

School Administrators' Perspectives on Child Neglect and Abuse and Intervention Methods

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Abstract : It is possible to define the abuse and neglect of the child as a social problem. Such adverse experiences of the child are witnessed by wider social circles as well as his or her immediate environment. The most effective institution among these social circles is the school. The awareness of teachers, administrators, and even auxiliary personnel on this issue can act as a protective and preventive buffer because teachers have the opportunity to be with children every day and constantly observe them; therefore, they can notice the physical and mental changes in students. Furthermore, school administrators have an undeniable role in recognizing and responding to the risk of neglect and abuse. This study aims to evaluate the awareness of school administrators on the risk factors, clues, and ways of intervention towards abuse and neglect through the scenarios given to them. Data were collected from 37 primary, secondary, and high school administrators working in various provinces of Turkey through descriptive and scenario-based questions to determine their general knowledge of the concepts of neglect and abuse and their general tendencies towards practice. Descriptive questions were evaluated with content analysis, and scenario-based questions were evaluated with numerical qualitative data analysis. Concepts and themes were tried to be reached by content analysis from the descriptive data collected. When the results are evaluated in general, it is striking that the concept of child abuse means only sexual abuse for some school administrators. There is an important uncertainty for school administrators in the content of the idea of neglect. When the views on the causes of neglect and abuse are examined, the family factor was seen as the primary source of both neglect and abuse. In addition, among the prevention strategies applied by school administrators, intervention for the family -interviewing and informing- was recommended by only 9 (29%) out of 31 administrators. When the responses to the physical, emotional, and sexual abuse scenarios are examined, it is revealed that the administrators generally realize the abuse but fail to develop an appropriate/whole intervention method. The research results show that school administrators' awareness should be increased. Although administrators have sensitivity towards children, they should be empowered to recognize all types of neglect and abuse and develop appropriate intervention tools.

Keywords : assessment child abuse and neglect, child abuse, child neglect, school administrators

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