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ABSTRACT

The relationship between family engagement and child welfare in the S'tieng ethnic families residing in Bu Gia Map district, Binh Phuoc province has received limited research attention. To address this gap, we conducted a study examining the impact of family engagement, facilitators' practice skill on child welfare within this specific context. Our data was collected from 202 S'tieng ethnic families living in Bu Gia Map district, Binh Phuoc province, Vietnam. The findings of our study revealed that facilitators' practice skill was significantly positive correlated with child welfare. Family engagement was significantly positive correlated with child welfare among the S'tieng ethnic families in Bu Gia Map district, Binh Phuoc province, our research provides valuable insights for both practitioners and policymakers. Furthermore, the findings of this study have implications for both policy and practice, suggesting that enhancing facilitators' practice skills and promoting family engagement can contribute to the improvement of child welfare implementation among S'tieng ethnic families residing in Bu Gia Map district, Binh Phuoc province. Further research is warranted to enhance our understanding of this topic and address these limitations.

Keywords: Family engagement, child welfare, Facilitators' Practice Skill

1. INTRODUCTION

Family engagement holds crucial importance in addressing and finding effective solutions to challenges within child welfare, while also playing a significant role in decision-making processes. Although models exploring client engagement exist, the theoretical framework regarding parental engagement in the context of statutory child welfare is currently insufficiently developed. Previous research by Augsberger et al. (2022) highlighted the involvement of families in decision making and enhancing child welfare outcomes. Platt (2012) also emphasized the central focus on family engagement in social work and related service sectors, particularly for children at risk of maltreatment or other welfare issues. Furthermore, there are 96,649 S'tieng ethnic people living in Binh Phuoc Province, Vietnam, distributed in districts, towns and cities of Binh Phuoc Province, including Bu Gia Map district (Dieu Dieu, 2021). To bridge this gap, we propose an integrated conceptualization that examines the factors influencing parental engagement within such contexts. This paper specifically investigates the influence of Family Engagement and Facilitators' Practice Skills on Child Welfare among S'tieng ethnic families residing in Bu Gia Map District, Binh Phuoc Province.

1.2. Literature review

1.2.1. The relationship between family engagement on child welfare

The relationship between family engagement and child welfare is characterized by the level of involvement and participation of families in activities and interventions aimed at promoting the well-being of children. Family engagement is recognized as a crucial factor in shaping positive outcomes and success in interventions and programs (Cowan et al., 2009). Augsberger et al. (2022) demonstrated that involving families in decision-making processes leads to improved experiences and outcomes. Furthermore, this study highlighted the cultural responsiveness of family engagement in enhancing child welfare outcomes (Augsberger et al., 2022). When families actively engage in their child's welfare, they collaborate with professionals, service providers, and the broader community to ensure the child's safety, development, and overall well-being (Gerlach et al., 2017). Such engagement can involve participating in decision-making processes, attending meetings, utilizing available resources and support services, and establishing effective communication with professionals involved in child welfare efforts.

Research consistently indicates that higher levels of family engagement are associated with positive child welfare outcomes (Hilado et al., 2011; Kemp et al., 2009). Active family engagement leads to improved communication and collaboration between families and professionals, resulting in informed decision-making, effective interventions, and better outcomes for children (Crea et al., 2009). Additionally, family engagement contributes to increased family resilience and empowerment by recognizing their strengths, knowledge, and cultural values in shaping the well-being of their children (Augsberger et al., 2022). Efforts in policy and practice focus on promoting and enhancing family engagement to improve child welfare outcomes. Overall, a strong and positive relationship between family engagement and child welfare is essential for ensuring the well-being and positive development of children. By actively involving families, professionals, and communities, it is possible to achieve the best possible outcomes for children, creating a nurturing and supportive environment for their growth and development. This research highlights the significance of engagement as a key element in promoting positive outcomes for families and children involved in the child welfare system. It explores the factors that influence parental engagement within the statutory child welfare context.

