Utilizing the Japanese Anime, 'Kotaro Lives Alone' to Foster Awareness of the Concept of Child Abuse and Neglect among Filipino Pre-service Teachers

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to utilize the Japanese anime, 'Kotaro Lives Alone' as an intervention to foster awareness of the concepts of child abuse and neglect among Filipino pre-service elementary teachers from a teacher education institution in Pampanga, Philippines. Using a qualitative action research paradigm, a total of 53 pre-service teachers preliminarily responded to validated open-ended questions related to the said concepts to assess their existing knowledge and understanding. After a thorough screening of responses, ten students were identified to have a limited understanding of the concepts. They voluntarily participated to watch the Japanese anime and were provided the same set of questions after. Using reflexive thematic analysis, three themes were derived to describe the encompassing totality of the qualitative data captured in the study. The first theme summarized the descriptions of the participants on the concepts of child abuse and neglect before the intervention which they associate with physical harm, threat, and failure to provide a child's basic rights and needs. The second theme highlighted the participants' understanding of the two concepts after the intervention which pointed out that they are not all about physical abuse, and abandonment, and that they contribute to the personality and behavior of a child. The third theme revealed the totality of the experience in watching the anime as they understand the concepts. Ultimately, the study recommends the use of applicable Japanese anime as it may prospectively foster an understanding of critical concepts in education.

Keywords: child abuse and neglect, Japanese anime, qualitative action research, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Some of the prevailing problems in the world are child abuse and neglect. Jasmine and Hameed (2016) posited that child abuse is any act of commission or omission by an adult which may include physical, emotional, sexual, negligence, and other forms of exploitation which has implications for the child's survival, health, and dignity. Victims of these cases often suffered from their adverse effects. It may lead to injuries, health, and psychological problems—and worst of all, death. Almost every day in the news, cases of child abuse or neglect are reported across countries. Based on the global status report of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), as of 2020, about one billion children were victims of child abuse cases (WHO, 2020). In the United States, it was recorded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (U.S. HHS) that, as of 2019, around 656,000 suffered from child maltreatment (U.S. HHS, 2019), while in Japan, as stated by Tauchi (2022) in the Asahi Shimbun, a record of 108,050 suspected cases were reported. In the Philippines, based on the latest metadata update of the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development, there were 3,857 cases in 2018, and the highest number is seen in the cases of neglect and sexual abuse (PSA, n.d.). In fact, 98% of the victims were girls. During the pandemic, it was reported by Hernandez (2021) that child abuse cases involving young girls have increased. Parents engage their children in all sorts of online child exploitation for the sake of money. It is unfortunate that victims usually develop a culture of silence because of fear and disgrace. Though this problem still exists, different organizations worldwide have launched programs to help the victims and prevent the occurrence of this problem. In the Philippines, it was mentioned by Roche (2017) that government agencies have provided national policies and programs which responded to the continuous increase of child abuse and neglect. Usually in such cases, raising awareness programs were developed as a support practice that may provide knowledge on the topic and its sensitive effects. Awareness-raising is a process that seeks to inform and educate people about a topic or issue with the intention of influencing their attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs toward the achievement of a defined purpose or goal. According to Headen (2021), awareness and prevention

programs are found to be the most effective way in reducing the risks of child maltreatment among communities and in strengthening the protective factors among children.

At the time of writing this study, there are limited studies that investigate the potential of media-based interventions in addressing issues related to child abuse and neglect. For instance, a study on the effectiveness of video coaching for improving school teachers' understanding of child abuse and neglect was carried out by Shivashankarappa et al. (2022). Their research showed that teachers lacked adequate knowledge in this area, and they came to the conclusion that intervention utilizing video tutorial coaching was effective in raising teachers' knowledge of the subject. In a separate study, Russel et al. (2008) explored the use of educational videos to raise awareness of the negative effects of shaking babies, which is a form of child abuse. Russel et al. found that educational videos as an intervention similar to their study can significantly increase awareness. Bashatah (2020) on the other hand, conducted research on the role of video materials in empowering children to report abuse incidents. Their study looked specifically at how videos can raise awareness and help children protect themselves from potential sexual abuse. Bashatah concluded that videos not only urged parents and teachers to raise awareness about child abuse, but they also provided information on how abuse occurs and how to prevent it. Despite the limited number of studies that tried to explore the potential use of media-based interventions, exploring how videos can raise awareness about child abuse and neglect is critical, as these issues are widespread and have serious consequences for children's well-being. Videos have the potential to educate and inform a large number of people about the signs of abuse and how to avoid it. Furthermore, media-based interventions can be a more engaging and accessible way of communicating information to a diverse group of people, including children, parents, caregivers, and educators. This kind of media-based intervention may help prevent and address child abuse and neglect by raising awareness and promoting understanding of the issues, as well as promoting the safety and well-being of children.

