How Can the Capabilities of Child Protection Workers Be Enhanced? A Report from Kuwaitis Child Protection Workers

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ABSTRACT

This article establishes empowerment strategies to enhance child protection workers' capabilities in Kuwait. It utilized a phenomenology design and a qualitative method to collect 12 Kuwaiti child protection workers' experiences with daily challenges while protecting and safeguarding children who attend the Child Protection Office. The study collected its data using semi-structured interviews with 12 child protection workers. The findings show that the capabilities of child protection workers can be improved using several approaches, including salary increments, training opportunities, supportive organizational policies, and the introduction of performance evaluations. Despite the numerous challenges that child protection workers in Kuwait face, the identified interventions could significantly improve their effectiveness. Therefore, the government and the relevant organizations should invest in realizing the identified interventions.

Keywords: Child protection workers, Child protection office, Capabilities, Enhancement

1. Introduction

Children all over the world face many hardships and danger, so children at risk are considered a problem in different countries (WHO, 2022). Abuse refers to physical harm or sexual and emotional abuse and neglect inflicted by the person responsible for the care of a child and damaging to his or her health and well-being (Scott et al., 2023). Maltreatment includes physical abuse, psychological abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect (Kisely et al., 2018), which exposes children to adverse health consequences. Child abuse costs countries, governments, and individuals huge sums of money because children require extensive care to treat the consequences. Conti et al. (2021) identified child abuse as a financial burden. They estimated the average lifetime cost per victim of non-fatal child abuse at £89,390, based on confirmed incidents in 2019 (Estimated Economic Burden of Child Abuse in the UK). Therefore, preventing child abuse and preventing child abuse is an important issue, the costs resulting from violence are high costs incurred by the individual, society and governments.

According to UNICEF (Thomas et al., 2020), children suffer from multiple forms of abuse, such as violence, exploitation, and abuse. Incidents of child abuse are often transient, but long-term health consequences include mental health disorders, unwanted pregnancies, and substance abuse

(Thomas et al., 2020). Abuse can have both short- and long-term negative consequences on a child's social and psychological life. This type of abuse can occur to those responsible for the child's care, such as a parent or secondary parent, a guardian, or even a school teacher, and can have a negative impact on the child's health, well-being, and psychological stability (Lloyd, 2018). The consequences of child abuse can be financial, psychological can affect mental health and the child's cognitive and academic performance and social affect which causes problems with social relationships, family and friends.

Residential child protection authorities now ensure coordinated and comprehensive care for children in care. Group care is provided by individuals who specialize in various areas of child care. The duty of care is a legal obligation to provide an appropriate standard of care and to act in a way that ensures the safety of a child at risk. A duty of care exists when there is reason to believe that one person's actions or omissions may cause harm to another person. All carers have a duty of care (Duty of Care Group, 2020, p. 2). Child protection professionals are therefore defined as a group of social workers and other professionals working in protection settings who perform a variety of roles with children at risk, as they are tasked with responding to child protection issues such as violence, sexual exploitation, etc. Come risk neglect and abuse (Hashim, 2021). As mentioned in Ahmed's study (2018), one of the goals of professional intervention in the social service field is to meet the needs of child beneficiaries and their families and reduce their risks. As mentioned in the UNHCR Guide to Child Protection (2021), early child protection interventions help protect the child, which helps in the well-being and protection of the child. The Child Protection Office provides a summary of the prevention of child abuse and neglect from any member, whether from inside or outside the family, examines child maltreatment statistics, explains how child abuse and neglect can be avoided, and provides links to several resources regarding preventing child abuse and neglect, as well as essentials for parenting (Child Welfare Group, 2017). This requires working on the right of children to a life free of violence, and investing in empowering child protection workers, as well as working to develop child protection workers to reduce public expenditures on child protection, and investing in prevention programs is sufficient to work to protect children and develop societies from Through an environment that works for the well-being of children and society.

