



International Journal of Advance Studies and Growth Evaluation

A Study on the Factors that Influence the Implementation of Child Safeguarding Programmes in Protestants Churches in Lusaka, Zambia

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Article Info.

E-ISSN: **2583-6528**

Impact Factor (SJIF): **5.231**

Available online:

www.alladvancejournal.com

Received: 15/Feb/2023

Accepted: 20/March/2023

Abstract

Across the world children at risk of exploitation and abuse and Zambia is not an exception. There are increasing cases where by children has been abused by the very people who are supposed to protect them. This situation has necessitated the need for organizations that works with children to develop and implement child safeguarding interventions that are aimed to protect the child from abuse. The main objective of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of child safeguarding mechanisms amongst protestant churches in Lusaka.

The research was based on a mixed research design and the respondents were selected through the use of probability sampling (simple random sampling) The Sample size for the study was 150 respondents from Protestant churches in Lusaka. Data was collected by the use of a semi structured questionnaire and analysed by the use of the Statistical Package for Social sciences. The results of the study indicate average awareness and knowledge levels on child safeguarding. The results shows that majority of the respondents are not aware of the existence of child safeguarding policies within their organizations. However, it was noted that organizations are implementing a number of child protection interventions such as sensitization and awareness campaigns, training of staff members, child support programs, policy formulation and child protection programs amongst others. These interventions are being effective and have sustainability mechanisms. However, the researcher recommends the scaling up of these interventions for maximum impacts and increased staff capacity building on child safeguarding mechanisms.

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Keywords: Child safeguarding, abuse, protestant churches

1. Introduction

According to UNCRC (2015:74) all children have voices and have the right to be heard, whether this is regarding activities they are doing or what is happening in their lives both in school and at home, they should be allowed to express their feelings and opinions. It also states that children have the right to be protected from all forms of physical, mental and sexual abuse as well as neglect -Child Safeguarding is about ensuring safe practice and appropriate responses by workers and volunteers to concerns about the safety or welfare of children, including online concerns, should these arise. Child safeguarding is about protecting the child from harm, promoting their welfare and in doing so creating an environment which enables children and young people to grow, develop and achieve their full potential (Brian, 2000) [1].

Child safeguarding refers to the broad range of activity organizations must take to promote the safety and wellbeing of children, and prevent harm. Effective child safeguarding must be embedded in the interactions that children have with the organization or group. Organizations have developed and adopted safeguarding policies and procedure and these must specify requirements for how organizational representatives respond to risk and harm, including abuse or harm that has been experienced by a child or young person outside the organization (Rueben, 2019) [10]. Child safeguarding is for everyone and every organization responsibility to protect children from any harm and promote their welfare (Henry, 2010) [6]. In many cases according to Emmanuel (2004) [4], children and young children are more dominant to abuse than the older children, and most of the children abuser could be relatives, close friends or parents. Children who have been

abused are likely to be affected in their adulthood, some having depression, antisocial behaviours, and unable to sustain relationship according to (Harrison, 2006) ^[5]. In Zambia, there are statutory requirements that promote the safeguarding and welfare of all children when they are healthy, safe and secure and when their individual needs are being met. At national level, a child policy is available and at organizational levels, children codes of conducts have been developed with aim of protecting children. A positive relationship with adults caring for the children is vital (Harrison, 2006) ^[5]. Henry (2010:75) ^[6] holds the view that settings should be welcoming, safe, secure and stimulating. Further, providers like the victim support, NGOs etc. are required by the current systems that they must take all necessary steps to keep children safe and well from safeguarding, suitability of adults in contact with the children, promoting good health, managing behavior and maintaining policies and procedures. Therefore this study is aims at investigating the factors that affect the implementation of child safeguarding programs.

At national level as noted by Rueben (2019:54) ^[10], a child policy is available and at organizational levels, children codes of conducts have been developed with aim of protecting children. A positive relationship with adults caring for the children is vital. Settings should be welcoming, safe, secure and stimulating. Further, providers like the victim support, NGOs etc. are required by the current systems that they must take all necessary steps to keep children safe and well from safeguarding, suitability of adults in contact with the children, promoting good health, managing behavior and maintaining policies and procedures (Henry, 2010) ^[6]. Brian (2000:23) ^[11] states that notwithstanding the availability of the required legal and policy frameworks at the national and organizational level, there have been increased cases of the violation of children's rights including in the church. This shows the importance of instituting research on the factors affecting the implementation of child safeguarding programs in Protestant Churches. In addition this study is guided by the theories of Child Protection, Implementation Theory and the Complex Theory.

