



Towards better child protection programs: A qualitative evaluation of youth disseminating life skills program

Abstract

Objective: Evidence shows that peer-led programs are effective in health promotion and illness management. However, no published data are available on any peer-led program targeting child protection. Arguably, child protection can be viewed as a social construction. Therefore, the present study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of a 12-week training program, Youth Disseminating Life Skills Program whose aims were to help university students acquire knowledge on, and to increase sensitivity towards child abuse and neglect by taking the social construction approach as a basis and therefore, by adopting a qualitative methodology.

Method: The sample consisted of 13 university students who took part in the Youth Disseminating Life Skills Program (10 female, 3 male: mean age 22 years; age range:20-31). Focus group meetings were undertaken during which the general interview guide approach was used. Anonymised interview transcripts were analysed following established conventions.

Results: The analysis showed that participants evaluated the Program in terms of feelings about and benefits of the Program, and ways to improve the Program. Feelings about the Program included both positive (e.g. feeling hopeful and healed) and negative feelings (e.g. feeling traumatised and nervous). Participants recounted a variety of benefits of the Program (e.g. helping participants to realise that child abuse is a humanity problem, correcting some myths about child abuse and helping participants develop themselves both professionally and personally). Participants proposed a number of ways whereby the Program could be improved. These were not only related to the content and format of the Program but also the population that the Program can target.

Conclusion: In general, qualitative analysis revealed important information whereby child protection programs can be improved. Some findings could be interpreted in terms of existing literature and/or theory. Other findings extended the literature and could be viewed as targets for future child protection programs.

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