Several potential interventions have been identified in the introduction chapter as being suitable for enhancing the capabilities of child protection workers in responding to the vice of child maltreatment. Interventions to enhance child protection workers' capabilities, residential-based child protection, through care is provided by a group of individuals specialized in various fields of childcare (CSP Group, 2020). Offices are established in communities where cases of child maltreatment can be reported, and action taken (Gale, 2021).

The interventions that have been specifically implemented in Kuwait, it is evident that Kuwait has comprehensive legal and institutional frameworks to respond to child maltreatment. Police protection are directly tasked with the responsibility of identifying and responding to possible cases of child maltreatment, supervises the measures taken to protect children's rights in Kuwait (Legal Advice, 2022). Child's Rights Law in 2015, provides a framework for the protection of children from maltreatment. Outlines the need for and role of child protection services, empowering efforts to protect children (Almazeedi et al., 2020). Child protection office handling child maltreatment cases and taking punitive measures against violators of child rights, and

following up on potential child maltreatment cases from hospitals (Al-Khalidi, 2017). Non-governmental organization provide child protection workers to assist families in resolving disputes (Indeed Editorial Team, 2022).

Despite the existence of these frameworks, the evidence presented in the introduction paragraph shows that the ability of Child protection workers to protect children from maltreatment is undermined by the fact that they are not provided with adequate support by the government (Al-Mutairi, 2020). They are not given legal power to carry out rehabilitation for parents who subject their children to maltreatment (Al-Qattan, 2020), little media attention (Abdulaziz, 2022), the lack of systems to improve their performance (Abdulaziz, 2022), and the lack of professional recognition (Khalifa, 2018). In spite that Child protection workers and protection institutions play an influential and vital role in protecting children (Plan International Group, 2017). Child protection will only be achieved by raising the efficiency of child protection workers (U.A.E, 2021). The research shows that addressing these challenges should lead to enhanced capabilities of child protection workers to reduce the prevalence of child maltreatment in Kuwait.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Child protection centers

Goldman et al. (2020) estimate that between 5 and 6 million children worldwide live in child protection centers rather than family institutions. In the context of Kuwait, children are placed in child protection centers when a protection professional decides that it is unsafe for children to remain with their families (Child Protection Act, 2015). In cases of physical danger, a specialized team is dispatched to review suspected cases of child abuse and take the necessary steps to protect the child. Child Protection Services are for children who need protection and refuge from their families. They ensure that maltreated children receive appropriate assistance in a timely and family-centered manner (UNHCR, 2021). Centre staff provide children with a safe, supportive, and therapeutic environment while working toward family reunification or other permanency options (Ward et al., 2005). In addition, children in these centers could transit from home to other forms of care in a way that child welfare workers and other relevant agencies can Collaborate with members.

2.2. Child protection

Child protection, an essential service for children, refers to the child welfare system. Child protective services include legislation and policy, meaningful coordination between different levels of government agencies, and numerous state and non-state actors (McGill, 2012, p. iii). Child protection Child protection is a set of procedures and frameworks to prevent child abuse, exploitation, neglect and violence affecting the psychology of children, in accordance with the provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and human rights treaties and applicable national legislation. Child protection is one of the priorities of developed countries to enable the well-being of the child, the family, and society.

2.3. Child protection workers empowerment

Empowerment describes the means of enhancing the role of employees in collective decision-making within a company, which helps improve employee efficiency and functional effectiveness and grants employee's temporary authority or functional roles to express their opinions on the nature of their work. After applying one of these opinions, they can influence the results (Abdul Hafez, 2020). Clients and social workers must be familiar with the mechanisms of empowerment and the empowerment mechanisms of the social worker's role. This stage can be achieved with the satisfaction of both parties (Al-Sabakhi, 2020). Child protection workers and protection agencies play an influential and vital role in protecting children (Plan International Group, 2017), and child protection can only be ensured by increasing the effectiveness of child protection workers (u.ae, 2021). The number of social workers and psychologists should be increased so that they can follow up on cases and deal with problems in the best interest of children and their families (Al-Sharqawi & Al-Awaid, 2015). Consideration should be given to increasing staff skills and conducting research on child protection through training and capacity building (Al-Abdullah, 2019).