1.2.2. The relationship between facilitators' practice skills and child welfare

Facilitators' practice skills encompass the abilities and competencies demonstrated by individuals involved in facilitating programs or interventions within the realm of child welfare (Ahn et al., 2022). Preliminary evidence from Rockhill (2021) suggests that specific models of family meetings, such as family team decision meetings, have the potential to improve parents' experiences and child welfare outcomes. These skills encompass a diverse range of qualities and behaviors that contribute to the effective implementation and delivery of services aimed at improving child well-being (Dettlaff, 2013). Facilitators with strong practice skills possess a comprehensive understanding of child welfare issues and best practices, providing a solid foundation for guiding their interventions (Bywaters et al., 2015). They excel in establishing rapport, respecting the needs and perspectives of the families they work with, and maintaining focus during sessions. Furthermore, facilitators with effective practice skills create a safe and comfortable environment for participants while efficiently managing time. The impact of facilitators' practice skills on child welfare outcomes can be significant. With strong skills, facilitators can effectively engage families, promote positive interactions, and provide valuable support and resources (Ahn, 2022; Rolock, 2011; Villagrana, 2017). Consequently, this can lead to improved child well-being outcomes, including enhanced safety, emotional well-being, and overall development (Ahn, 2022; Rolock, 2011; Villagrana, 2017). Research studies frequently explore the relationship between facilitators' practice skills and child welfare outcomes to gain a deeper understanding of how these skills influence the effectiveness of interventions (Ahn, 2022; Collins-Camargo & Royse, 2010). By identifying the specific aspects of facilitators' practice skills associated with positive child welfare outcomes, policymakers and practitioners can tailor training and support programs to enhance these skills and promote better outcomes for children and families.

Based on theoretical considerations, we hypothesize that need frustration will show a positive relationship between family engagement, family team decision meeting, and the child's welfare among members of the S'tieng ethnic group (Hypothesis 1). Additionally, we expect that the facilitators' practice skills will positively influence the child's welfare among members of the S'tieng ethnic group (Hypothesis 2). Please note that it is important to clarify the specific variables and operational definitions in order to provide a more accurate analysis.

2. METHODOLOGY.

2.1. Participant and process

Table 1: Demographic characteristics Vietnamese S'tieng ethnic group (N=202)

Criteria	Classification	N (%)
1. Sex	Male	64 (31.7%)
	Female	138 (68.3%)
2. Age	<18 years old	19 (9.4%)
	18-30 years old	78 (38.6%)
	30-40 years old	47 (23.3%)
	40-50 years old	31 (15.3%)
	>50 years old	27 (13.4%)
3. Total Income	< 1 million VND	58 (28.7%)
	1-3 million VND	60 (29.7%)
	3-5 million VND	41 (20.3%)
	5-7 million VND	24 (11.9%)

	> 7 million VND	19 (9.4%)
5. Educational Level	Illiterate	55 (27.2%)
	Primary School	83 (41.1%)
	Secondary School	16 (7.9%)
	Vocational School	41 (20.3%)
	College/University	7 (3.5%)
6. Religion	Catholicism	27 (13.4%)
	Buddhism	2 (1.0%)
	Hoa Hao Buddhism	167 (82.7%)
	None	6 (3.0%)

This study involved the analysis of data from 202 participants residing in Binh Phuoc province, Vietnam. Prior to the commencement of the study, the researchers emphasized the voluntary nature of participation. Participants were assured that their personal information would be treated confidentially, and all data collected would be used solely for research purposes. Among the surveyed Vietnamese individuals, there were 64 males (31.7%) and 138 females (68.3%), out of the total sample size of 202. In terms of age distribution, 19 individuals were under the age of 18 (9.4%), 78 individuals fell within the age range of 18 to 30 (38.6%), 47 individuals were between the ages of 30 and 40 (23.3%), 31 individuals were between the ages of 40 and 50 (15.3%), and 27 individuals were over the age of 50 (13.4%). Regarding educational attainment, 55 individuals (27.2%) reported being illiterate, 83 (41.1%) had completed primary school, 16 (7.9%) had completed secondary school, 41 (20.3%) had completed vocational school, and 7 (3.5%) had attended university or college. In terms of total income, 58 participants (28.7%) reported an income below 1 million Vietnamese dong, 60 (29.7%) had an income ranging from 1 to 3 million Vietnamese dong, 41 (20.3%) reported an income between 3 and 5 million Vietnamese dong, 24 (11.9%) reported an income ranging from 5 to 7 million Vietnamese dong, and 19 (9.4%) reported an income above 7 million Vietnamese dong. Religiously, 27 participants (13.4%) identified as Catholic, 2 (1%) as Buddhist, 167 (82.7%) as Hoa Hao Buddhist, and the remaining 6 (3%) identified as non-religious.