Awareness of Students and Teachers About Child Abuse and Neglect

In the study conducted by Khandagale and Chavan (2019), child abuse and neglect awareness tests were conducted among primary school teachers. It was found that most of the respondents are aware of the concepts of child abuse and neglect. However, a moderate number of the respondents said that their schools do not have policies on how to overcome child abuse and neglect. While in the study of Jasmine and Hameed (2016), it was indicated that only 18% of the respondents were highly aware, and 26% are less aware of child abuse and neglect, while the remaining 56% are moderately aware. It was also stated in their research that girls showed more awareness than boys. It was further recommended that boys shall be made to attend awareness programs pertaining to child abuse and neglect. There were also studies that focus on the awareness of the teachers about the national policy concerning child abuse. As it was found out in the research of Bayuca (2020), most of the teacher-respondents are aware of the Child Protection Policy; however, there was no rigid implementation in some schools under the Department of Education. Several studies have mentioned that limited and lacking specific knowledge on child maltreatment and related abuses are common issues among students (Pur et al., 2016), teachers (AlBuhairan et al., 2011; Heredia, 2015; Márquez-Flores et al., 2016; Weegar & Romano, 2019), school staff (Greco et al., 2017), and other professionals (Schols et al., 2013) that primarily deal with children (Lloyd, 2018).

Awareness-Raising Programs in the Schools about Child Abuse and Neglect

There were different trainings and programs adopted by the schools to prevent the increase in rates of child abuse cases. These programs aim to provide knowledge and skills on how to avoid scenarios that may violate the rights of children. There were studies that have shown the effects of the implementation of school-based programs on child abuse prevention. Gubbels et al. (2021) indicated in their study that school-based child abuse prevention programs have positive effects on children. It was also mentioned that teaching children is never to blame for the occurrences of such abuse. These programs also included teaching the children how to escape such scenarios and developing their self-esteem. In the study by Walsh et al. (2015), it was found that these programs are effective in strengthening children's knowledge on protecting themselves from harm. It was also stated that children who were exposed to the programs were more likely to disclose their abuse compared to children who lacked awareness. While in the study of Altundag (2020), awareness training program about sexual abuse in children was found to be effective. It was recommended to include it in the curriculum so that students will be more sensitive and knowledgeable about the problem (Uysal et al., 2022). Uysal et al. also concluded the same recommendations provided by Altundag in which greater awareness can be attained through instruction.

Ways How to Increase Awareness among Students

Aside from trainings, seminars, and lectures about child exploitation, there are other varieties of activities that can be used to increase the awareness of children about child abuse and neglect (Uysal et al., 2022). One of these activities may include the use of technology. This promotes media literacy among the students. Engaging

students in the concept of child abuse through technology may promote more awareness. As stated by Thaichon and Quach (2014), social network sites may quickly reach the audience and can easily generate knowledge on child maltreatment and increase public awareness about the issue. In the study of Carta et al. (2012), they made use of cellular phone technology as an approach to enhance parent engagement in protecting their children and preventing maltreatment. There were also studies that made use of television and visual media as the means to increase awareness. In the study of Heward et al. (2015), they uploaded videos using YouTube to disseminate information which provided novel ways and reached wide-ranging audiences.