Additionally, there is a need to increase social workers' cadre and their salaries to make the job attractive to Kuwaitis. The Commission on Values and Negative Phenomena states that all problems students face in schools, such as behavioral deviations or deficiencies in education, family problems and poor educational qualifications, can be attributed to the lack of follow-up on these issues. There is a need for social workers in public and private schools. This role is lacking in schools at all levels of education, so it is essential to bring experts into schools and prioritize their work so that playing this critical and influential role among students meets basic standards. Social work should not be a traditional profession; people should only be committed to work if they fulfil their intended role. Therefore, it is crucial to establish a social work department led by professionals in schools, religious institutions, and kindergartens. Furthermore, it is also crucial to expand the pool of social workers, increase their salaries, activate the role of social workers in public and private schools, and encourage Kuwaitis to participate in this work (Awwad, 2022).
Legislating a general policy to enhance the social worker's role, providing offices and special centers for the social worker in different places such as hospitals, and conducting courses and workshops for social workers that match their workplace is vital (Abu Rumman et al., 2018). Among the mechanisms for activating the role of the social worker within the framework of the quality system through the perspective of the method of working with groups, the departments in all their institutions must organize training programs to raise the level of professional performance of the group specialist, and the expansion of courses and seminars through the College of Social Work to activate the role of the specialist working with groups. They are also interested in holding professional development lectures for the specialist role (Hijazi, 2018). Financial contributions to development offices, including child protective services, were recently suspended, impacting many male and female employees (Al-Turki, 2022). The main office was also moved to a smaller building, which conflicted with the capacity of the new building and compromised the privacy of the workplace as it houses 650 employees (Jasem & Atef, 2022). According to a study (Ahmed, 2023), it is necessary to focus on the psychological aspect, create a suitable working environment and comfortable space for workers, introduce a reward system and provide wages to help them cope with the high cost of living.

Therefore, training workers in child protection and other social fields prepares them for professional development as a gateway to work in all social services. For example, raising the skill level of workers working with children and improving their performance, working in a functional hierarchy with the correct titles, defining workers' tasks by their expertise in social

institutions and assigning roles according to the skills of each social worker and further empowering workers to some extent, and activating the role of social workers through media and social communication (Al-Anzi & Al-Qahtani, 2020).

2.4. Theoretical framework: the role theory

This study used Role Theory, which key assumptions are that roles, including many jobs and tasks, are delegated to individuals in specific positions; individuals cannot successfully fulfil these roles without training, and individuals can be influenced in the performance of their roles (Al-Hassan, 2015). Social psychology defines a role as a set of expectations attached to a particular social position. Roles are considered a set of behaviors and expectations associated with social structures. The basic idea also suggests that roles are initiated by others and valued in the relationships attributed to them by certain situations because of their actions (Al-Ayasra, 2020). Everyone typically plays multiple roles in life. The people who make up a group see roles as a stable set of behaviors. Social systems and networks are studied from this perspective, emphasizing environment and context rather than individual behavior (Gesualdi, 2017).

The strength of Role Theory is that it can be applied to specific situations to demonstrate its emergence. It can be used to resolve conflicts in one's life, help others identify their problems, or clarify ambiguous situations in committees or systems (Blatner, 2006). Role Theory has a status for social workers through role theory. This is because social workers have duties and rights to fulfil through their work. Through Role Theory, individuals gain a specific position in society due to the reality of social life and their role through their work, considering the duties and tasks they fulfil inside and outside the child centers with the families of children at risk. It can go beyond this role outside the child protection center by applying methods and skills when necessary.

