

An Exploration of Knowledge about Child Abuse Linked to Faith or Belief

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What is this research about?

This groundbreaking new research investigates current knowledge and raises awareness of child abuse linked to faith or belief. Internationally, cases of child abuse linked to faith or belief (CALFB) continue to cause concern (Bartholomew, 2015; Hansen & Ruggiero, 2013). In the United Kingdom (UK) high profile cases such as Victoria Climbié and Kristy Bamu have raised awareness of the need to develop child protection in this area (DfE, 2012). However, there are relatively small numbers of recorded cases (Stobart, 2006; Gilligan, 2009; Stobart, 2009; La Fontaine, 2012) though this data may be open to question due to underreporting and lack of recognition (La Fontaine, 2012). Therefore, this research is timely and important in providing a foundation on which to build more effective identification of cases, policy and intervention.

An online survey was developed and an invitation to participate, was distributed across the internet via professionals' websites, social networking sites, church organisations etc. This was in order to gather as wide a range of different professionals' views as possible. The necessity to first 'understand the area' and ascertain the knowledge, skill base and needs of those encountering CALFB motivated the survey questions. The research gained ethical approval from Manchester Metropolitan University.

Who is conducting this research?

This research was commissioned by the National Working Group on Child Abuse Linked to Faith or Belief and uses a multi-partner collaborative approach. It is led by Manchester Metropolitan University academics Dr Lisa Oakley and Dr Kathryn Kinmond in partnership with Mor Dioum, Director of the Victoria Climbié Foundation (VCF) and Justin Humphreys, Executive Director of Safeguarding at the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS).

Who has completed the survey?

In total 1,361 people have completed the on-line survey. The results show that they had backgrounds in social work (n=91), teaching (n=156), counselling (n=79), police (n=318), medicine (n=60), faith organisations (n=771), community organisations (n=143) with 219 people listing 'other' as their professional background.



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This research found a wide variety of definitions and understandings of the term **child abuse linked to faith or belief**.

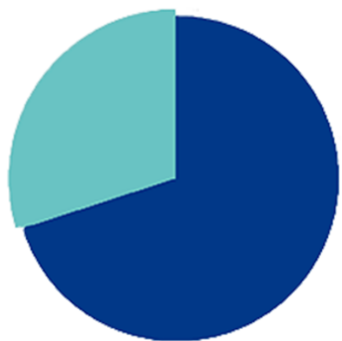


61%

of respondents in the study were confident they understood the term **child abuse linked to faith or belief**



The results show awareness of witchcraft and spirit possession but also other forms of child abuse that could be related to faith or belief such as FGM and excessive physical punishment.



33%

of respondents were confident they can identify indicators of **child abuse linked to faith or belief**

Although nearly 2/3 of respondents were confident they could define child abuse linked to faith or belief only 1/3 were confident they could identify indicators of this form of abuse.



52% of respondents were confident they would know how to respond professionally to **child abuse linked to faith or belief**

The research results suggest limited experience of working with **child abuse linked to faith or belief**



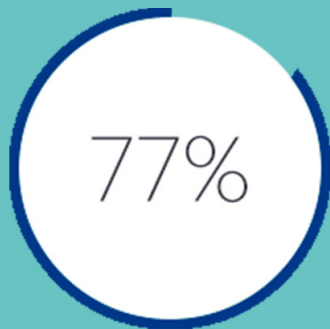
Just over half of respondents were confident they could respond professionally to this form of abuse, which may be linked to the findings that only 25% had received training on this issue. There was a clear call for specialised training in this area. Further, respondents stated that they had limited experience of working with child abuse linked to faith or belief, this could be argued to affect confidence levels and again emphasises the need for targeted training.

Our research showed a clear need for specialised training on **child abuse linked to faith or belief**

The study results emphasises the necessity of statutory agencies and faith communities engaging in partnership to address this form of abuse. It also shows the importance of recognising and working with faith or belief in child protection.

Our research showed a need to understand religious beliefs and communities to address **child abuse linked to**

Faith or Belief



respondents don't know if their LSCB includes policy and procedure on **child abuse linked to faith or belief**

Knowledge of the National Action Plan in this area was very low with only 12% of respondents stating that they were familiar with it. Further, 77% of respondents did not know if their Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) includes policy and procedure on this form of child abuse.

This research found a wide variety of definitions and understandings of the term **child abuse linked to faith or belief.**



The results illustrate the desire of frontline professionals and faith communities to engage with the issue of child abuse linked to faith or belief and the necessity to be properly equipped to do this. There is a need for a toolkit to enable the early identification of this form of abuse and promote effective response and intervention.

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