

Attachment experiences of grandparent kinship caregivers and nonkinship foster parents with preschool-aged children in their care

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This study explored the attachment relationships of grandparent kinship caregivers and nonkinship foster parents with preschool-aged children in their care. Research suggests that attachment is crucial in early childhood relationships and can impact relationships throughout the lifespan. Children in kinship care or nonkinship foster care are removed for abuse, neglect, dependency, and other traumatic life experiences, which can affect their ability to form positive attachment relationships. The goal was to understand attachment relationships in the grandparent kinship caregiver and nonkinship foster care milieu. Qualitative research methods were utilized. There were 8 grandparent kinship caregiver participants and 8 nonkinship foster parent participants. The themes that emerged were: 1) importance of family; 2) attachment, trauma, and traumatic grief and loss; 3) challenges; 4) roles; and 5) family relationship styles. Each theme contained subthemes. All participants reported challenges and the majority reported positive attachment relationships. This was the first qualitative study to explore attachment experiences of grandparent kinship caregivers and nonkinship foster parents with preschool-aged children in their care. The findings from this study can be used to inform mental health professionals, the child welfare system, grandparent kinship caregivers, nonkinship foster families, and serve as a guide to future research.