STANDARDISED SOCIAL WORK METHODS AND STRATEGIES IN THE ROLES OF CHILD PROTECTION WORKERS: A REPORT FROM KUWAITIS CHILD PROTECTION WORKERS

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Abstract: Protection workers around the world are faced with methods and strategies to protect children at risk. Therefore, this article aims to identify the methods that are applied in the State of Kuwait by workers in the field of child protection in hospitals and community police, as well as the Kuwaiti Development Office. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted on 12 workers. The study utilized the qualitative approach, employing phenomenology as a research design. The data gathering technique involves conducting a comprehensive in-depth interview and performing analysis through the utilization of NVivo software. The results showed that there are different methods used to protect children, the interviews also revealed that the counseling service is provided through the Social Development Office and that there is a demand from hospital workers to provide counseling services. The results also showed that there is no unified safety plan in place. The study suggests working on standardized methods for working with children at risk, through assessment, trauma-informed care, as well as proper planning for children's safety.

Keywords: Standardised social workers, Methods social workers, Child protection, Child protection workers.

1. The introduction

According to a study (Yıldız & Tanrıverdi, 2018), the effects of child abuse in the world are significant. Therefore, child abuse is a global problem that we must pay attention to (Jameel & Shah, 2020). Consequently, society members play a role in child abuse and neglect, especially in low-income families, because of their health and social impacts of significant risks due to environmental conflict (Ma et al., 2022). The term 'child protection agency' refers to the governmental centers that

have the authority and ability to act through practices through various measures to protect children and to affirm the right to protect children through participation and expression of their goals as an active element (Vaga & Kutsar, 2022). Meanwhile, a community-based child protection agency (CBCP) is:

'A group of individuals at community level who work in a coordinated manner to protect children from harm. It can be formal or informal, initiated by local volunteers, or led by externally funded individuals or organizations. These groups operate at the grassroots or district level as opposed to a national or international level. Some examples of community-based child protection mechanisms include child welfare committees, religious groups that support orphans and other vulnerable children, and traditional processes for responding to violations against children (The Alliance Group, 2019, para. 7)

Child protection services in a community setting make frontline efforts to protect maltreated children. Frontline efforts include acts of courage and commitment by social workers, teachers, counselors, and child helpline workers. These workers protect children from neglect and abuse, help them learn, and provide much-needed connection and empathy (UNICEF, 2020). Child Protection Office helps protect children from abuse and maltreatment, ensuring children's health and development (Gale, 2021). According to Sala Roca (2019), child protection offices are critical because they offer children a stable place to live, providing a space for conducive socialization where children learn to interact with one another.

An essential asset of child protection offices is the child protection workers. These social workers provide various services to assist children and families in times of difficulty. These workers frequently work for non-profit organizations or government employees. They assist families in resolving disputes and gaining access to social support services. They might also work for the welfare of children and intervene in cases of abuse or neglect (Indeed Editorial Team, 2021). The actions taken to prevent abusive behavior are typically called 'Protection.' It can also depict actions that encourage positive behavior or action. Research has found that effective interventions against child maltreatment must simultaneously promote protective factors and reduce risk factors to ensure the well-being of children (Child Welfare Group, 2017).

2. Methodology

Research approach

This study follows a qualitative approach, as it aims to recount the tale of specific people's experiences in their own words; consequently, the work is centered on the narrative (Creswell, 2018). The qualitative approach allows the researcher to explain the relationship between social actors and the situation (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). It also allows participants to discuss personal topics, such as their work experiences, in a familiar environment. Additionally, the natural characteristics of qualitative studies allow external validity, especially with studies that cannot be performed in laboratory settings (Morselli & Marcelli, 2021). Additionally, researchers use in-depth analysis of small groups to build theories. The results of qualitative research are descriptive, so it helps to understand the complexities (Queirós et al., 2017).

