

The influence of child negligence on children's mental wellbeing

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Children are regarded as the future of the world who need stable mental and physical health to move forward as grown-up individuals. Children need love, affection, protection, and proper education in their different age stages. According to a report published by the National Child Protection Authority (NCPA), from 2010 to 2018, more than in any other part of Sri Lanka, children who live in Western Province were reported to have received less attention in terms of basic human needs. Precisely, 'cruelty to children' and 'not giving compulsory education' have consecutively ranked first or second place among the neglect categories, which has turned out to be a controversial issue. With all these reports and information, it is regretful to state that only a handful of research studies have been conducted concerning child neglect. Since it was evident that child neglect is a continuously prevailing condition in Sri Lanka, it is rare to find studies related to the neglect and mental wellbeing of children. This study aims to identify the mental wellbeing of the victims of child neglect. Primary data were collected using the survey method contained structured questionnaires (N=134) and semi-structured interviews (N=10) from neglected children who were reported in Gampaha District. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses revealed that participants who belonged to the category of physical neglect and cognitive neglect represented lower levels of mental wellbeing. In contrast, those who belonged to the emotional neglect and supervision neglect represented moderate mental wellbeing levels. Among them, the most common neglect category was physical neglect. The mental wellbeing of the victims of physical neglect in the sample remained at a lower level. Several programs should be implemented to improve the awareness of the victim's parents and relevant government offices to reduce child neglect and develop their mental wellbeing.

Key words: Child neglect, Mental wellbeing, Physical neglect, Emotional neglect, Cognitive neglect, Supervision neglect