

Caregiver State of Mind and Role Performing of Counselors in Foster Homes

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Abstract

Nowadays, Thailand is facing a problem in orphan care. There are huge numbers of children living in foster homes with lower numbers of child caregivers. As researchers reviewed the literatures, researchers found that there were many reasons that caused this career to have a high turnover rate. This study was conducted to explore caregivers' experiences and perceptions of their work in foster homes. The study provided information how caregivers feel about their career and how they act as counselors at work. The researcher used a qualitative research method to explain the phenomenon. In-depth Interviewing and observation are also used as methods to obtain information. As the Person-Centered Theory and the Theory of Needs are humanistic counseling models, in that these theories that examines the healthy functioning of human being, mode of living and life goals, researchers can use such theories to explain the daily lives of caregivers and how they can act as a counselor for their colleagues. The researcher used open-ended questions in interviews with six child caregivers of different ages. The results indicate that most child caregivers typically acted as a counselor when colleagues had work and family problems. They always shared their experiences with their colleagues to make them feel better as they faced the same problems. The study also found that child caregivers were proud to be parents to their children. They mentioned having a low income, but they still wanted to work full time. The researcher suggested the need for mind training with humanistic counseling to strengthen the capacity of caregivers to provide effective care for orphans and to develop the standard of living of caregivers.

Keywords: Caregivers, Child caregivers, Orphan care, Orphans, Counseling, Humanistic Counseling, Person-centered Theory, Theory of Needs

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Introduction

Thailand has a problem in terms of caring for orphans. There are a lot of children who have no home to live in and lower numbers of child caregivers. Studies have also shown that caregiving is a career that has a lot of stresses and a high rate of turnover for the past decade. It is widely recognized that children are an important resource for developing countries. Both domestic and international organizations are concerned about the standard of living for children. The United Nations has been discussing children as an important issue since 1955. Children should have an opportunity to grow up in a proper environment. They should receive love and care from parents and also need physical and mental improvement. (Vilairat Hiranyasupachot; et al., 2007 : 1) As the number of orphans in Thailand increases, foster homes are directly related to orphan and child caregivers become an important carrier. (Tossapol Hiranyavong and Suriya Jeamprachanarakorn, 2012) Child caregivers act as parents of children in foster homes. They are closest to the children and become a model for children to develop their character and behavior. (Somsri Kijchanapanich, 1996). As counseling is a way to help people (McCully, 1969), it can be in a school, a workplace and other places related to people. Person-centered Theory and Theory of Needs are theories that talk about the functioning of a healthy human being, mode of living and life goals, and theories are explained in this study. The researcher used in-depth interviews and observation to obtain information from child caregivers.

Purposes of the Study

- 1.To explore the experiences of the caregivers and perceptions of their work in a foster home.
- 2.To know how caregivers feel about their career.
- 3.To know how child caregivers act as a counselors when they work together.

Literature Review

Counseling is the process of a counselor helping a counselee. (Brammer & Shostrom, 1952) Counseling can also help people to develop character, improve skills, solve problems and also to gain confidence (APA, 1961). The task of counseling is to give the client an opportunity to explore, discover and clarify ways of living that are more satisfying and use their resource (BAC, 1984). Counseling psychology focuses on emotional, social, educational, health-related, developmental and organizational concerns. The counseling includes a broad range of practices that helped people improve their well-being, reduce their stress levels and an increased ability to live in daily life. The process of counseling can be in almost any setting including industry, commerce, prison service, school to university, to work with variety of problems and also to work with clients who have psychological disorders, such as anxiety and depression.

Humanistic Counseling

Humanistic counseling was founded in the 1950s in the United States. The main founders of these perspectives are Carl Rogers, who created the Person-centered theory and Abraham Maslow, who created the Theory of Needs. Humanistic

counseling emphasized the ability of human being that can achieve their daily work, talk about the functioning of healthy human beings, mode of living and life goals.

Person-Centered Theory

The person-centered approach was established by Carl Rogers in the 1940s and is based on concepts from humanistic psychology. Rogers believe that humans have an ability to deal with their problems without direct intervention. The person-centered approach emphasizes on the power of humans to change themselves (Tallman & Bohart, 1999). Specific goals are not imposed on clients, but the clients are the ones who choose their own values and goals. Rogers described people who are becoming increasingly actualized as having an openness to experience, a trust in themselves, an internal source of evaluation and a willingness to continue growing. The encouragement of these characteristic is the basic goal of person-centered therapy (Roger, 1961). These characteristics provide a general framework for understanding the direction of therapeutic movement. Therapists do not choose specific goals for clients. Therapists are the only ones who deal with how to help clients to achieve their own goals (Bohart, 2003).

Theory of Needs

Abraham Maslow (1954) created his five-level hierarchy of needs by observing the growth and development of students. According to Maslow, most fundamental needs of individuals are for air, food, clothing, and shelter; these are survival or physiological needs. Unless these needs are met, the person cannot progress along the continuum to achieve higher levels of growth and development (Hamel, Leclerc, & Lefrancois, 2003). The higher needs of Maslow's pyramid include safety and security, love and belonging, and self-esteem and self-actualization, in that order. Moving from survival needs to more social development needs, one of the highest levels is self-actualization, in which a person is concerned about their legacy, the needs of humankind, and how to make the world a better place for its inhabitants (Hamel et al., 2003). Every person is capable and has the desire to move up the hierarchy toward a level of self-actualization. Unfortunately, progress is often disrupted by failure to meet lower level needs. Life experiences, including divorce and the loss of a job may cause an individual to fluctuate between levels of the hierarchy. Therefore, not everyone will move through the hierarchy in a uni-directional manner, but may move back and forth between the different types of needs. Maslow noted that only one in a hundred people become fully self-actualized because our society rewards motivation primarily based on esteem, love and other social needs.