Research design

This study adopted a phenomenological design. Researchers actively study emotional, affective, and intense human experiences. Through phenomenology, researchers aim to capture data that is not yet available. Thus, the researcher explores life experiences related to an event from the subject's point of view. This approach requires participants to go beyond measurable perspectives and explore the most surprising aspects of human existence. Additionally, knowing the experiences through stories and anecdotes is fundamental because such knowledge allows one to understand the nature of the contextual dynamics and even transform them (Fuster Guillen, 2019). The rich data from a phenomenological research design leaves room for further inquiry and describes the phenomena (Dahlberg & Dahlberg, 2020). They also require scientists to save their biases and earlier suppositions, focusing instead on experiences (Lundh, 2019).

The study's physical location and population

The investigations were conducted in the social service offices of a group of hospitals in Kuwait, as well as in regional police and social development offices. The investigation unit for this study is child protection workers at child protection centers for maltreated children in Kuwait hospitals, development offices, as well as community police.

Sample and sampling technique

Non-probability samples were adopted from those working in the field of child protection who expressed their willingness to participate. The sample size is 12 workers. However, a sample of between six and twenty individuals is sufficient (Vagle, 2018). The sample includes a variety of child protection workers with different work experiences to illustrate the challenges, impacts, and roles of workers in the adoption of abused children in child protection centers.

Data gathering and analysis technique

In-depth interviews were adopted as the study tool. In-depth interviews are a subjective exploration strategy that requires severe individual meetings with study participants to investigate their perspectives of a specific thought, program, or circumstance. In addition, in-depth interviews establish a one-on-one relationship between the interviewer and the participant (Boyce & Neale, 2006) because the exchange may be unstructured or semi-structured (Schnittker et al., 2018). The semi-structured interview offers some scope and flexibility in asking questions of the participant but has the condition of preserving the basic structure of the interview. Consequently, the interviewer may benefit from any idea raised during the interview, but this idea must be relevant and valuable to the research study. The researcher can ask detailed questions about a topic (Monday, 2020). This type of interview is commonly used in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2019). One of the advantages of the semi-structured interview is that it is flexible; Additionally, the possibility exists that answers may be expressed in the form preferred by the participant and the researcher (Bhat, 2022).

Data analysis technique

The collected data was managed in stages; at first, some participants registered with the Voice Memo program, as others did not want to record their voices, so paper writing was relied upon. After

completing the data collection, the next stage was transferred into NVivo. The researcher familiarised herself with the data by previous research and reading, repeatedly perusing the interviews, making notes, and guaranteeing comprehensive acquaintance with the entire information collection. The second step was defining the framework by reading the data accurately and determining the coding plan. The extracted data were uploaded into NVivo and coded, which required the researcher to connect marks to lines of text so that the researcher could gather and ponder comparative or related bits of data (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019). Coding was used to analyze the data by highlighting phrases and sentences in the transcriptions; these markings generated themes. Third, the data was sorted in the framework by each topic discussed. NVivo was used as a tool for data preservation and organization.

Research ethics

A moral survey was required to ensure the members and analysts. Getting moral endorsement illustrates that the analyst has followed the acknowledged moral measures required of an investigative think about.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Strategies for ensuring the safety and well-being of children in Child Protection Centres

Interviews revealed various strategies used to ensure the safety and well-being of children in child protection centers. One of the strategies is to provide a safe, comfortable environment for children to communicate with their families and make them feel comfortable during the awareness stage, which is where the Child Protection Officer makes the child and family feel comfortable and calm. According to CPW1:

> "In talking with the child, try to find a place where they can talk comfortably with the child and his family, a place where their confidentiality can be preserved."
> (CPW1, 16 May 2023, 12 AM/ Social Service Office)

> "The fact that we work in social service offices in hospitals we don't have a private space… we are in one big office and a number of tables adjacent to each other… with psychologists, social workers, and other specialties… It is difficult to receive cases and talk to them in front of everyone… there is no privacy for them… and also can't talk comfortably… so, if I had a case I call the child protection office in the main building to receive them in a private office."
>
> (CPW5, 10 May 2023, 11 AM/ Social service office)

> "We must first provide a place where they can talk comfortably… and the level of safety is high, and there is no one else but us…we also demand in special places to protect the child such as private offices such as child protection centres or even for the child and the mother There are times when a child's risk isn't just for the child… the danger to the child and the mother…we miss some basic things It is possible

that it is not available because we do not have large numbers of children at risk… I don't know."