2.2. Measurement

Child welfare variables

examined in this study included the purpose of the meeting, the family's previous involvement with Child Protective Services (CPS; Ahn et al., 2022), the level of family engagement in the meeting, and the practice skills of the facilitator. The mandatory triggers for convening a meeting encompassed situations such as removal or potential removal, changes in permanency plans, placement changes, youth transitional plans, voluntary placement agreements (VPAs), and others. Due to limited sample sizes, the purpose of the meeting was recoded into a binary variable: removal (1 = Removal) and other purposes (0 = Other). The family's history of substantiated CPS involvement was coded as 1 for "Yes" and 0 for "No" in response to the question, "Have there been any prior substantiated reports of child abuse/neglect for the child?" The Cronbach's alpha for reliability in this study was determined to be 0.75.

Family engagement in the meeting was assessed using seven items that were completed by all family members present at the Family Team Decision-Making (FTDM) session (Ahn et al., 2022). Each item was measured on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). The items encompassed various aspects, including understanding the purpose of the meeting, feeling prepared for the meeting, the presence of necessary individuals, the ability to share input, involvement in planning and decision-making, building the family's strength, and agreement with the proposed plan and services. The overall scale demonstrated good reliability with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.83 in this study.

The sum of the scores for the family engagement items ranged from 21 to 35, with an average score of 31.43. To create a dichotomous variable indicating family engagement, the scores were recoded as either engaged (1 = Engaged) or not engaged (0 = Not Engaged). This method of dichotomization has been supported by previous studies, including Wu et al. (2021). In this study, the Cronbach's alpha for the family engagement scale was found to be 0.90, indicating high internal consistency.

Facilitators' practice skills

In this study, facilitators' practice skills (Ahn et al., 2022) were evaluated using a Likert-type scale consisting of six items, where respondents rated their agreement on a 5-point scale ranging from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree" (1 to 5). These items covered aspects such as the facilitator's knowledge, respect towards participants, ability to maintain focus, neutrality, creation of a comfortable environment, and effective time management. The reliability of the overall scale was high. The total scores on the scale ranged from 18 to 30. To simplify the variable and determine whether family members perceived the facilitator to possess strong practice skills, a cutoff score of 24 was used, representing 80% (24 out of 30) of the total range. This variable

was subsequently recoded into a dichotomous variable, with 1 indicating strong practice skills and 0 indicating otherwise. In this study, the Cronbach alpha was 0.80

2.3. Data analysis

In the present study, data were analyzed using SPSS software version 20.0. Firstly, the means and standard deviations were calculated for the variables of interest, namely Child welfare, Facilitators' practice skills, and Family engagement among S'tieng ethnic families in Bu Gia Map District, Binh Phuoc Province. Secondly, descriptive statistics were performed, including calculating the means and proportions for the main variables (e.g., Child welfare, Facilitators' practice skills, and Family engagement). Thirdly, the correlation between child welfare, Facilitators' practice skills and Family engagement was examined. Finally, a simple regression analysis was conducted to investigate the relationships between child welfare and Family engagement among S'tieng ethnic families in Bu Gia Map District, Binh Phuoc Province.

3. RESULTS.

3.1. Descriptive among Family engagement, Facilitators' practice skills and Child welfare variables

Table 2 showed that Child Welfare (M = 8.79, SD = 2.83), Facilitators' practice skills (M = 22.71, SD = 5.63), and Family Engagement (M = 19.17, SD = 4.87).

Table 2: The mean, standard deviation of the among Family engagement, Facilitators' practice skills and Child welfare variables

Variables	N	M	SD
Child Welfare	202	8.79	2.83
Facilitators' practice skills	202	22.71	5.63
Family Engagement	202	19.17	4.87

Note: n: sample size; M: Mean; SD: Std. Deviation

3.2. Correlation analysis

Table 3 summarizes the Pearson correlations between Child welfare, Family engagement and Facilitators' practice skills. The results showed that Child welfare was positively correlated Facilitators' practice skills ($r = .177$, $p < .05$). Child welfare was positively correlated Family Engagement ($r = .151$, $p < .05$). Facilitators' practice skills were positively correlated Family Engagement ($r = .825$, $p < .001$).

Table 3: Correlation between Child welfare, Family engagement and Facilitators' practice skills

Variables	Child Welfare	Facilitators' practice skills	Family Engagement
Child Welfare	1		
Facilitators' practice skills	.177*	1	.825**
Family Engagement	.151*	.825**	1

*. $p < 0.05$; **. $p < 0.01$

3.3. Hypothesis testing

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship between Facilitators' practice skills, Family Engagement, and Child welfare in Binh Phuoc province. The regression model indicated that Facilitators' practice skills was significantly positive correlated with Child welfare ($\beta = .084$; SE = .106, $t = .181$; $B = 1.344$, $p < .031$). Thus, we supported hypothesis 1. Family Engagement was significantly positive correlated with Child welfare ($\beta = .01$, SE = .111; $t = .911$; $p < .05$). Consequently, we supported hypothesis 2.

