A STUDY ON CHILDREN EXPOSURE TO DANGERS AND SOCIAL WORK POLICY

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Abstract

Children are the priority category of policies relating to social services. They are the major segment of the population who need protection because they are always vulnerable to the increasingly diverse and different dangerous situations. While the children were facing risks such as violence, homelessness, poverty, the war in the past, these risks have varied greatly in the present. These days, we notice the increasing ignorance and exploitation toward children facing various forms of physical, emotional and sexual assaults. Also, we notice the increasing proportion of children facing the risk because of problems that affect the family, such as alcohol and drug abuse, domestic violence, poverty, and unemployment. This paper will be addressing the risks confronting children especially these days using an approach via a literature review. Child protection policies related to the risks exposed by children must be developed by countries. Child protection system and the dangers that face children these days are topics that have been addressed in this paper. At the same time, this paper also includes the intervention of social work that can be implemented in order to protect children from the dangers. In this paper, there is a discussion about the intervention of social work to risks faced by children within the child protection policies. At the same time, it will present suggestions for prevention and protection policies that can be applied in order to protect children from risk.

Keywords: Children at Risk, Substance Abuse, Social Protection, Social Work.

1. Introduction

The environment of a child is considered as a primary source for his growth and development, at the same time, it can obstruct them and turns into a risk environment that adversely affects the children's growth, development and participation. There are risks stem from the family, school and community where the child lives. Additionally, there are risk factors associated with the child himself that could cause the risks faced. It is worth mentioning that the social policies of countries can eliminate these factors or lead to alleviate its severity. As well, the effectiveness of the role of many professions, such as social working with children, developing and applying intervention plans and strengthening social policies for the protection and care of children, is essential to be achieved. Classifications of environments and risks faced by the child through them can be made as follows:

It is implicitly understood that the family is the safety zone for a child as it is where he/she spends most of his time and affecting his/her growth and development in its various aspects. But the problems that arise within the family, such as alcohol and drug abuse, domestic violence, the problems of communication within the family, poverty, unemployment, disruption of family caused by death or divorce, family composition such as extended families and the large number of children, demographic characteristics of the family, the low educational level of the parents are risk factors which lead to neglecting and abusing one´s child which then results in psychological, physical, social and behavioral problems.

In the study conducted by Wagner (1997) "evaluates the empirical support for the claims that various aspects of family dysfunction are risk factors for completed suicide or suicidal symptoms in childhood or adolescence. There is consistent evidence that a history of physical or sexual abuse is a risk factor and some evidence for other risk factors, including poor family or parent-child communication, loss of caregiver to separation or death, and psychopathology in first-degree relatives**.**" The findings of UNICEF study (2009) show that "children who are exposed to violence in the home may suffer a range of severe and lasting effects and they are more likely to be victims of child abuse. Those who are not direct victims have some of the same behavioural and psychological problems as children who are themselves physically abused. Children who are exposed to violence in the home may have difficulty learning and limited social skills, exhibit violent, risky or delinquent behaviour, or suffer from depression or severe anxiety".

There is also an obvious effect that is family poverty on children. They suffer the worst consequences of poverty that affects their intellectual ability and achievement and school completion (Jeanne Brooks-Gunn

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and Greg J. Duncan, 1997), as well causes health problems resulting from malnutrition. All of this, along with the existing values and traditions of many families such as early marriage of children and their exclusion from school and not sending girls to school, explains the effects of environment on these innocent creatures.

School is the second-place where the child spends a large part of his time. School turns out to be the risk environment as a result of many factors, the most prominent ones are sites of school the area it is based on, the presence of gangs in the school, substance abuse, children exposure to sexual abuse, contact and communication problems between teachers and students, lack of the ineffectiveness communication between the school and parents of students, ineffectiveness or limitations the role of social workers and psychologists in working to solve the problems of students and involve them in social and school activities, limited activities within the school and social exclusion for some students, the lack of security or insufficient, the lack of recreational elements such as school garden and playground, long distance from the school to health centers.