2. Statement of the Problem

Children experience violence in a wide variety of settings, ranging from home and school, to institutions and the judicial system. Being exposed to different types of violence, be it physical, emotional, sexual or neglect, is painful and can be traumatic. More importantly, such experiences in childhood have a strong association with future violence victimization and perpetration, lower education attainment, health and social problems across a person's life. Conversely, it is very important for all the professionals working with children to be able to recognize the signs of abuse, what is abuse and how the effects of abuse can affect children in their lives.

However, according to Brian (2000:53) ^[11] child safeguarding lacks even amongst the unexpected institutions like the law enforcing agencies and the churches. It is for this reason that it is important to establish the factors that influence effective implementation of child safeguarding programmes protestant churches. It is evident that Child safeguarding and protection is becoming an important global issue as children are increasingly exposed to violence, exploitation and all forms of violation of rights. Permitting to the United Nations (1989), the African Charter on The Rights and Welfare of The Child, and the Zambia Child act places much emphasis on ensuring that children are well protected and safeguarded. All

organisations that work with or come into contact with children should have safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure that every child, regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation, has a right to equal protection from harm.

Despite the growing need for effective child safeguarding systems at institutions and community levels, compounded by the rising high levels of cases of abuses and the role of the church in addressing church safeguarding issues, it has been observed that very minimal research has been conducted to assess the effectiveness of the child safeguarding programs being implemented by protestants churches hence the need for the study. Therefore this study is aims at investigating the factors that affect the implementation of child safeguarding programs in faith based Organisations with a focus on protestants churches

3. Research Objectives

3.1 Main Objective

To examine the factors that influence the implementation of child safeguarding programmes in Protestants churches in Lusaka

3.2 Specific Objectives

- i) To investigate the awareness levels on child safeguarding interventions in protestants churches in Lusaka
- ii) To identify the key success factors for the effective implementation of child safeguarding programmes in protestants churches in Lusaka
- iii) To assess the influence of project cycle management skills on implementation of child protection programmes, in protestants churches in Lusaka
- iv) To examine the effectiveness and sustainability of child safeguarding interventions in protestants churches in Lusaka

3.3 Research Questions

- i) What are the awareness levels on child safeguarding interventions in protestants churches in Lusaka
- ii) What are the key success factors for the effective implementation of child safeguarding programmes in protestants churches in Lusaka
- iii) What is the influence of project cycle management skills on implementation of child protection programmes in protestants churches in Lusaka
- iv) What is the effectiveness and sustainability levels of child safeguarding interventions in protestants churches in Lusaka

4. Significance of the Study

This study aims to add new findings and knowledge to the literature on the factors affecting the implementation of child safeguarding programs in faith based organization in Zambia further, this study aims also to generate valuable information which will be of great importance to all stakeholders such as the government, nongovernmental organizations and the local people themselves who would like to help address the problems of Child safeguarding. The study findings will also bring to right the successes, lessons and challenges in the child safeguarding mechanisms in Protestant Churches in Zambia

5. Scope of the Study

The study will be limited only to the members of the Protestants churches in Lusaka and the reasons for taking this

population is because the area under consideration will give a good platform to show the factors affecting the implementation of child safeguarding programs in faith based organization in Zambia

6. Research Methodology

A research philosophy is a belief about the way in which data about a phenomenon should be gathered, analyzed and used. The research was based on pragmatism philosophy. Pragmatism highlights the importance of using the best tools possible to investigate phenomena. The study used a mixed research approach and which include being based on a mixed research design. The study involved a mixed research design. This design is appropriate for the study as it attempts to combine the best of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to integrate perspectives and create a rich picture. In terms of the specific type of mixed research design, the researcher used the concurrent triangulation design.

The Universe for this study was three Protestant's churches in Zambia namely; The United Church of Zambia (UCZ) Reformed Church in Zambia (RCZ) and Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) and a total of 150 respondents were randomly selected through simple random sampling. In addition key informants were purposively selected Data was collected through a variety of semi structured interviews and key informants interviews. A semi structured questionnaire and an interview checklist was used as a tool for data collection. The Data collected was analyse using the Statistical; Package for Social Sciences SPSS

