

Raising the profile of Child Abuse linked to Faith or Belief, in counselling practice.

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Study Aims

- 1) explore frontline practitioner and community group awareness and understanding of CALFB
- 2) identify additional support and training requirements.

- Child Abuse Linked to Faith or Belief (CALFB)

CALFB still remains an area that as Simon et al., (2012 p5), reflect “ ... is open to multiple interpretations”

Multiple interpretations.....

- Most work on CALFB focuses on a discussion of witchcraft, spirit possession, ritualistic and satanic abuse (Stobart, 2006)
- However, there is no proven method to establish whether a child is 'possessed' or is a witch; the accusation often being made by a religious leader without other validation (AFRUCA, 2008).
- Accusations are often linked to negative life events (eg. illness or unemployment), with children being held 'responsible' because of spirit possession (Stobart, 2006) or being a witch (Foxcroft, 2012).
- Or, accusations may be directed at children who may be noticeably 'different'; being disobedient, or disabled or bedwetting (AFRUCA, 2008; Goddard, 2012; Stobart, 2006).

Multiple interpretations...

- It has been argued that CALFB can be attributed at least partially to the migration of African communities (Britten, 2012)
- However, work by the Victoria Climbié Foundation (VCF 2011) and Pull (2013) illustrates that CALFB is evident in communities and cultural groups outside of these.

Recently.....

- There have been posts in the media (eg Gallagher, 2015) and some publications (eg. Kinmond, Oakley et al., 2017; La Fontaine, 2010; Oakley, Kinmond et al., 2017; Pull, 2013; Stbart, 2006)

- However, there remains confusion around exactly what constitutes CALFB.
- There is still no single universally agreed definition
- There is still no clear guidance for practitioners who may encounter children who have subjected to this form of abuse.

The study

- An online survey delivered through survey monkey.
- Links to the survey were placed on professional websites, social networking sites Twitter and Facebook, and Church organisations' websites. The survey was open from September 2015 to June 2016.
- The survey consisted of 21 questions, 13 closed and 8 open, designed to gather participants' stated understandings, knowledge, experience and confidence to work with CALFB.
- The survey utilised collection of both quantitative and qualitative data in a mixed methods approach (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011).
- Many ethical considerations:
- In total, 1,371 participants completed the survey.
- Participants indicated their professional identity from a range of categories including – counsellor, teacher, social worker, police and health care professional. They were able to indicate that they held multiple roles and to identify all that applied to them.
- 79 participants identified themselves as counsellors. Some of these also categorised themselves as holding other identities such as faith group member, teacher and police.

Research Findings

- 79% of counsellors stated that they had heard of the term CALFB.
- 66% were confident that they knew what the term CALFB meant. However, only 46% were confident they could identify indicators of CALFB with 25% choosing the option – ‘neither agree nor disagree’.
- 54% said they were confident they were able to respond professionally to CALFB but interestingly again there was a reasonably high percentage - 30% choosing the ‘neither agree nor disagree’ option.
- Only 34% of counsellors stated that they had received any specific training on CALFB. Within this group there seems to be some confusion as many noted that it was mentioned in other child safeguarding training as an issue but that they had not received focused training on this form of abuse.

Thematic analysis

- Three key themes emerged from the analysis of counsellors' qualitative data.
 1. 'effective responses',
 2. 'issues of cultural competence' and
 3. 'limited knowledge of working with these cases/ need for training'

Summary

- It is clear from the findings that counsellors want to be better equipped to offer counselling to those who have experienced CALFB.
- It is also evident that many counsellors have not yet had experience of working with this form of abuse and thus feel ill-prepared or uncertain about how to effectively work with CALFB.
- Counsellors specifically requested training around working with the issue of CALFB and understanding the main indicators of this.
- Within responses there was also a reflection of the need to be equipped to engage more with faith or belief in counselling practice.

So.....

- Where do we go from here?

Conclusion.... And beginnings

- There is clearly a need for work on training programmes to address CALFB; both in initial counsellor training but then also in CPD modules.
- The research also alerts policy makers to call for sound and objective research into CALFB such that counsellors may be better equipped to recognise the signs and symptoms and also know where and to whom to signpost those affected.
- In this way, we can all begin to challenge and then eradicate the abuse of children that is linked to faith or belief.