All these issues together make the school environment a threat to the growth of children and require intervention at the individual, group and local community level, as well as to the social policies that support and process to improve the educational environment reducing or eliminating the risks increasing the chances of equality and justice.

2. Society and the Political Situation Prevailing:

Historically, child abuse and children´s issues have been one of the major area problems of societies. At first, societies faced with the challenges such as employment of children in ships and metals, abandonment of children, bought and sold them like commodities, using children in wars, nowadays kids are facing numerous problems that negatively impact on physical, mental, psychosocial and educational development of the children and impact negatively on all aspects of their life (Türkeri, 2014).

In present day wars and conflicts considered as the main problems faced by human communities, which constitute the biggest risk to the child's development. At the same time they pose a serious threat to the future generations, for it causes psychological, social and physical inconvenient to millions of children in many countries. It is also notable that the countries and communities that face the risk of wars and conflicts lacking at the same time to the child protection system where there were no therapeutic, rehabilitative and preventive services.
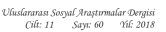
Poor communities also pose a risk environment for children and their proper growth because of lacks of the child protection system, a shortage or lack of health and education services, lack of entertainment possibilities and the declining role of law in child protection. It is observed the spread of disease and dropping out of school, child labor, drug abuse and trafficking, children victims of domestic violence and increasing phenomenon of street children and the concomitant neglect and exploitation of children.

The spread of the poverty phenomenon and unemployment and the instability of the political situation left a lot of problems on communities. Thus on children as the greatest victim in these communities where it has become a danger threatening environment on children´s grow and future generations.

3. Policies and Systems to Protect Children from the Risks

Countries take many social policies, systems and enact laws to protect children and provide health, education and welfare services. Social work is one of the most important professions that contribute significantly to the social policies to protect children as important hub of social work hubs. The importance of social policies in protecting children from the risks lies in the comprehensiveness of the needs of all children, preventive, curative and rehabilitation interventions.

"Child Protection System" has always been a top priority and importance of the service provided in the social services system of countries. That is because child protection services are of great importance to protect children from risks conditions. If these services system take part widely in a country it can be said that children in that country are protecting them very well from the risky living conditions. Protected children from all kinds of risky situations in the family, school and social environment, living and upbringing them in a healthy environment, in other words all policies, laws and services are developed considering the welfare and best interests of the child, are located in the area of child welfare. The child welfare area being structured to cover all kinds of children needs such as child protection, care, housing, feeding, education, health, etc. are of great importance to make the child consistent with the social life and grow as physically and psychologically healthy and happy individually (Duman, 2014). Today's situation can be mentioned as a general consensus at the international level in the resolution of the children and

children's issues. As mentioned in document of the UN child rights and the documents that followed, the state with its institutions and its laws are responsible for the protection of children and solving problems. Based on the UN Convention on the child rights in which states considered that the protection of children from all kinds of neglect and abuse is the right of a child, it can be said that child protection responsibilities are given directly to the government. Surely the government can fulfill this responsibility by providing the necessary coordination and active cooperation with the institutions and the public. Various risk factors confronting children in the developmental stages and adversely affecting physical, psychosocial and educational development of children which could affect its development in future cannot be avoided. At the same time these effects should be considered as missed development opportunities in the family and society. For example, the psycho-social and educational problems created by the lack of sufficient protection to children against the risks they face in the learning environment, affects the whole life of these children (Türkeri, 2014).

Accordingly, the social policies that countries should be developed to protect children from the risks should include the family, school and the community. As well as focus on the support and protection of the child within the family and the community programs by providing infrastructure and centers that contribute to child development and averting the risks surrounding in addition to development of plans for the protection of children in times of crisis.

4. Social Work Intervention to Protect Children in Multi-Risk Environments

The social work intervention to protect children in risk environments be in the form of preventive, therapeutic and rehabilitation intervention, aims to protect the child from all kinds of neglect and abuse. This intervention is done through working with the child and all parties related to the problem on many levels within all the places where the child exists. This intervention depends on the information and skills of social worker in management the case and work with the children in danger and disaster environments.