Table 4: Unstandardized and standardized regression coefficient of Family engagement, Facilitators' practice skills predicting predating Child welfare in Binh Phuoc province.

Variables	B	SE	t	95% CI	
				Lower	Upper
Facilitators' practice skills	.084	1.344	.181	0.039	.206
Family Engagement	.01	.111	.911	0.134	.150

* $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$

4. DISCUSSION

Our study aimed to test the influence of family engagement and facilitators' practice skills on child welfare among the S'tieng ethnic families in Bu Gia Map District, Binh Phuoc Province. This work also explored the impact of family engagement and facilitators' practice skills on child welfare. The results found that facilitators' practice skills were significantly positively correlated with child welfare, and family engagement was also significantly positively correlated with child welfare.

4.1. The relationship between family engagement on child welfare

Our study revealed a significant positive correlation between family engagement and child welfare, aligning with previous research that has also demonstrated the importance of family involvement and participation in activities and interventions aimed at promoting children's well-being (Cowan et al., 2009). Family engagement is widely recognized as a critical factor in shaping positive outcomes and achieving success in interventions and programs (Cowan et al., 2009). Moreover, our findings support the notion that family engagement leads to improved experiences and outcomes, ultimately enhancing child welfare outcomes (Augsberger et al., 2022). Thus, this research underscores the significance of family engagement as a key component in promoting positive outcomes for families and children within the child welfare system. By exploring the factors that influence parental engagement within the statutory child welfare context, our study contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamics at play. Overall, a strong and positive relationship between family engagement and child welfare is essential for ensuring the well-being and positive development of children.

4.2. The relationship between facilitators' practice skills and child welfare

The primary aim of this study was to examine the association between facilitators' practice skills and child welfare. Hypothesis 2 proposed that when facilitators' practice skills are taken into account, they would have a significant impact on predicting child welfare outcomes, particularly by fostering partnerships with community providers to ensure that children and families have access to necessary services.

Facilitators' practice skills encompass a wide range of abilities and competencies demonstrated by individuals involved in facilitating programs or interventions within the field of child welfare (Ahn et al., 2022). Preliminary evidence from Rockhill (2021) suggests that specific models of family meetings, such as family team decision meetings, hold potential for improving both parents' experiences and child welfare outcomes. These skills encompass diverse qualities and behaviors that contribute to the effective implementation and delivery of services aimed at enhancing child well-being (Dettlaff, 2013; Rockhill, 2021). Facilitators with strong practice skills possess a comprehensive understanding of child welfare issues and best practices, providing a solid foundation for guiding their interventions (Bywaters et al., 2015).

The findings of this study are consistent with the aforementioned evidence. Furthermore, this study contributes to the potential for improved child well-being outcomes, including enhanced safety, emotional well-being, and overall development. Researchers frequently explore the relationship between facilitators' practice skills and child welfare outcomes to gain a deeper understanding of how these skills influence the effectiveness of interventions (Ahn, 2022; Collins-Camargo & Royse, 2010; Rolock, 2011; Villagrana, 2017).

By identifying the specific aspects of facilitators' practice skills associated with positive child welfare outcomes, policymakers and practitioners can develop targeted training and support programs to enhance these skills and promote better outcomes for children and families. This research emphasizes the importance of considering facilitators' practice skills within the child welfare context and highlights their potential impact on fostering positive outcomes for children and families.

5. Strengths and limitations

Despite the aforementioned limitations, the present study has several notable strengths. Firstly, it represents a pioneering effort in examining the contributions of Child welfare, Facilitators' practice skills, and Family engagement among S'tieng ethnic families in Bu Gia Map District, Binh Phuoc Province. While prior research has explored the role of Facilitators' practice skills or Family engagement individually, our study's analysis provides a novel and comprehensive contribution to the existing literature. Secondly, this study builds upon previous research emphasizing the significance of models that can offer insights into service disparities within the child welfare system. By examining the relationships between facilitators' practice skills, Family engagement, and child welfare, our study provides valuable insights into the underlying mechanisms that govern these connections. Additionally, our study employs an anonymous data collection process that allows participants to feel comfortable providing accurate responses without concerns about potential repercussions in their child welfare cases. This aspect strengthens the credibility of our findings and contributes to the development of evidence-based practices in social work. Lastly, by focusing on the S'tieng ethnic families in Bu Gia Map District, