

Middle Age Mother's Perspectives on Children's Rights within Irish Families

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Abstract

The research aims to identify middle age mothers own understandings of and treatment of their children in the family. A qualitative research approach was employed and it was evident mothers place a high value and respect on their children but do not think it a rights based approach.

Introduction

Children's rights is a relevantly new concept in Ireland, potentially affecting children and parents everyday lives in many ways but the full impact is unknown as there continues to be a lack of research-based understanding of children lives in Ireland (DOHC, 2000). The aim of this research is to address this gap and explore how middle age mothers perceive children rights in the family by identifying mothers own understandings of and treatment of their children. A further aim is to identify mother's level of awareness on the concept of children's rights.

"It is like they are seen to have more rights than they should have." (Interviewee one)

"No I don't think so from a rights point of view, you should just bring them up right in a loving home. If they're getting abused well then they have rights but on an ordinary level." (Interviewee eight)

Despite Ireland's visible dedication to the CRC and significant developments in law, policy and practice it has been slow to adopt children's rights in legislation and practice. Ireland still maintains a welfare based approach rather than a rights based approach when dealing with children. The tensions between the rights of parents and the rights of children have dominated much of the debate around children's rights in Ireland and the government's failure to raise awareness about children's rights among parents has allowed these misconceptions to dominate public discourse (Hayes 2002, Kilkelly, 2008).



Method

Design. A qualitative research approach involving a thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with the aid of Nvivo was employed.

Materials. A qualitative interview schedule, dictaphone, Nvivo 9, information sheet and consent form were used.

Participants. A purposive sampling method was applied and the composition comprised of nine middle age mothers living in the greater Dublin area with a minimum of one child between the ages of nine and fifteen.

Procedure. Participants were sourced through the researcher's acquaintances but to ensure a non-bias sample, the interviewer did not interview anyone they knew. A pilot study was conducted and interviews were held in mother's homes, took forty minutes and a conversational approach was applied.

Ethical Considerations. The main ethical issues that were addressed included written consent, sensitive questioning, time out of ones day, confidentiality and if a child was deemed to be at risk.



Results

Four key themes were found, children's voices and participation in family decisions, parental discipline strategies and children's general lifestyles relating to cultural and sporting activities, contact with extended families and expressions of love and affection. Finally mother's opinions on and awareness of the concept of children's rights was also discovered.

Discussion

A major limitation of this study is that it only dealt with a small sample of Irish mothers from a specific age group, with similar social class backgrounds and in a certain location. It would be extremely difficult to generalise these findings onto other mothers and parents in Ireland.

It is evident from this study that middle age mothers understanding of and treatment of their children is closely in line with the children's rights concept. Mothers have huge respect and value for their children across many areas of their lives ensuring they have a right to have their voices heard by including them in the family decision-making process, a right to protection by using forms of discipline that are less harmful, a right to experience their cultural identity by offering a huge range of activities, a right to contact with family, ensuring they see their extended family on a regular basis and a right to be cared for and loved by expressing their affection physically and verbally regularly. However it is evident, as can be seen in the quotes on this poster, there is a lack of conceptual awareness of children's rights among middle age mothers and they do not view their children in a rights based approach.

References

- Department of Health and Children. [DOHC]. (2000). *The National Children's Strategy Our Children their Lives*.
- Hayes, N. (2002). *Children's Rights - Whose right? A review of child policy development in Ireland*.
- Kilkelly, U. (2008). *Children's Rights in Ireland: Law, Policy and Practice*. Dublin: Tottel Publishing Ltd.