With the aforementioned literature and studies, there were several researches conducted on how to increase the awareness of children about child abuse and its components. Aside from lectures, trainings, seminars, or webinars, other forms of media literacy were used to increase awareness. Thus, in this study, the researchers came up with the idea of using Japanese anime to raise student awareness among pre-service teachers. Japanese anime is a popular culture worthy of being taken seriously since its themes also elaborate artistic forms of issues related to psychology, sociology, gender, and many others (Mihara, 2009). Japanese Anime has been used by educators to engage and motivate students to further their study of Japanese history and culture (Ruble & Lysne, 2010). Although in recent years, Anime is extensively used by educators to assist students to learn Nihongo (Japanese language) inside the classroom (Chan et al., 2017; Han & Ling, 2017). The study was an exploration of an innovative action intervention to assist would-be teachers in increasing their awareness of social issues that can be made possible through a critical viewing of an appropriate anime series. The study may pave the way for the exploration of alternative platforms to understand current social issues that have implications for the education sector.

Philosophical Stance

The study, through the intervention explored, could be a potential contribution to the existing body of knowledge, the curriculum implementation from the internal stakeholders' premises, and the teacher education program of the country. It could serve as a springboard for the discovery of the implications of such an intervention in fostering awareness of critical concepts covered in the study through a rich description of their experiences before and after the intervention. The researchers as faculty implementers capitalized on the idea that there is a need to utilize existing materials from a non-educational perspective that can be linked to education-related issues and concerns.

The study was grounded on a realist, essentialist approach. Such philosophical and theoretical underpinnings venture to seek truth and reality to be drawn out from a given dataset. It likewise assumes that an objective reality can be extrapolated from such data and subsequently reported. The paper was also supported by a relativist, constructionist approach which seeks to explore the underlying realities, from the dataset, that are socially constructed by the participants. It should be noted that the presence of objective reality cannot be captured from the data alone as this can be retrieved from the participants' sense-making.

Objective of the Study

The researchers aimed to utilize Japanese anime as an intervention to foster awareness of the concepts of child abuse and neglect among pre-service elementary educators in a teacher education institution in Pampanga, Philippines. Specifically, the following research questions were addressed:

1. How may the descriptions of the concepts of child abuse and neglect provided by the participants be described prior to the intervention?
2. How may the descriptions of the concepts of child abuse and neglect provided by the identified participants be described after the intervention?
3. What is the description of the participants' experiences in watching the Japanese anime towards an enhanced understanding of the concepts of child abuse and neglect?

METHODS
Research Design

The study employed a qualitative approach grounded on an action research paradigm. Qualitative action research is a type of research that seeks to understand social phenomena through the perspectives and experiences of the individuals or groups being studied. It is often used in education, sociology, and organizational development, and involves a cyclical process of data collection, analysis, and reflection that is used to inform and guide action. The goal of qualitative action research is to understand the problem being studied and to develop solutions that can be implemented to improve the situation (MacDonald, 2012). The purpose of the study was to explore how watching Japanese anime could potentially foster pre-service teachers' understanding of the concept of child abuse and neglect. The design was deemed appropriate for the study as the researcher-implementers, in the pursuit of fostering a profound understanding of the critical concepts of child abuse and neglect among the participants, examined the potential contribution of a foreign anime for such a purpose.

Participants

The initial population of the study is composed of fourth-year teacher education students specializing in general education (n = 53) from a state-funded teacher education institution in Pampanga, Philippines (x̄ age = 23.00 ± 0.70). They were identified to be the fitting participants in the study as their knowledge of the concept of 'child abuse' is a critical component that will be influential to their role as in loco parentis (in place of a parent) in school. This will also ensure that their way of dealing with their pupils can be shaped by how they acknowledge each child's possible vulnerability. This was supported by earlier studies (Schols et al., 2013; Weegar & Romano, 2019) indicating that the role of primary school teachers and other professionals is important in detecting and reporting child abuse because they encounter children due to the nature of their work (Greco et al., 2017; Schols et al., 2013). A total of 53 students participated in the initial assessment where questions related to their understanding of the concept of child abuse and neglect were asked. These students were duly informed and oriented about the focus of the study. They also provided their consent in participating in this research. From the collated responses and thorough analysis, an extreme case sample of participants was trimmed down to ten students who were identified to have the lowest quality of responses based on the following: (1) limited to almost no responses written, (2) responses were merely lifted from an online source. The second criterion is indicative that students may have the tendency to lift something from an internet source when they have limited to almost no idea about a concept (Apuke & Iyendo, 2018; Bana, 2020). Relative to this, all ten students agreed to participate in the study where they were requested to watch the entire episodes of the Japanese anime, Kotaro Lives Alone and were asked the same set of questions during the pre-assessment phase.