<div align="center">(CPW4, 10 May 2023, 10 AM/ Social service office)</div>

Another strategy is implementing measures to safeguard children from harm and abusers to ensure children's safety, empowering child welfare, and providing a safe environment to protect the child. It includes having hospital security and the police on standby if something happens. This point is forwarded by CPW10 when he said:

> "If the child needs protection, I call the hospital security so that they can provide protection in the hospital because in all Kuwait hospitals there is a security point... so the police help us if we need more protection."
>
> <div align="right">(CPW10, 3 July 2023, 12 PM/ Social service office)</div>

CPW11 also raises a similar point:
> "If there is an emergency situation that needs to ensure the safety of the child, it will be through the police."
>
> <div align="right">(CPW11, 4 July 2023, 8 AM/ Social service office)</div>

Overall, the results demonstrate strategies for keeping children safe and ensuring they are protected. The hospital has safe spots for staff to use in emergencies. Some participants also noted the need for consistent security plans.

3.2 Counselling services

Interviews revealed a variety of counseling options for children through contact with child protection workers at the Social Development Office or 'Manara'. This is a mental health center. One of these includes meeting with the family and providing guidance and advice from social and psychologists to deal with neglect and poor parenting. You are responsible for multiple case sessions. CPW1 mentioned this strategy, saying:

> "Currently, in the Child Protection Committee, we sit with the family, whether with my colleagues in the social service department in hospitals or as well as the Social Development Centre as a member of the Child Protection Committee working on guidance and counselling as well as the "Manara" for family and childhood problems. We understand the reason for, for example, neglect. Such as poor upbringing and not knowing the methods of upbringing, so we teach them and work to guide the family."
>
> <div align="right">(CPW1, 16 May 2023, 12 AM/ Social Service Office)</div>

> "We do not provide consultations in hospital offices… Cases are sent to the Office of Social Development... I think… But I really have the desire to provide advice… For the child... for the mother... and so on… But there is a role for every person or place… We have to write reports after the attending physician's report… Then I write my own report… Then the reports are sent to the main child protection office, and they are the ones who have to send the file to another party."

<div align="center">5</div>

(CPW11, 4 July 2023, 8 AM/ Social service office)

> "We do not directly provide advice… However, there are agencies that provide advice… It is also affiliated with the Child Protection Office… But there are social and psychological specialists like us… They provide counselling service… I have to write a report and a letter to the family protection… and they act."
>
> (CPW7, 15 May 2023, 9:30 AM/ Social service Office)

Another strategy mentioned is offering psychological counseling and treatment and assessing and advising the child through friendly consultations between workers and those who need advice in various centers such as Al-Manara and the Office of Social Development. CPW9 said:

> "There are family and childhood counselling that I offer as a cooperation from me to the people who come to me."
>
> (CPW9, 3 July 2023, 10 AM/ social service office)

CPW2 offers psychological counseling and treatment to children and describes her process as follows:

> "Therefore, in the first session, you get to know the child, and in the second session, I know who I am and why, and I try to form a relationship with the child through drawing or playing, and I explain to the child that I deal with feelings, and I also prepare the mother what to say to the child when he comes to me."
>
> (CPW2, 16 May 2023, 12 AM/ Social Service Office)

The findings above show that social workers do not conduct counseling but rather through external offices such as Al-Manara or the Social Development Office.

3.3 Family Safety Plan

Family safety planning is another important strategy to help abused children reunite with their caregivers in an emergency or family crisis. Addressing family safety planning strategies is a first-level prevention issue. This strategy is designed to protect the health of families and workers. However, most respondents indicated that they do not have a specific family safety strategy and some rely on individual initiatives and approaches to ensure child safety. For example, CPW7 stated the following:

> "We do not have a specific thing everyone works according to his effort… I wish there were residential places where children in need and those who were harmed, for example, because of an assault by the family or others, could resort to them... In fact, we have, for example,

those affiliated with Social Affairs... but from my point of view they are not suitable for our cases, such as children... It is better to establish a place our fit."

