

The Knowledge of Teachers about Rights of Children to Reducing Child Abuse in Homeless Students

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Abstract

The aim of this review paper is to identify the important role of teachers about reporting child abuse in their classroom to reduce and prevention of child abuse with considers the homeless students. The findings of this study show that teachers have an important role to intervene and prevent of child abuse, because they spend a lot of time with students and contact with them in classroom. This study also finds that, teachers believed that the appropriate training has not been taught them in colleges, universities or teachers training centers. Furthermore, this paper pursues the professional abilities of teachers in order to find the child abuse signs of their students as well as the homeless ones and the skills of reporting them.

Keywords: child abuse, homeless students, knowledge, teacher, report

Introduction

Most people often take their home for granted, but for homeless people who had been moved from shelter to shelter, a home is a dream they hope someday to realize. But a home is not all that homeless students need. There is more to their problem than a roof and four walls which they can call it own home. Today one of serious problem in societies is homelessness (Toro *et al.*, 2007), there have always been people who were homeless. The problem may have been called by a different name or may have been deal with in different ways, but the fact is that, homelessness has existed through the centuries (Milbourne &

Cloke, 2006). While, the great number of children and the young have experience homeless, the precise number of those who are homeless is not clear (Reed-Victor & Stronge, 2002), and therefore the population of homeless students are rising (Dillon, 2008). Homeless people are at risk to abuse (Johnson & Chamberlain, 2008; Tyler, Hoyt, Whitbeck, & Cauce, 2001) and also homeless students are vulnerable to child abuse (Tower, 2003).

Students spend more than five hours a day during weekday in school, which give educators chance to be with students more than other professionals. The mean of “educator” is who encompass all

the teacher in classroom, and all school staff involved in serving the child (Tower, 2003). In this paper, the researchers focus on classroom teachers as educators. Some researchers like as Hinson and Fossey (2000) and Tower (2003) believed that, believed that in preventing and responding to the problem of child abuse and neglect, the function of trainer is very important, because they can find and recognizing child abuse, report, provides support after report, and also preventing child abuse. All kind of child abuse although all kinds of child abuse are from different social or economic families, but the most common element among them is that their children go into schools (Kenny, 2004). For many of these children, the schools are places where many of the students are headed by teachers or counselors, and probably can protect them from abuse.

A researcher by Hinson and Fossey (2000) mentioned, in spite of reporting 10% of child abuse in schools, the real rate is 50% at least. Unfortunately, reporting the child abuse neglected by teachers despite of its laws. Contrarily; most of them especially teachers reported there was no child abuse among their students. Obviously, though the teachers should be responsive toward their obligations when they find the signs of child abuse physically and sexually, and they have to know about right of children (Hinson & Fossey, 2000). When abuse is not reported, children fail to receive protection and treatment (Smith, 2005). In fact, teachers do not have sufficient knowledge about children rights and child-abuse reporting law (Kenny, 2004). So, in this paper, researchers focus on knowledge of teachers

about children rights for reducing child abuse in school with considers homeless students.

Homeless students

Nowadays the homeless students' number is increase in schools. Each year, as average 1.4 million children is homeless (Mizerek, 2004). Homeless students, like any population, have particular needs when it comes to academic and emotional assistance. Academic achievement often is low level for them, and they can lack basic needs and social skills. Consequently, it is necessary that educators make certain that these students receive essential supports in school. Homeless students included of each race, background, and gender. The characteristics of homeless students are similar to other students in poverty, the difference being that they do not have consistent housing. Therefore they are at risk on child abuse (Mizerek, 2004).

The Child of Rights Convention

In this part the researchers maintain some article about child rights, to improve knowledge of teacher about child rights to reduce child abuse.

Article 19 (Protection from all forms of violence): *“Children have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, physically or mentally. Governments should ensure that children are properly cared for and protect them from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents, or anyone else who looks after them. In terms of discipline, the Convention does*

not specify what forms of punishment parents should use. However any form of discipline involving violence is unacceptable. There are ways to discipline children that are effective in helping children learn about family and social expectations for their behavior – ones that are non-violent, are appropriate to the child's level of development and take the best interests of the child into consideration. In most countries, laws already define what sorts of punishments are considered excessive or abusive. It is up to each government to review these laws in light of the Convention (Analyti, 2012)."

Article 28 (Right to education): *"All children have the right to a primary education, which should be free. Wealthy countries should help poorer countries achieve this right. Discipline in schools should respect children's dignity. For children to benefit from education, schools must be run in an orderly way – without the use of violence. Any form of school discipline should take into account the child's human dignity. Therefore, governments must ensure that school administrators review their discipline policies and eliminate any discipline practices involving physical or mental violence, abuse or neglect. The Convention places a high value on education. Young people should be encouraged to reach the highest level of education of which they are capable (Policy, 2011)."*

Article 33 (Drug abuse): *"Governments should use all means possible to protect children from the use of harmful drugs and from being used in the drug trade (Cox, Allen, Conrad, & Hanser, 2010)."*

Article 34 (Sexual exploitation): *"Governments should protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse. This provision in the Convention is augmented by the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (Cox et al., 2010)."*

Article 39 (Rehabilitation of child victims): *"Children who have been neglected, abused or exploited should receive special help to physically and psychologically recover and reintegrate into society. Particular attention should be paid to restoring the health, self-respect and dignity of the child (Analyti, 2012)."*

States the Reasons of Concern of Teachers about Child Abuse

The teachers have an essential role in identifying, reporting, as well as preventing child abuse (Kenny, 2004). The list of some reasons why teachers are very important in identifying, treating, and preventing child abuse have presented in below:

- As the teachers connect with children directly, the initiate reason for major role of teachers is their direct connection,
- The second reason focuses on the responsibility of teachers in reporting the suspected cases during teaching students, so when children are maltreated, they cannot concentrate and focus on their studies.
- The third one summarize in the unique role of teachers in order to prepare the appropriate program and services to help both children and their families, in this way, having fruitful connection with adults

would increase children's resilience who were maltreated or were exposed at-risk, homeless children, or even the problem comes back to the substance abuse of family experiences. (Tower, 2003).