The Japanese Anime, Kotaro Lives Alone as an Intervention

The Japanese anime, Kotaro Lives Alone (コタローは1人暮らし) using English subtitles, was selected to be the sole material for the intervention. It is an original net animation (ONA) on Netflix based on Manga (i.e., comics/graphic novels originating from Japan) authored by Mami Tsumura which was released worldwide on March 10, 2022 (Figure 1). During the writing of this study, it was ranked 175th among top anime and received 8.93/10 ratings from 29,553+ users on the MyAnimeList website - the world's leading and most popular active online anime and manga database (MyAnimeList, n.d.). It is composed of ten episodes and each was approximately 27 minutes long which includes the opening and ending songs. The theme revolves around childcare while the genres were focused on comedy and slice of life (i.e., akin to melodrama with a focus on creating emotional relationships with the characters without any fantastical aspects and is recognizable with everyday life). The story was about a mysterious four-year-old boy named Koutaro Satou (i.e., the main character) who moves and lives alone in a dilapidated apartment building and seems to be very capable of taking care of himself and more mature despite his young age. The 10-episode anime series talks about the boy and how his current affairs including his demeanor, mannerism, and how he talks are reflections of his past experiences and coping mechanisms. It is implied in the story that Koutaro was neglected and abused by his father after the death of his mother. There were several hints in the story on how child abuse and neglect negatively affect a child as they grow. These include a habit of buying tissues with high-quality ingredients (a behavior resulting from eating tissue in the past to satisfy extreme hunger), catering and satisfying other people (to avoid any potential conflict and issues that might lead people to hate him), helping others by any means necessary (to make people stay regardless of consequences), among others. All of which was the aftermath of his past experiences with his parents.
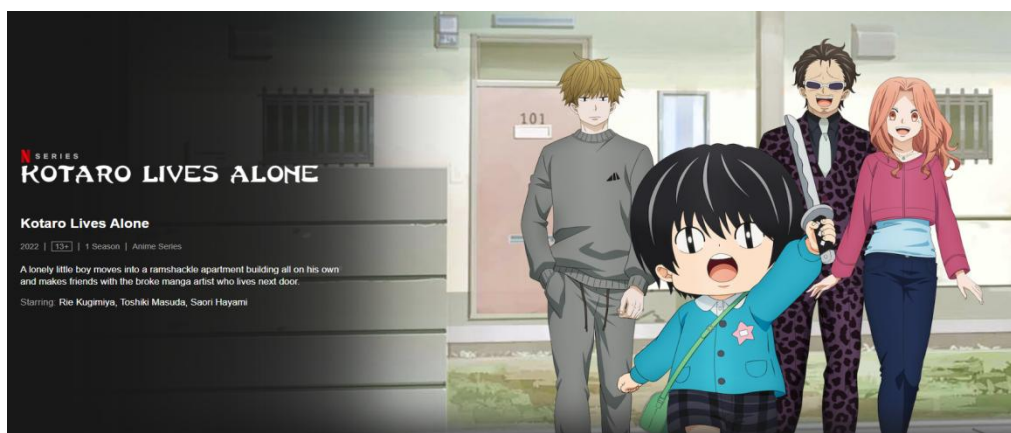

Figure 1:Kotaro Lives Alone as seen on Netflix's Official Website

Data Gathering Procedures

The ten pre-service teachers were provided access to the entire series of the anime and were given two weeks to complete watching at their own pace. This was initiated at the time when they had their semester break to ensure that they were free from academic tasks and requirements, which made them more focused as they reflected on the assignment. Likewise, the participants were requested to be part of a group chat on Facebook together with the faculty-implementers to monitor their viewing status from time to time. This was done to determine their concerns or questions while watching the series and provide immediate feedback on their queries. Upon completion of the tasks, the pre-service teachers were given an assignment via a learning management system, managed by one of the faculty-implementers. They were provided with the same set of questions prior to the intervention to assess how the anime assisted in fostering their understanding of the identified concepts. They were then tasked to simply write their responses in as many details as they can. The writing modality was chosen because they can freely express their ideas and thoughts as opposed to actual in-depth interviews or focus groups. With careful consideration, the responses were subsequently discussed with them to likewise verify their understanding and to establish the validity of responses. This was done individually and online via the video teleconferencing platform, Google Meet, which they frequently access during their online classes. After the validation procedures, the final data composed of responses to questions were verified, confirmed, and prepared for analysis.

