

## Psychosocial Experience of Parents of Children with Conduct Disorder in Thulamela, South Africa

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**Abstract :** Child mental disorders are strongly associated with different forms of challenges, including behavioural problems. The burden of care for children with a mental disorder is high and put primary caregivers, parents in particular, at risk of poor mental wellbeing. Understanding the experience of parents of children with mental disorders is crucial to developing a relevant intervention to assist them to attain optimal mental wellbeing. The aim of this study was to explore the experiences of parents of children with conduct disorder by focussing on the psychological and social stress experience of the parents in raising and caring for their children with conduct disorder. A qualitative research approach, using in-depth interview was utilized in this study. Purposive and snowballing sampling techniques were used to select 9 parents of children with conduct disorder in Thulamela Municipality, Limpopo Province of South Africa. Participants comprising of 2 males and 7 females aged between 30 years and 49 years were interviewed individually at scheduled appointment in-home setting. Interviews were conducted in both English and Setswana language. Data collected in Setswana language were translated to English by 'expert in language translation'. Ethical approval was obtained from appropriate authority before data collection. Thematic analysis was conducted to analyse the collected data. The findings identified anger, fear, depressive symptoms, denial, and suicidal ideation as predominant psychological experiences of the parents. Furthermore, deteriorated interpersonal relationships with family and community members, financial stress, and stigma emerged as social problems being the experience of the parents. It was concluded that parents of children with conduct disorder are highly traumatized by the challenges of caring for their children. We recommend professional engagement in terms of counselling service to support the parents. There is also a need for massive enlightenment programmes for members of the community in order to support the parents of children with child mental disorders.

**Keywords :** conduct disorder, parents, psychosocial experiences, South Africa

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