In the protection of children it is a must for all environments to be aware that risk factors can appear. The protection of children can be gathered in the main title such as: Protection within family, Protection within society, Protection in educational environments, Protection within working environment, Protection within institutions environment, Protection during judicial and law enforcement process, Protection in the execution process. Education environment has a particular importance in terms of being an environment where children are living effective processes in education and personality development, in which they socialize, being an environment where the child spends most of his time after the environmental family (Türkeri, 2014).

Therefore, the intervention of school social work carries too much importance in the detection of the risks surrounding the child in the school environment and its connections to family and community. School social worker through case management works with children at the individual, group and community level. In this regard, the problem of drug abuse among school students and how social worker deal with such serious problem on school, family and community-level will be addressed.

5. Intervention at School Level

The intervention of social work at the school level has the preventive, therapeutic and rehabilitation dimensions. This intervention aims to protect children from the risks surrounding the school and inside it, as well consequently remove barriers to school success or that might lead to the exploitation and neglecting of children making them victims, as well as exclusion from school.

School social work is a specialized area of practice within the broad field of the social work profession. School social workers bring unique knowledge and skills to the school system and the student services team. School Social Workers are trained mental health professionals who can assist with mental health concerns, behavioral concerns, positive behavioral support, academic and classroom support, consultation with teachers, parents and administrators as well as provide individual and group counseling/therapy. School social workers are instrumental in furthering the mission of the schools which is to provide a setting for teaching, learning, and for the attainment of competence and confidence. School social workers are hired by school districts to enhance the district's ability to meet its academic mission, especially where home, school and community collaboration is the key to achieving student success (School Social Work Association of America, 2012). The focus of school social work has followed the historic concerns of education . The problems confronted by the education institution over its long history have ranged from accommodating immigrant populations, discrimination against particular groups, truancy, and the tragic waste of human potential in emotional disturbances of childhood to problems regarding school disruption and safety, homelessness, drugs, and AIDS. The first social workers in schools were hired in

recognition of the fact that conditions, whether in the family, the neighborhood, or the school itself, that prevent children from learning and the school from carrying out its mandate were the school's concern (Constable, 2007).

In school closely monitored adverse conditions of family and environment such as domestic violence experienced by children, neglect and abuse, substance abuse, peer violence participation in gang group, poverty and taking the necessary precautions is of great importance. In order to protect a child individual, family and school problems experienced by children who are in such adverse environmental conditions should be monitored. Therefore, the social work has a great importance in the detection of these children in the school environment and follows them and appropriate intervention to solve the problems they face in order to overcome the most adverse situations that might occur in the future. School administrators, teachers, school psychologists, school nurses, school counseling and guidance specialists and social workers are conduct efforts in collaboration in the school environment in order to get the highest level of educational opportunities for children and to show a healthy development. "School social work" is defined as social work practices carried out for children and families in schools, in order to support a child to take benefit from the educational opportunities at the highest level, to show a healthy psychosocial development and create opportunities to children to use their capacity in the best possible level. School social work acting pre-disclosure of the risks hinders the growth of the children in a safe environment and remove it in order to protect the child before he or she suffers a risk position (Duman, 2014).

For example highlights the role of social worker in the school to deal with the problem of drug abuse among school students by doing an intervention within the team on the levels of preventive and protective, educational and supportive, therapeutic and rehabilitative. He comes to work at the individual level and work with the group interested in the special problems for students and perform the duty of cooperation and coordination between parents, teachers and other professions staff. Success in this work and steps associated with social worker information, functions and roles as well as the functions and roles of family and students themselves.