The above mentioned reasons highlight the major role of teachers toward child abuse is to recognize the different type of it such as sexual, physical maltreatment, and emotive abuse which are obtruded on the elementary school children.

Recognizing Child Abuse

Every form of maltreatment (sexual and physical abuse, neglect, and emotional maltreatment) is inflicted on school-age children. Furthermore, the students living in the violent families or homeless children are at risk for misdirected abuse. They are also in danger to suffer emotional consequences from observer this behavior (Tower, 2003). One of the issues that is neglected and there is seldom studied in is "the different kinds of child abuses" that are performed by offenders (Higgins & McCabe, 2001).

Teachers have an important role to intervene and prevent of child abuse, because of their relations with student for a long time in classroom. The teachers have a good opportunity to regard their students behaviors and identify child abuse (Smith & Lambie, 2005). The signs of abuse among students are recognized by knowledgeable teachers through observation, them in the class, finding the physical signs and having an active interaction with the parents regularly (Tower, 2003). They, as trained observers, can notice and

find behaviors from students who are inflicted the child abuse (Dausen, 2006). Teachers can collect information from child's previous teacher to find changing students' behaviors. Child abuse and neglected provide the conditions for acquiring the 'bad kids' title for these children (Tower, 2003).

Reporting Child Abuse and Knowledge of Teachers about It

After recognize and identify child abuse by teachers, it necessary to report it to the proper authorities to prevent child abuse (O'Malley, 2002). In spite of good intentions of teachers, they don't heed to the reporting regulation on child abuse (Tower, 2003), and by knowing their undertaking to do, many are not sure on procedures of the reporting (Hinson & Fossey, 2000). The function of schools are often to create an effective role for teachers in this field (Kenny, 2001). Schools' role in training the teachers and preventing the child abuse is unique (Tower, 2003).

Kenny (2001) in his research has mentioned in his research that three fourth or 75% of child abusers are not reported by teachers. He cited that teachers claimed that the sufficient training was not taken by college educations to them in the field of child abuse, and also these teachers felt that their pre- and post-service training did not adequately prepare them for abuse reporting. The most reasons mention for not reporting abuse were fear of making an inexact report, feeling as though child protecting services do not help parents, and no clear physical signs of abuse.

He also mentioned that in comparison with the profession and physicians, the teachers got the minimum knowledge in child abuse.

Another finding confirm the lack of teachers' knowledge about the signs of child abuse in school age rather than the experts (Reiniger, Robison, & McHugh, 1995). This finding and the previous ones that mentioned strongly supported that the signs or indicators of child abuse should be taught to the professionals and teach them how to report it. These studies and a lot of studies about child abuse show that it is necessity to enhance and improve training teachers on child abuse reporting.

The training of child abuse for teachers should create their responsibility along with their duty in order to report. In order to train the teachers it is essential to make the experiment and hypothetical environments to cover the fear of teacher regarding the false report and to improve the skills of reporting (Smith, 2005).

Providing Support after the Report

The primary step of the protection process of children is child abuse (Vulliamy & Sullivan, 2000). Some acts like as remedy, rehabilitation, uplifting and prohibiting the families are still continuing to prevent the future abuse. The sending report is considered traditionally the last step of child abuse, but now some teachers assist and protect the families and children through Child Protective Service (CPS), they share their relevant information about the child abuse with the staff of CPS to offer the services necessary

for both children and parents, and to take part in multidisciplinary groups. Both teachers and schools participate in groups to reduce the child abuse (Tower, 2003).

The situation of teachers in fruitful support of students is unique (Feng, Chen, Wilk, Yang, & Fetzer, 2009). The experts require reviewing certain necessities for preparing the suitable programs in order to adopt them with the previous needs in schools. Teachers who trained well are the valuable help for parents and children on child abuse (Tower, 2003).

The whole life of a child who is abused before and after abusing is covered by stress, so the schools should create the constant and stable situation while the sensitivity toward the child's need is essential. Teachers, administrators, and school counselors be supposed to be aware of the necessity of child to constancy and new way to cover his needs (Tower, 2003).

Conclusion

Homelessness is a problem in each society. This problem may have been named by different words, but in real, this is existed throughout the centuries. The most important point is homeless people are at risk to abuse and also homeless students are more vulnerable in the field of child abuse. Teacher's role in prohibiting and responding the child abuse is vital, because they can find, recognize, and report child abuse, as well as they can support them after report along with preventing child abuse, while they share their time with them in schools.

Failing report to the proper authorities about suspicious case are happen by many teachers, so the skilled teachers can find out and recognize the abuses by some physical signs just by observing the children in the classroom. Unfortunately, teachers believed they did not get the sufficient training about child abuse during their college

education or even in training program. So these teachers believed that their training service before and after training courses could not prepare them to report the child abuse. This paper shows that the necessity of the training of teachers about the rights of child, identifies the homeless students, and mentions the signs or indicators of child abuse and reporting it.

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