3. Methodology

3.1. Study's approach

This study employs a phenomenology design, which the researcher effectively studies emotional, affective, and intense human experiences. Through phenomenology, the researcher aims to attract data that has yet to be attained; therefore, the researcher investigates life experiences regarding an event from the subject's perspective. This approach requires participants to examine the most mind-boggling parts of human existence that are beyond quantifiable perspectives. Husserl (2007) states that a person's worldview attempts to make sense of the idea of things, the substance, and the veracity of peculiarities. The point is to understand the complexity of lived experiences, and understanding is therefore pointed towards bringing issues to light and finding the implications that encompass a peculiarity. Knowing the origin and standards of phenomenology, the strategy to move towards a field of study, and the mechanisms to search for meanings are vital. The qualitative research focuses on individuals' lived encounters and is sensitive to the predispositions of both the researcher and study population (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). This approach is undertaken when the goal is to answer significant inquiries regarding individuals and their lives.

3.2. Research design

This study employed a phenomenological design that aims to obtain data that still needs to be determined. The researcher examines the life experiences associated with the event from the subject's perspective. This research design describes the lived experience of individuals without considering the phenomenon. The phenomenological design places participants' lived encounters at the center of attention because it relies on how we see participants' encounters (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This is feasible within this study as interviews will be used as the data collection method, allowing the researcher to attempt to determine the participants' direct experience.

3.3. The study's physical location

The study was conducted at social service offices in a group of hospitals in Kuwait, in addition to the community police and the social development office.

3.4. The study's population

The population of this study is child protection workers. These teams specialize in addressing suspicious cases that result from child abuse and undertake the necessary measures to protect affected children. The teams consist of pediatricians, internists, nurses, social workers, a psychotherapist, and an officer from the General Department of Criminal Evidence of the Kuwaiti Ministry of the Interior (Child Protection Law, 2015), as defined by the Child Protection Law.

3.5. Sample and sampling technique

As this is a qualitative study with a phenomenological design, the researcher recruited a sample of 12 child protection workers. To gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of interest, the researcher needed to ensure a certain degree of reliability, which required conducting enough interviews to gain sufficient insight into the topic but not conducting so many interviews that the essence of the topic was not lost. Additionally, the sample included a variety of child welfare workers with different backgrounds to illustrate the challenges, impact, and role of child maltreatment workers in child welfare centers.

The researcher utilized nonprobability sampling to select participants who met the informational requirements of the study. The researcher selected the study participants from the staff of child protection centers who were willing to share their knowledge and experiences relevant to the research questions. Several setting factors, including access, time, and vulnerability of participants and stakeholders, also influenced the sample. Therefore, in this case, the researcher considered how participation in the study would affect child protection center workers and the need to inform relevant stakeholders, such as their managers and supervisors, that they would have time to attend the interviews.

3.6. Data gathering and analysis technique

The researcher used in-depth interviews to collect the core data for this study. The interview process occurred in stages, from creating genuine involvement to closing while maintaining

contact. The next step was to encourage conversational competence, which allowed participants to regard the interviewer as a partner who had no desire to influence the responses rather than being seen as an interrogator. Additionally, participants felt that their opinions mattered in the study. Subsequently, the researcher demonstrated understanding and empathised with participants by employing responsive facial expressions, murmurs, and a sympathetic tone. This made it easier for participants to share their experiences without fear. Once the conversation began to flow, the interviewer gathered facts and basic descriptions before asking the difficult questions. The next step was to temper the emotional level, which was accomplished by the researcher's reminders that the interview was confidential and encouragement of the participant to ask questions. However, in extreme cases, the interview was discontinued. Finally, the interview ended with an informal conversation between the researcher and the participant. After obtaining information from child protection workers through the in-depth interviews, each interview's data was transferred to a transcript, then read and reread to clarify each participant's references and compile the main ideas. The data was analysed in an inductive thematic manner. Finally, the recorded data was transcribed verbatim to provide a database for analysis.