(CPW7, 15 May 2023, 9:30 AM/ Social service Office)

Meanwhile, CPW1 shares these sentiments by saying:
"We don't have a family safety plan we have our own personal approach… But it is possible that the administration has a family safety plan policy... but I don't know about it."

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

CPW6 notes that they need a safety plan to ensure the child's safety. She said:
"It is difficult to guarantee the safety of the child because the child has a family with him, and therefore nothing can be done."

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

"We do not have a plan to reunite the child with his family, because we do not take the child from his parents or caregivers like developed countries, because neither religion nor law allows us to do so."

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

As a result, there is no specific safety plan that is consistently implemented by staff. Participants also want to provide appropriate residential protection places for children at risk.

As a result, the following three key points were identified:

(1) Child guidance centers were found to have measures to ensure the safety and well-being of children, such as creating a safe and comfortable environment for children and their families. There are also measures for the protection and care of children, such as the establishment of safety posts in the hospital.

2) Counseling services are provided through institutions other than child protection officers, such as social development offices and Al Manara.

3) The study found that a clear security plan for reintegration is needed.

Standardized social work methods for working with children at risk

1) Assessment Social workers conduct a comprehensive assessment to understand the child's situation, including the nature and extent of the abuse, the child's immediate needs, and available support systems. Standardized assessment tools can help gather relevant information. An assessment model used by Cambridgeshire County Council in the UK (2020) is that the child should be included in the assessment process according to their age, identity, and understanding and that the assessment

should be conducted along with the social worker. The social worker should work directly with the child to understand their needs. The assessment should focus on the child.

2) Trauma-informed care: Social workers practicing trauma-informed care are aware of the impact of trauma on a child's emotional and psychological health. They design effective interventions in a safe and stimulating environment. According to the Northern Australian Government Department of Child Protection (2022), the practice approach of child-based trauma-informed care is based on safety, family support to assist caregivers by addressing concerns about the harmed child, support for child and family reunification, and the use of adoption processes. It is based on appropriateness.

3) Putting the child's best interests first: social workers treat children appropriately according to their stage of development, actively listen to their concerns, and involve them in choices about their care and safety. This approach focuses on community-based child protection mechanisms and procedures that prioritize the best interests of the child (UNHCR, 2021).

(4) Safety planning: The development of safety plans is necessary to protect abused children from future harm. Social workers work with families and other key partners to develop a safety plan customized to the child's risks and needs. In its plan to keep children safe, the Australian Government established the Department of Social Services (2020) to help parents listen and find solutions to their children's problems, as well as to help organizations understand and address existing problems. They strive to focus on and support the child in their care.

Standardized Social Work Strategies working with at-risk children

Social workers use standardized strategies, competencies and approaches to help abused children in care in child protection institutions. The main strategies often used by social workers are

1) Crisis intervention: Children who have been abused can be at serious risk or severely distressed. Social workers therefore use a crisis intervention approach through a training approach for child protection workers led by a child care trainer with crisis intervention experience (Holden, 2022) to protect and emotionally support children. This is a method of dealing with crises by accurately identifying the purpose that created the crisis, determining why the crisis was created, developing a scientific intervention plan, and tailoring the intervention to the crisis for each case (Asiri, 2020).

(2) Case management: Good case management involves organizing services, understanding development, and representing the needs of the child. Social workers ensure that everyone has access to and utilizes all available resources. According to the Global Social Work Workforce Alliance (2016), case management of children at risk is described in seven interrelated steps. Previous steps can be returned if the level of severity requires it. The steps start with the identification of the case, followed, if necessary, by case registration. Then, once the assessment of the child on an individual basis has been completed, the appropriate support for the child is assessed. The next step is to implement the action plan through direct support to the child. The last step is to follow up on the case and make sure that the goals of the plan are achieved. Finally, if the objectives are met, the case is closed.

Established strategies for ensuring the children's safety and well-being

The interviews also provided insight into the approaches, skills, and therapeutic services needed to support children at risk of admission to child protection institutions. The interviews revealed that child protection workers adopt a range of approaches to ensure the welfare and safety of abused children admitted to child protection institutions. These strategies include:

1) Providing a safe and private environment where children can speak freely; according to Scourfield (2018), child protection can be facilitated when children feel respected.