Discussion of Key Findings

The Awareness Levels on Child Safeguarding Interventions

The concept of Child safeguarding is a relatively new concept as regards the promotion and the protection of child rights. In this context various organizations are implementing a wide range of measures and interventions that are aimed at raising the awareness of the staff members and community members on the concept of Child safeguarding. The results of the study show that 60% of the respondents were aware of the concept of child safeguarding which is a significant percentage as this concept is still a new concept. It is evident that will increased efforts the awareness levels can be increased. In terms of the assessment of the awareness levels the results of the study revealed that majority of the respondents have medium knowledge on child safeguarding Awareness does not automatically translate to increased knowledge levels as awareness is the first step of the knowledge acquisition process. In this context despite the fact that 60% of the respondents reported being aware of the concept of child safeguarding, the results shows that only 22% reported having limited knowledge levels and this means 78% of the respondents reported having medium to high knowledge levels on Child safeguarding. This implies that the various interventions being implemented by the Protestants churches to increase the knowledge levels on child safeguarding are being effective and bringing positive results However despite the high awareness and knowledge levels on the concept of child safeguarding, the results indicates that majority of the respondents at 69% are not aware of any child safeguarding interventions that are being implemented. This shows that there is still a gap in the implementation of child safeguarding projects. This is also supported by the fact that only 33% of the respondents reported that they are aware of their organization having a safeguarding policy and 67% reported

that they are not aware implying that majority of the respondents are not well conversant with child safeguarding policies of their organizations. In addition only 50% of the respondents reported that the Child safeguarding interventions being implemented by the organization are very successful while the other fifty percent felt that they are successful. This greatly impacts the implementation of child safe guarding interventions as the staff cannot implement the child safeguarding interventions without knowledge on the policy direction of their organization regarding the issue.

The Key Success Factors for the Effective Implementation of Child Safeguarding Programmes in Protestants Churches in Lusaka

The research results identified capacity building, partnerships, financial resources, Human resources, and regulatory frameworks, availability of safeguarding policies and social factors as the key success factors that impacts the successful implementation of safeguarding interventions in protestant churches. Therefore it is very important to ensure that the protestants churches ensures that all these success factors are in place to ensure the effective implementation of safeguarding interventions that will lead to maximum impacts. The respondents reported that the main challenges faced that are limiting the effectiveness of child safeguarding projects are lack of resources, cultural factors and limited knowledge on child safeguarding.

The Influence of Project Cycle Management Skills on Implementation of Child Protection Programmes, in Protestants Churches in Lusaka

The effective implementation of any project greatly relies on the application of the relevant project management skills by the project team. The results of the study shows that majority of the respondents at 91% reported that they have medium to high levels of project management skills which shows that they are competent that they have the required project management skills for the effective implementation of child safeguarding projects. At the overall organization level 88% reported having medium to very high project management skills. Majority of the respondents also agreed that project management skills of staff influence the implementations of child safeguarding interventions being implemented in Protestants churches. The required project management skills that were reported by the respondents included financial management skills, partnership management skills, leadership skills, organizational skills, coordination skills, facilitation skills and networking skills.

The Effectiveness and Sustainability of Child Safeguarding Interventions in Protestants Churches in Lusaka

Sustainability is a fundamental aspect for the implementation of any projects. Project donors and implementers place much emphasis on the sustainability of the project interventions after the phase out of the project. This is the same scenario with child safeguarding projects, it is important for the interventions that are being carried under these projects to still continue after the end of the project. Majority of the respondents at 70% of reported that the interventions are effective and sustainable as compared to 30% of the respondents who reported that the interventions are not. This shows that the Protestants Churches have put in place adequate safeguards to ensure the sustainability of the project interventions

7. Recommendations

In View of the Research Findings the Researcher Makes the following Recommendations

- i) There is greater need for protestants churches to put in place child safeguarding policies and ensure that all staff are well aware of the policy
- ii) The Protestants Churches should put in place mechanisms that will increase the awareness and knowledge levels of ail staff members on child safeguarding
- iii) There is need for increased implementations of chain safeguarding interventions for maximum impacts

8. Areas for Further Research

Based on the Research Findings the Researcher Makes the following Recommendations as Areas for Further Study

- i) There is need to conduct a study focusing on the challenges that staff are facing in the implementation of child safeguarding interventions
- ii) There is also a need to conduct a study to examine the attitudes and perceptions of community members on child safeguarding interventions

Conclusion

Child safeguarding has become a central and important interventions for all organizations that works with children. Evidence have shows increased cases of violations of children's rights which are having negative impacts on the social and emotional welding and development of the child. This study was conducted to assess the effectiveness of child safeguarding projects in Protestants churches. The results of the study have shown positive developments in relation to the increase in the level of awareness and knowledge on child safeguarding. It has also been found out that the current interventions are being effective. However it is evident that there are challenges as majority does not have an idea about the availability of the required policies for child safeguarding at the organization level.

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