3.7. Research ethics

An ethical review was required to protect the participants and researchers. Obtaining ethical approval demonstrates that the researcher has adhered to the accepted ethical standards required of a research study.

4. Result

The skills of child protection workers are among the most critical factors in the various supports that child protection center staff need to enjoy. Participants emphasized that a variety of interventions were critical to strengthening their skills as child protection workers and protecting the development of maltreated children. These include:
1) Provide incentives and improve workplace policies,
2) Establish support systems to enhance the role of child protection professionals; and
3) Provide seminars and training to improve employee skills.

4.1. Provide incentives and improve workplace policies

Work incentives include monetary incentives (i.e., increasing salary levels by providing bonuses) and non-monetary incentives (i.e., workplace flexibility, psychological support, and gratitude to employees) provided by specific institutions such as departments or governments to improve personal qualities and achieve goals. Other incentives need to be highlighted, namely authoritarian or power incentives in the work environment, as they are essential aspects of workplace politics where power, authority, and evaluation override job performance. Workplace policies such as provide employees with opportunities to contribute and have their views considered; fair transportation policies and anti-discrimination (Creary et al., 2021) allow employees to behave professionally, help predict employee behavior, and work on another front: understanding their expectations and working to meet them (Zhenjing et al., 2022).

The lack of recognition of the professionalism of social work and other social professions under the heading of management rather than social researchers or technicians has led to low salaries. Most participants expressed dissatisfaction with low salaries and the lack of incentive programs and workplace policies to motivate them. These views were necessary given the importance of good pay and job performance. CPW4 says this of their incentive program:

"It is not enough. We want to increase our salaries… Almost we are the only low salary in the various disciplines of bachelor's degrees. We want to strengthen our role and give powers."

(CPW4, 10 May 2023, 10 AM/ Social service office)

This sentiment is supported by CPW1, who says:
"No, it is not enough. We do not have financial incentives. We need clear policies for us and the office. My presence in the job is because I love dealing with children, and there is no other employee, as I mentioned previously. Everyone left the child protection office in this hospital."

(CPW1, 16 May 2023, 12 AM/ Social Service Office)

Other participants noted that this lack of incentives has led to increased turnover from the child protection office, with others stating their willingness to quit their jobs if a better job opportunity arises. For instance, CPW6 says:

"To be frank with you, we do not have incentives or policies that support our role. Most of my female colleagues have gone to other places."

(CPW6, 15 May 2023, 9 AM/ Social service office)

CPW5 also stated that she loves her work with children, saying:
"I love my job very much and I love helping children...but there are some kind of financial and other restrictions...if I am offered a job in a better place with a better salary and benefits and a role that makes me feel the importance of my job and my specialty, I will go."

(CPW5, 10 May 2023, 11 AM/ Social service office)

CPW10 also points out the lack of workplace policies that enhance employee performance. She notes that the:
"Main problem is reluctance to specialize, and the main reason is low salary and lack of knowledge of our role, whether from our administration or other departments."

(CPW10, 3 July 2023, 12 PM/ Social service office)

In general, participants called for financial incentives through increased financial allowances, and trying to support workers in their role by empowering them in different ways, in addition to working towards the introduction of workplace health policies.

4.2. Establish support systems to enhance the role of child protection professionals

Social workers should have support systems and structures to enhance their performance. One example is establishing financial support systems, such as incentives, promotions, and advice systems, to help workers face challenges and relieve pressure. As a training center for the field of pediatrics to raise the level of social work practice, which encompasses many activities in child,

family and community services, training providers should be familiar with the field and have studied and gained experience in the theoretical and practical aspects of the nature of working with children, families, and the community at large. Child protection workers should also have the power and authority to take decisions directly from social workers to strengthen their social role.

One of the identified systems was identified by CPW9, which underscores the need for more powers to carry out tasks handled swiftly and confidentially to ensure that the child's safety is protected without engaging in procedures that would disrupt the protection phases. She says:
"We need authority to act, we need to organize the administrative structure… We want to take the measures ourselves... We don't want bureaucratic processes that take time, which negatively affects the health and psyche of the child."

