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The Dark Side of Parenting: The Victim Experience of Parent Abuse

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Abstract

Parent abuse is perpetrated by children and adolescents and is directed toward their parents or caregivers. It is an area of family violence that has received limited attention from researchers in the past and very little qualitative research has focussed on the issue. Consequently, there is a lack of awareness and understanding of parent abuse by victim's friends and families, social services, and government. This research adopts an interpretative phenomenological approach to explore the psychological experience of PA (Parent Abuse). Data was gathered from interviews with eight victims of PA and three super-ordinate themes evolved out of the analysis. As PA is a relatively unrecognised phenomenon in New Zealand it was important that prior to presenting these themes the psychological experience of victims was placed into context. An introductory theme therefore outlines some of the specific acts of psychological, financial, verbal and physical abuse that participants have been subject to. The three super-ordinate themes that followed are; Firstly, the emotional roller coaster of experiencing feelings of unconditional love right through to resentment and hatred toward their abusive child; secondly, blaming ones-self for the abuse occurring and fearing and experiencing blame and judgement from others due to the abuse; and finally, considering the father's responsibility for the abuse occurring and exploring the possible positive impact of a male role model. It is hoped that the current research will stimulate further research on PA in New Zealand and thus, impact practice, policy, and public awareness.

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(Kennair & Mellor, 2007)