

Awareness of Preschool Teachers in Sri Lanka on Child Rights

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The present study explored whether the preschool teachers in Sri Lanka have awareness of child rights. In the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is proclaimed that anyone is entitled to all the freedoms without any distinction such as race, color, sex, language, religion, opinion, birth or other status. A child needs special safeguards and care including appropriate legal protection before and after birth by reason of his or her physical and mental immaturity. The child is entitled to receive education. Therefore, the awareness of child rights is important for the preschool teachers to avoid violations of human rights. The main objective of this study is to investigate whether the preschool teachers in Sri Lanka have adequate knowledge on child rights in order to take actions when these rights are violated and also to protect their rights in the learning space. The other objective is to investigate whether every preschooler can enjoy the rights in the same manner in learning spaces regardless of any boundaries. The study was conducted with the consent of the directors of preschools and the preschool teachers. The participants were a sample of 40 preschool teachers and 30 parents. Both qualitative and quantitative measures were used for data collection. For quantitative data, the preschool teachers were given a semi-structured questionnaire. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with the 40 preschool teachers. The parents were given a semi-structured questionnaire and discussions were also conducted. Primary data were collected from interviews and discussions. Results were analyzed using thematic analysis. The outcome of the study conveyed that the awareness of preschool teachers regarding the child rights is not sufficient to protect the rights of the child whenever it is violated or to promote the child rights in their learning space. Different boundaries and ideologies of society limit preschool teachers from gaining proper knowledge on child rights and practicing them in the preschool. Therefore, in conclusion, the public authorities and responsible individuals should take necessary initiatives to promote the importance of child rights and to improve the knowledge and awareness of child rights among the Sri Lankan preschool teachers for the betterment of the preschoolers.

Keywords: awareness; child rights; preschoolers; preschool teachers