<div align="right">(CPW9, 3 July 2023, 10 AM/ social service office)</div>

The need for sufficient office spaces was also highlighted by CPW5, who noted:
"As a psychotherapist, I must work on separating the disciplines from each other. Currently, we are all in one place, social workers, and psychologists. The department official must be in the same specialty as yours so that we know the procedures and give each person the right."

<div align="right">(CPW5, 10 May 2023, 11 AM/ Social service office)</div>

Participants also sought organizational support and structures to improve their roles through meetings matters and hear their requirements and suggestions. This was highlighted by CPW10, who stated:
"We need a lot of organization and support from our administration and other departments… Through the participatory process... with our appreciation and listening to our demands... by meeting with us as employees to take ideas to develop procedures from our point of view because we are the direct ones with the child."

<div align="right">(CPW10, 3 July 2023, 12 PM/ Social service office)</div>

Likewise, CPW6 states:
"We need a lot, there is no appreciation from the administration, therefore we need administrative support structures that organize and enhance our role… We want a little interest in sharing suggestions from what we've been through."

<div align="right">(CPW6, 15 May 2023, 9 AM/ Social service office)</div>

CPW8 further adds that social workers:
"We need organization and cooperation… We need administrative support to enhance our role as providing workshops and courses… the child needs all services in one place and quickly."

<div align="right">(CPW8, 28 May 2023, 10 AM/ Social service office)</div>

Participants, therefore, emphasized the need to empower and empower employees. Besides the lack of office space, there is also a need for organizational support and efforts to listen to the needs of employees and improve performance.

4.3. Provide seminars and training to improve employee skills

Training is not the end of professional development; it is a process of increasing the scientific and practical knowledge and experience of child protection workers in the field of child and family protection through continuous and systematic theoretical and practical training. Knowledge is evolving, and problems are changing and expanding. Therefore, the only way to face the challenges is through continuous training.

The need to provide training and capacity-building opportunities was also emphasized in the interviews. Most participants stated that they received very little training in their workplaces and that most of their learning was self-directed. For instance, CPW3 laments the lack of training opportunities, *"All workshops are self-efforts, there is only one trained that does not fit my work and I did not benefit anything"* (CPW3, 16 May 2023, 1 PM/ Social service office), with CPW7 adding that they develop themselves through books. On the other hand, CPW10 points out that they only attend workshops *"once a year for writing reports"* (CPW10, 3 July 2023, 12 PM/ Social service office).

However, CPW1 reported that she had attended various workshops. She notes:
"Yes, we attend workshops through the Ministry of Health, or we participate in attending workshops via the Internet, and it was the most enjoyable workshop for the CCPW test, which is a test for listening and concentration disorders."
(CPW1, 16 May 2023, 12 AM/ Social Service Office)

Nevertheless, some participants whose workplaces offered training complained about the frequency of these workshops. For instance, CPW9 states that although she received family counselling training, she only trains once a year. On the other hand, CPW11 notes:
"Yes, we initially trained to write reports. I do not know if there is a specific time for training."
(CPW11, 4 July 2023, 8 AM/ Social Service office)

Some participants also mentioned the importance of gaining more experience through training, mentoring, and working with people experienced in child protection to help them deal with children from different backgrounds.

"I love dealing with children and I love my job very much, but I want to develop it I feel that I must develop many skills, like dealing and communication skill… I would like us to be trained in different cases of children's cases… To gain experience through these courses, Unfortunately, I am developing my experience on my part not through the Child Protection Office… To be honest, I feel that I should develop my skills and experience more."
(CPW1, 16 May 2023, 12 AM/ Social Service Office)

Regarding Whether they are culturally competent to deal with different cases by being trained in the necessary skills, receiving training from experienced people, and working with children in a unified way, CPW8 said:
"Yes, because I joined the office through my work in the hospital because we used to receive all case… So, yes, I am able to deal with different cases... However, my specialization during the school days has been working on teaching us all categories and cases."