Methodology

Study design

This study is qualitative research. In-depth interviews were used to get information from the participants and used observation to identify some hidden feelings during interviews. The researcher asked simple questions about daily work activities, allowing the child caregiver to express their feelings by reexamining their own experiences and perceptions. They also asked some deeper questions about the story told by the child caregiver. The question is divided into two sections which include

introductory and main questions. The introductory questions covered the personal information about the participants, their work background and education. For the main question, they were asked about their experiences and perceptions.

Setting and samples

This study took place in Bangkok, the capital of Thailand. The researcher chose Baannokkamin foster home, is a private organization that was founded over 30 years ago, for the interviews. There are eight child caregivers in this branch. The researcher interviewed six child caregivers provided information about their careers. One condition was that the participants had to have taken care of a child for more than five years.

Data Collection

The researcher collected data from six child caregivers in Baannokkamin foster home, Bangkok, Thailand. The process of collecting data took place from December 2016 until February 2017

Data analysis

The study used a phenomenological approach. It is qualitative research, using in-depth interviews and observations to get information from child caregivers who have worked in foster home for more than five years. The researcher spent a lot of time in foster homes to understand what child caregivers do when working in their daily lives. As the study was conducted to explore the experiences and perceptions of caregivers regarding their work at foster home, to identify how the caregivers feel about their careers and to ask how they act as counselors when working together. The researcher divided the analysis into three topics.

1. Experiences and perceptions

There are different experiences and perceptions that child caregivers have working in foster homes. They all talked about love and care as the key of their career. Child caregivers revealed that they felt like the children were their own sons and daughters. The children came from different backgrounds, different types of families, and also had different sources for their pain. Some children lost their parents in a disaster. Some children lost theirs due to poverty. Some children lost their parents in an accident. It is not easy for child caregivers to deal with all of their pain at the same time. Child caregivers revealed that the career is their life. It is a 24 hours job and they have to sacrifice their time to take good care of children around the clock. They all came as volunteers in the beginning, but stayed because of their kind hearts until present.

2. Feeling about the career

This career required love as a base, together with understanding, sacrifice, responsibility and above all, readiness. One child caregiver said "It is not easy to be as a good child caregiver and not everyone can be". Many child caregivers lost family member as children. They found themselves wanting to help orphans with problems and want them to have a good future. This career becomes a way for them to help children and they are proud to be a child caregiver. They talked about how they can

support society with this career. They all talked about their income which is not much, but with their warm feeling toward to children they want to work in the carrier.

3. How they act as a counselor

They act as a counselor at all times. They share things like family and work issues. As they have different issues that they have with their children, they can help their colleagues to solve problems by sharing them. Sometimes they do not know how to deal with the problem, but just talk it out together. Counseling is the process of helping two people and sometimes listening is the best way for people who are facing problems in their life.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study concerns the minds of caregivers based on their own experiences. The number of child caregivers in Thailand has decreased along with the standard of living for children. The researcher tried to examine the situation with child caregivers, understanding what is going on the minds child caregivers, how they can help their colleagues through their problems and explain it through humanistic counseling theories. Humanistic counseling theories, such Person-centered theory and Theory of Needs are used to explain the important of some counseling in the workplace. There are a lot of connections in the workplace and relationships between people always create the need for counseling. Not everyone knows about counseling, but it is a fact of daily life. The study attempted to explain how counseling works under the conditions faced by of child caregivers that result in a hard time in the workplace. From the information obtained by the researcher through interviewing, the researcher found that counseling for this career is suitable for a child caregiver. Child caregivers face with different problems while they are working. They feel deep concern about the children under their care. It becomes a job with family problems, because they feel like children are their own sons and daughters. Talking with colleagues is conversations between parents who can share similar problems about their children. Child caregivers revealed that they can help colleagues to get through their problems by sharing their problems and listening to their advice. As the key of humanistic counseling is not giving advice, but letting someone who came with problems setting their own goals, and helping them to achieve their goals, child caregivers can act as counselors for this perspective of counseling, help their colleagues by just listening to them, which they have already been doing. The Person-centered theory and Theory of Needs are applied in their conversation, but they did not realize that they are talking about it. The theories discuss healthy human functioning, mode of living and goals in life. This is a good way for the organization to introduce the theories as a way to establish a good standard of living in the workplace.

Suggestions

Suggestion for Child caregivers

1. Child caregivers should be concerned with Self-monitoring. It is beneficial for many people to beware of how they feel inside, so they can solve problems or deal with the issues in order to reduce stress.

2.To be effective counselors for colleagues or at least being a good listener. Good listening is one of the basic counseling techniques. You can help your colleagues from suffering just by being a good listener.

Suggestion for Foster homes

1.Develop counseling skills by providing courses about daily life, adding some humanistic counseling for caregivers to make sure that they can help each other when they face problems.

2.Provide activities for the caregivers and officers in an organization to make them feel more comfortable with others.

Suggestion for Further study

1.Study in different foster home systems as private and public organizations to compare the differences of the results.

2.Study in a bigger area at a national or regional level.

3.Study at different times because time differences always result in different results.

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