The planning of educational actions oriented to family and young people which will be held in the school in form includes cooperation between parents, teachers and other personnel and coverage of the school staff and educational staff in the school, it is important for achieving success. When work is to be done the priority should be given to investigation of reason that trend the student to drug abuse. The intervention should be directed to the deficiencies in individual, social and educational development of the students at school. In this direction should doing awareness-raising activities to the school staff, making supportive and educational activities for parents, giving education to volunteers with guidelines and educational qualities, organizing health screenings throughout the school and organizing peer assistance programs (Duman, 2001). All of these actions are done by the social worker within the concept of the case management team.

6. Working With Family and Community to Protect Children

Working to the protection of children in risk society or protect them from the dangers surrounding requires a comprehensive intervention at all levels in cooperation with all parties that have a relationship with the child. Working with family and society requires a comprehensive program of awareness, preventive, therapeutic and rehabilitation oriented to protect children from the surrounding risks and aimed to detect it in preparation for treatment.

When we speak about child protection, it should be addressed that child protection in all environments as a whole such as especially the family environment, education, work, street, residential care, etc. principally means protecting them against possible risk factors they may face every moment in this environment. It should be the basic principle (Türkeri, 2014).

Working with family and society requires the provision of counseling and guidance centers, health centers, youth centers and clubs and psychosocial support services. In addition, working as a team for the development of preventive and curative services and encourage their use. To reach success in the protection and prevention for children at the family and the community levels is linked to the social policy of the state and budget allocated to programs of protection, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation as well as the number of specialists in this area and their quality. Here we can show the role of the social worker to work with the community to protect children from drug abuse.

The results of one study on the impact of alcohol and drug addiction on mothers in children suggest that children in households surveyed face high physical, academic and social risks and need special long-term services. (Conners, et al., 2004) The social worker recognizes the negative impact of the use of alcohol or

drugs by a family member on children and assesses their needs. Thus providing information and support to children and linking them to the most appropriate services and focus on protecting children from the harm and neglect that may be inflicted on drug users within the family (Galvani, 2015).

In the prevention of drug addiction, a social worker can take an active role in different institutions in society as of volatile substance abuse prevention, educational and therapeutic programs and services. These include mental health centers, youth centers, street children centers, schools, institutions, family counseling centers. To achieve the objectives of the prevention of substance abuse and contribute to intervene in work one must focuses on the necessity of having a wide-oriented perspective, having legal basis, providing support in work life and giving a place to programs that address the community in general (Duman, 2001). This intervention can be applied to other problems that were and are faced by children in the community and the family in order to reach a real application of the concept and the system of protection and prevention

7. Conclusion and Suggestions

As with the given review, it can be easily said that the child protection system is one of the most important systems that social policies in the states should and need to contain. That is because the environments or places where the child lives most of his or her time, such as the family, school, community often constitute a source of risk. Child exposure to risk in these environments requires serious interventions at the level of laws and regulations and social policies adopted by the government in the protection of children and also it requires social workers involved to have sufficient skills working with children in all institutions.

Following this study and referring to similar scientific studies on the topic of child protection risk environment, the following suggestions to protect children from the surrounding risks can be cited as follows:

Countries should develop child protection system by strengthening the laws and social policies and to provide adequate budget and the quality and quantity of services and its providers in this area.

Working to strengthen and intensify programs directed to the family and family relations as well as working to detection of the problems of children and the risks they face within the family and resolve it.

Strengthen school work and school social work in the detection of cases of child abuse and neglect and the problems and the risks they face and work to resolve it through intervention at the school level,

Intensification of training courses and supportive of the work of the school social workers and cooperation in this field between schools, universities and social work departments.

Intensification of education and awareness programs through the media in order to early detection of problems and risks faced by children and work to resolve it.

Strengthening the role of universities in scientific researches relating to the protection of the child as well as the placed the curriculum that serve this purpose.

Induces the application of international conventions in order to protect the child in times of war and armed conflict and the noninvolvement of children in acts of violence or targeted by parties of the conflict.

Protection of refugee children's rights and to provide psychosocial support to them and protect them from all kinds of violence, exploitation and neglect.

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