(CPW8, 28 May 2023, 10 AM/ Social service office)

On her part, CPW3 accredits her cultural competency to the various cases they handle. Her response to the above question was:

"Yes, of course, in the Office of Social Development, we receive all cases, consultations, ages, and cases… During my career, I worked with several cases...family, teenagers, Kuwaitis, and others."

(CPW3, 16 May 2023, 1 PM/ Social service office)

Thus, participants needed to regularly receive the necessary training to develop their scientific expertise, which points to the need for training and capacity building through workshops. It is also clear that they can deal with a wide range of situations.

5. Discussion

Through the results of the previous article entitled "What hinders us to safeguard the maltreated children," the study reached several results, which are as follows: First, there is a lack of training and accurate scientific knowledge in the field, and they must be trained and their skills developed. Secondly, working with authority based on professionalism is one of the most important points mentioned by the workers, as there is limited authority, so we must work to provide authority to social workers in their work. Third, enhancing the proactive participation of parents because it has a positive impact in the treatment stages. Fourth, meeting employees' expectations through the roles they play (Almutairi et al., 2023).

An analysis of the interview transcripts also revealed the necessity of role development and support structures for child protection personnel. Participants stated a need for particular domains to reinforce their social worker and psychologist duties, such as an office dedicated to decision-making authority and confidentiality. As such, the findings emphasize the necessity of teaching the community about the value of the social work profession and how having fewer professionals in child welfare agencies can negatively affect the community. Katz et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of clearly defining roles and establishing complementary support systems to ensure that professionals in this field can access appropriate resources and training to address the needs of children at risk effectively.

In the same context, the study by Fletcher (2021) argued that structures and support systems that improve child protection workers' competencies help improve outcomes for vulnerable children, underscoring the importance of such a policy. In Atassi's study (2020), organizational structure and management were found to lead to employee satisfaction with job content and supervision style in the performance of employees in childcare projects and childcare associations. The support system for employees is defined as a set of counselling systems that help individuals in any sector to solve problems faced in the work environment and reduce pressure and backlog (Mandi, 2018).

This study reached new results that complement the previous study, as the result, child protection workers must have access to appropriate administrative support, resources, and equipment to

perform their duties effectively and to mentoring and supervision programs that provide essential feedback and guidance. Hashim (2021) notes that social workers need to be responsive and flexible in child protection, which suggests that flexible working arrangements increase workers' work-life balance and satisfaction. Staff turnover in child protection can provide services and continuity of care for at-risk children. Despite the critical role of the workforce in child welfare services, the average staff turnover rate is estimated to be 20% to 57% annually in the USA (Park & Pierce, 2020). Such turnover can lead to low staff morale and excessive workload for the remaining child protection staff. It is, therefore, essential to address the root causes of employee dissatisfaction and adopt effective methods to increase employee engagement and minimize turnover.

More importantly, participants identified a lack of financial incentives, inadequate support, and the need for better workplace policies to motivate people to work. They also highlighted high employee turnover due to a need for proper workplace policies and motivation. This theme highlights the importance of having a positive work environment and adopting appropriate policies that encourage employee engagement and retention. Various studies in social work have repeatedly demonstrated the importance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on staff performance and job satisfaction. Intrinsic motivation here refers to an individual's desire to leave a positive footprint in a child's life. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, refers to the extrinsic motivation that drives social workers to fulfil their duties. Examples include workplace support policies and financial incentives.

It should be noted that financial incentives such as performance-based bonuses and competitive salaries are critical in recognizing the problematic aspects of child protection workers' jobs and providing fair compensation to employees commensurate with their efforts. Lack of adequate financial incentives can lead to decreased motivation, increased employee turnover, and difficulties recruiting and retaining qualified staff. Workplace support policies and financial incentives are crucial to creating a healthy work environment and motivating employees.