Ethical Considerations

The methodological grounds of the study were anchored on three ethical principles included in the Belmont Report (U.S. HHS, 1979) such as respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. In adherence to the first principle of "respect for persons", all participants sought permission to participate in the study protocols using informed consent forms, indicating that their voluntary participation was a product of being an informed participant. In terms of "beneficence", it was ensured that risks were minimized and benefits be maximized. All participants were informed that there were no risks associated with their participation in the study and that their identity will be kept confidential before, during, and after the conduct of the study. It was also discussed that no external rewards will be given as a result of their participation. Lastly, justice was achieved when all participants were given equal chances or opportunities to participate. On a contextual note, all procedures were governed by the "National Ethical Guidelines for Health and Health-Related Research" (Philippine Health Research Ethics Board, 2017) and the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

Data Analysis

In the analysis of the transcribed responses, the reflexive thematic analysis approach by Braun and Clarke (2019) was employed. It followed a six-step analytical process as reflected in Figure 2. The data familiarization was the initial phase which was described as the immersion of the researchers into the data in an in-depth examination to initially look for potential patterns and meanings. Constant reading and re-reading of the transcripts and note-taking were facilitated during the process. Also, consistent reflexivity was undertaken by the researchers situating themselves as individuals and researchers fully aware that potential biases may influence the qualitative processes (Creswell, 2014). Then, the generation of initial codes was conducted to meaningfully and logically organize the data. Data items were labeled into meaningful categories. Afterward, initial general themes were derived by mapping and looking at meaning properties. Theme review was conducted after which the researchers ensured that the data properly supported the themes. Constant refinement and reworking of codes and themes were facilitated. Themes were subsequently named and defined where stories were organized and grounded on each theme. Finally, a report was produced through the provision of a detailed description of each theme and subtheme in accordance with the research questions. Each was supported by actual transcripts from the participants' responses.
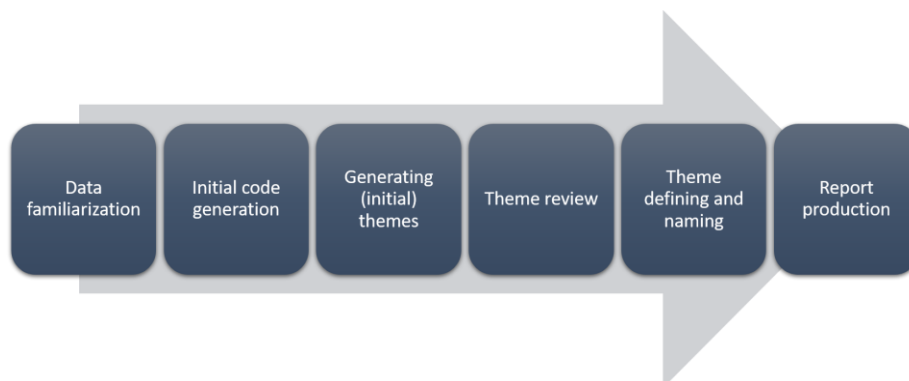

Figure 2:Linear Process of the Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019)

Establishment of Trustworthiness and Rigor

Following the criteria set by Lincoln and Guba (1985) on establishing trustworthiness and rigor in qualitative research, four criteria were considered in the data collection and analysis namely, (1) credibility, (2) transferability, (3) dependability, and (4) confirmability.

To establish credibility, member checking was conducted to establish the validity of the accounts. This was done by returning back to the participants after collecting data from them. They were asked to confirm whether the accounts are valid representations of their perception. Thereafter, analysis was undertaken. After the analysis, the thematic report was formally introduced to them using an ordinary course of conversation. Eventually, all participants agreed with the themes and therefore made the report valid.