2) Teaching children at risk and their families how to identify and avoid potential perpetrators; Bhabha (2018) suggests different ways of identifying and avoiding such perpetrators.

(3) Developing measures to protect children from violence; according to Mathews Collin-Vézina (2019), these measures include conducting thorough research before legislation is adopted and involving all stakeholders in the process of creating and formulating legislation.

According to Scourfield (2019), Bhabha (2018), and Mathews & Collin-Vézina (2019), the need to provide a safe and supportive environment for abused children is emphasized. Indeed, various studies emphasize the importance of providing a safe and private environment for abused children to share their experiences of neglect and abuse; NASW (2021) states that privacy and confidentiality are essential when interacting with abused children. Furthermore, a variety of interventions, including safety measures, have been shown to reduce the likelihood of recurrence of abuse and harm and improve the well-being and safety of abused children.

Counselling services specifically for maltreated children

Another theme that emerged from the interviews is the counseling services provided to abused children. Interviews revealed that psychologists working in child welfare centers frequently provide counseling services to abused children. These services are designed to meet the psychological and emotional needs of abused and neglected children. While some respondents indicated that providing counseling and guidance is part of their work, a significant number of respondents indicated that these services are primarily provided by specialized agencies and external organizations. Abu Rumman et al. (2018) noted that there are centers where the role of social workers and counseling is not activated, as this risks leading to an aversion to this expertise. Therefore, legislation and policies regarding the role of social workers should be established. Previous research has often highlighted the value of psychosocial interventions for abused and neglected children; Hussain (2018) highlights the effectiveness of evidence-based therapy in minimizing trauma-related symptoms in abused children. Scourfield (2019) emphasizes the need for understanding the level of the child before interventions.

Safety plans for maltreated children

Finally, safety planning is needed to ensure the continued well-being and safety of abused children when they are reunified with their caregivers and placed in care. Safety planning is undoubtedly an essential component of child protection programs, particularly in the reunification of abused children with their parents or caregivers. Preventive measures need to be identified, potential risks assessed and procedures put in place to ensure the safety and well-being of children upon reunification with their families (Olszowy et al., 2020)

A well-implemented safety plan reduces the likelihood of maltreatment recurring and promotes positive outcomes for children and families. Consequently, the safety and well-being of maltreated children is jeopardized by the lack of a family safety plan. The lack of adequate safety planning can have several harmful effects. First, children may be exposed to repeated neglect and abuse. Research shows that the lack of a safety plan increases the likelihood of repeated abuse and re-entry into the child protection system (Kress et al., 2012) The ability of child protection workers to adequately analyze and support families is hampered by the lack of a planned approach and possibly the inability to address persistent threats and barriers. Potential.

Overall, the themes highlighted in these interviews are in line with previous research highlighting the importance of creating a safe environment, providing counseling services, developing skills necessary to deal with abused and neglected children, and developing safety plans for reunification of abused children with their caregivers. This is consistent with the report. However, the report identifies challenges related to budget constraints and the need to strengthen linkages between mental health services and child welfare institutions. New research should fill these gaps to improve the effectiveness of child protection interventions and outcomes for abused children.

4. Conclusions (Bold, 12 pt)

The article sheds light on the basic perspective of institutionalized social work strategies and methodologies utilized by child security specialists in Kuwait when assisting abused children in accessing child security centers. Guiding services have emerged as a vital component within the care of abused children. However, it was observed that such services were often provided through entities other than child security specialists, such as the Social Development Office or Al-Manara. To enhance the support system for abused children, it is critical to establish strong collaborations between child security specialists and the service providers, ensuring a seamless continuum of care. Furthermore, a clear family reunification plan is essential to address the specific needs of each case. The study findings indicate that there is often no clear reunification plan, emphasizing the need to develop institutionalized strategies for reuniting children with their families when it is safe and appropriate. Standardized procedures and approaches were emphasized as fundamental tools for child protection specialists to ensure the safety, happiness, and healing of abused children under their care. Using evidence-based practices and established protocols can provide a consistent framework for addressing the diverse and complex needs of the children.

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