The United Arab Emirates has initiated policies to create a suitable workplace for employees and maintain employees through the Federal Authority for Government Human Resources (2017) by providing programs for job welfare in the work environment, implementing suggestion and grievance systems, working on reward and incentive systems, providing health and safety systems in the work environment, providing benefits, and working on regular promotions and bonuses.

The interviews revealed a variety of measures that are essential for building the capacity of child protection workers to protect the safety and well-being of abused children. One of these was workplace policies and motivation, highlighting child protection workers' dissatisfaction with existing workplace incentive policies and programs, according to Leung et al.(2021), who recommended the establishment of more comprehensive workplace motivation policies, particularly for those working in child protection. Gallo et al. (2023) study also agreed that motivating social workers in the workplace by working to manage workplace facilities, creating favorable conditions for professional work inside and outside the workplace, providing material and non-material incentives, and improving the quality of social workers' practice through policies of administrative innovation.

Similarly, the finding resonates with the arguments of Lawson et al. (2020); there is a direct correlation between incentives and the effectiveness of child protection networks, suggesting that workers are more likely to be motivated when policies are implemented through continuous change. Familiarity with incentives and networks sets workers' expectations and policies, which are regularly formulated to achieve the goals of their work environment.

According to Siman (2021), Incentives and various government incentive policies can greatly motivate workers to produce and increase the speed at which employees respond. Daniel's study (2020) also showed that Incentives were closely related to what employees offer regarding productivity and employee improvement. In addition to Alkandi et al. (2023), the study found that financial incentives and rewards for the employee's work and performance were the primary drivers of job satisfaction.

Another theme that emerged from the survey results is how society's institutions and structures affect child protection workers' work. Respondents specifically complained that transferring cases to another agency instead of allowing them to practice what they had learned in the field limited their ability to provide ongoing supervision and support to children. They emphasized the need for improved organization, teamwork, and interdisciplinary collaboration to ensure at-risk children can access all necessary services. This finding complements the work of Higgins et al. (2019), who revealed that a lack of coordination among organizations and disjointed systems may ultimately lead to successful child protection service delivery. Therefore, the findings underscore the need to simplify social processes and structures to provide effective and comprehensive child protection services.

Participants also stressed the importance of ongoing training and capacity-building opportunities to improve the competence of child protection personnel. Thus, they stressed the importance of training, self-education, and regular professional development opportunities to stay abreast of the latest best child safety practices. The findings complement the arguments of Tulane (2021), who revealed that ongoing training and capacity building of child welfare staff is essential to improve their knowledge, competence, and ability to meet the varied needs of at-risk children and their families. The findings also resonate with the recommendations of Al-Farih (2022) that child welfare agencies should have training programs that cover a wide range of topics, such as cultural competence, assessment and intervention, and skills development.

6. Conclusion

This research provides an in-depth evaluation of what is currently being used to promote the effectiveness of child protection workers in the general context and the efforts currently applied in Kuwait. The government of Kuwait has implemented a wide range of strategies, including establishing child protection offices in healthcare facilities, and introducing legislation specifically aimed at supporting child protection workers. Despite all these elaborate strategies, the rate of child maltreatment in the country is still high. This observation justified the need to include a question on approaches that could be used to improve the effectiveness of child protection workers in the country. The analysis of the data shows that the effectiveness of child protection workers could be improved by increasing their remuneration and providing incentives to work in the profession. Increasing pay and introducing incentives will reduce the high turnover in the sector and improve organizations' ability to attract a large number of new professionals.

After the pay is adjusted upwards, the findings show that stakeholders in the sector should introduce policies and regular training programs. Encouraging membership in various child protection networks is also an effective strategy that could positively influence the success of child protection workers in their roles. Finally, regular performance evaluations will contribute significantly to the reduction of child maltreatment in Kuwait. These strategies should not be implemented independently but together for the targeted outcomes to be realized.

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