In terms of transferability, the thick description was used as a means to attain external validity. Detailed descriptions were provided in the methodological premises of the study, such as the design used, the characteristics of the informants, the protocols in the data-gathering phase, and the findings to educators and other researchers who may find meaning in the association of this work in multiple settings and contexts.

Dependability was attained by making use of external auditing. This process included a researcher not involved in the study to examine the precision of the process and product of the study. A social science researcher with extensive experience in pure qualitative research sought to audit the process (methodology) as it relates to the product (findings). Feedback from the expert was subsequently integrated into the final report of the study fostering accuracy and validity of the findings from an external lens.

Confirmability was achieved through an audit trail highlighting the detailed description of the steps and procedures conducted from the time the study started to the finalization of the findings. This capitalized on the fact that such procedures were not influenced by conscious and unconscious biases reflective of the participants' responses.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After a thorough analysis, and as guided by the reflexive thematic analysis scheme provided by the reflexive thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2019), three themes were generated and identified. The first theme covers the descriptions of the student participants on the concepts of child abuse and neglect before watching the Japanese anime. Meanwhile, the second theme encompasses the views of the participants after watching the Japanese anime. Lastly, the third theme provides a detailed description of the participants' experiences in watching the Japanese anime toward their understanding of child abuse and neglect.

Theme 1: Descriptions of the Participants on the Concepts of Child Abuse and Neglect Before the Intervention

Critical to understanding how pre-service elementary teachers view concepts like child abuse and neglect, this theme provides detailed and significant preliminary inputs in assessing the participants' responses and identifies among them those who manifest a less profound perspective on the given concepts. With that, several participants, upon analyzing their responses on how they describe their notion about child abuse and neglect, four subthemes were derived.

Subtheme 1.1: Child Abuse is harming the child physically

For the participants, their existing understanding relates to the concept of child abuse and neglect as something related to the physical dimension. This implies that abuses committed by someone toward a child may most likely be linked with physical abuses that may harm or cause pain to a child which can be explicitly shown through physical manifestations like bruises caused by a pinch or a hit by any hard object. The following statements support this notion.

"My ideas child abuse is when a child is hurt physically." - P1

"It is about abusing the minor or the child physically." -P6

"When there is a bruise in his/her body." -P8

"It is usually caused by physical abuse of the child, such as pinching, hitting, and beating." -P9

Subtheme 1.2: Child Abuse is threatening the child.

Another subtheme derived from the responses is the association of the concept of child abuse with threat and violence. This implies that the pre-service elementary teachers involved in the study perceive child abuse as an act characterized by violence and may be threatening to the child.

"It is any form of maltreatment by an adult, which is threatening for the child." -P5

"It is any form of adult abuse and neglect that is violent or threatening to the child."-P2

"Maltreatment violence the child" -P3

Subtheme 1.3: Child Neglect is a failure to provide a child's rights and basic needs.

The participants described neglect as a form of abuse and is often related to a child's basic needs. Failure of the people responsible for a child to provide the basic necessities, including food, clothing, housing, medical care, education, and the emotional support they need is described as a form of child neglect according to the participants prior to the intervention. The participants' responses related to this theme include:

"The failure of the person responsible for the child's welfare" -P1

"It is a form of child abuse wherein parents failed to give or meet their child's basic need." - P2

"Neglected children are those children who failed to meet their basic needs such as food, housing, and education."- P3

"Child neglect happens when a person or responsible person for the child's basic needs like food, clothing, and shelter is having failure to provide those for the child." - P4

"Failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, clean living conditions, affection, supervision, education, dental or medical care." -P7

Theme 2: Descriptions of the Participants on the Concepts of Child Abuse and Neglect After the Intervention

Subtheme 2.1: Child Abuse is not only Physical Abuse

After watching the anime series, participants noted that child abuse is not limited to physical abuse. Based on their responses, participants have realized that abuse can also be mental and emotional. Physical abuses, including other types of child maltreatment, are often interrelated and sometimes co-occurs with other types of abuse like the ones the participants have noted (Schilling et al., 2016). In addition, earlier studies have indicated that it is important to know other forms of abuse as they can affect a child both in the short and long term (Dolisgan & Razisni, 2020; Mohammadi et al., 2014). Understanding and being aware of other abuses can equip an individual to identify (i.e., see early signs) and assess who is at risk, including their experience (Lloyd, 2018) and the type of abuse a child receives (Dolisgan & Razisni, 2020). This way, early interventions can be provided to them. The following statement supports these statements:

"After watching the series my ideas about child abuse is it's not only physical abuse there is also mental and emotional abuse." -P3

Subtheme 2.2: Child Neglect is not just Abandoning the Child

Child neglect can take multiple forms (e.g., physical, emotional, psychological etc.) and can affect a child in various ways. The definition of child neglect can be complex, and at the same time, multiple factors can be attributed to it (Dubowitz, 2013). Sometimes, other forms of abuse can co-occur or can happen at the same time (Al Odhayani et al., 2013; Debowska et al., 2017). For example, the participant, in this case, emphasized that neglect can happen when a person in charge of a child fails to provide the basic necessities and support they need (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2018). This subtheme was derived from one participant who specifically mentioned:

"My idea of child neglect came from watching the Japanese anime "Kotaro Lives Alone." When a parent or other caregiver fails to provide the attention, guidance, love, and support necessary for a kid's health, safety, and well-being, that behavior is known as "child neglect." Neglect of a child can take many different forms, including physical neglect, poor supervision, emotional neglect, medical neglect, and/or educational neglect." - P7

Subtheme 2.3: Effects of Child Neglect and Child Abuse May Contribute to the Personality and Behavior of the Child

Both child abuse and neglect can have a significant impact on a child's personality as described by the participants after the intervention. Children who experienced abuse and neglect may change their personality and behavior to cope with it (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2014). In this case, the participants described that the Anime's main character Kotaro changes his personality and behavior, particularly in his consciousness of his body and health to be loved by others, including also the need to become independent. This type of manifestation was supported in the study of Al Odhayani et al. (2013) which stated that a child's behavior is an outward manifestation of their inner characteristics (i.e., stability and security). The sudden changes in student behavior are sometimes seen as simple misbehavior by teachers (Heredia, 2015) due to their lack of knowledge about the issue. That is why Al Odhayani et al. further stressed in their literature review that some behavioral changes among children should be indicators to professionals as to whether a child is being abused and neglected. Based on the responses, the participants after the intervention were able to understand and identify some cues (i.e., changes in behavior and personality) that can be attributed to abuse and neglect. Some of these responses are:

"When a child is being neglected, he will do everything to take care of himself. He is very conscious of his body and health so that he will be loved by others. Just like Kotaro, he makes sure that he takes a bath everyday." -P2

"Child is being neglected when he is alone, when he will decide on its own and when he became independent because he has no choice." -P3

Theme 3: Description of the Participants' Experiences in Watching the Japanese Anime toward their Understanding of Child Abuse and Neglect

Subtheme 3.1: Learning that Victims from the Past can Live independently in the Present

The intervention in this study provided insight to the participants particularly on the issue that a child previously subjected to abuse, neglect, and other traumatic experiences can still live independently in the present. The anime series as an intervention showed and helped the participants to learn that overcoming previous traumatic experiences is possible despite setbacks. The intervention also helps the participants gain a deeper understanding and empathy about destigmatizing the potential effects of previous abuses and neglect as well as the path for healing and living in the present. Therefore, the intervention can be a positive, informative, and inspiring experience as they realize that there is resiliency and strength as well as reducing stereotyping of people, particularly a child who is subjected to abuse and neglect. An example of the participant's response is:"I also blamed myself, but after watching I need to dwell on it and face it. I will just live and continue." - P1

Subtheme 3.2: Overcoming Adversity and Moving Forward despite Traumatic Experience

The participants in this theme realized that child abuse and neglect can only have a negative impact but after the intervention, the participants believed that despite traumatic experiences, a child can develop a coping mechanism that will help them deal with this trauma. Furthermore, they may even develop their resiliency and acquire new skills to overcome their future adversities and move forward with their life. Example responses from the participants include:

"It can affect the life of a child, at that young age Kotaro decided to live by himself when a child should be being taken care of. But, Kotaro fought because of the people around that despite all of the traumas he experienced." -P1

"At first, child abuse and neglect has only negative impact for me, but after watching this anime, I found out that it has also positive impact. Kotaro had experienced child abuse and neglect, but he still continue his life despite of his young age. At a very young age, he is very dependent. He knows how to budget his everyday living." -P2

Subtheme 3.3: Realization that Parents/Guardians have a Huge Responsibility and Accountability

The participants realized after watching the anime that being a parent or guardian comes with great responsibilities. Having a child means having a huge responsibility and a number of obligations that cannot be avoided, and sometimes, these obligations can be a lifetime commitment. For example, these obligations can include physical and emotional needs and ensuring a child's safety and well-being as they grow. In addition, there are also legal consequences when a parent or guardian is responsible for a child. A child's actions can be attributed to their legal guardians. The participants' response according to this theme includes:

"You can't avoid obligations once you become a guardian."- P2

"Because Kotaro Sato and Shin Karino taught us a valuable lesson, guardianship carries responsibility. You can't avoid obligations once you become a guardian." -P4

REFLECTION AND INPUTS FOR THE NEXT CYCLE

Child abuse and neglect were among the perennial and critical issues occurring worldwide. With that, academic institutions should be viewed as avenues for the dissemination of appropriate, scientific, and relevant information on these concepts. It is therefore imperative for in-service and prospective teachers to promote awareness among learners on the possible effects of these concerns on children. While seminars, trainings, lectures, and other forms of pedagogical innovations assist to increase the awareness of children, the researcher-implementers realized that there are novel ways to enhance understanding of social concerns that have implications for child development. On the part of the researchers, to motivate the students to learn more about these particular social problems, the utilization of Japanese anime was considered relevant and helpful. Japanese anime was not developed merely for entertainment but may also be used for educational purposes. As evidenced in the study, it paved the way for the students to easily relate their understanding of the concepts. Expanding and deepening their understanding of child abuse and neglect may nurture their ways on how to find out and deal with pupils who might be victims of these problems. Student-participants further understand that child abuse and neglect do not only imply hurting the child physically but may bring a significant effect on their personality. Ultimately, letting the students watch an informative Japanese anime may increase their awareness of relevant

issues such as child abuse and neglect. Therefore, careful selection of other anime-related materials may be explored relevant to the course of study.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The exploration of innovative interventions to raise awareness of the concepts of child abuse and neglect among pre-service teachers was the main objective of the study. Using the Japanese anime Kotaro Lives Alone as an intervention, the pre-service teachers were able to exhibit fostered awareness of the concepts of child abuse and neglect. The first theme identified in the study centered on their ideas and insights about child abuse and neglect before the use of the intervention. This was the main basis of the researchers to find out about the understanding and awareness of the participants. With the utilization of the intervention, selected pre-service teachers were able to understand more about the concepts of child abuse and neglect as specified in the second theme. The third theme described their experiences in watching Japanese anime towards their understanding of critical concepts. This theme specified the realization of the participants on these social problems and the possible effects on children who experienced abuse and neglect. However, it must also be considered that this intervention is not applicable to all students because of the age restriction applied in the Japanese anime.

Faculty implementers may consider the action used in the study to help students increase their awareness about child abuse and neglect. The procedures employed during the implementation phase may also be recalibrated depending on the modality and context of students. While the present study considered students watching at their own pace, future implementers may also venture into the possibility of placing students in a specific room where they can watch together and teacher-implementers may monitor their experience. Moreso, this will ensure that students will watch the video while regulating the possible distractions that may interfere with the process. Moreover, it is recommended that other anime-based materials could be explored to provide alternative mechanisms to support the understanding of critical and relevant issues in education. On a methodological note, using a postmodernist approach, a quantitative approach as data collection strategies may be employed using available constructs relevant to the study. This may provide scientific and empirical evidence to support claims and possible hypotheses.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There were noted limitations toward the completion of the study that centered on methodological grounds. One of these is the way the study collected its data. Since the participants were given two weeks to watch the anime during their own time at their own pace, there might be external factors that might have influenced the data collected from the participants such as distractions, attention span, focus, and other internal factors. Furthermore, the findings derived from a thorough and rigorous analysis of data are only applicable to the participants' context and hence cannot be generalized to wider populations that have different settings, contexts, and cultures.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare no conflict of interest in this study.

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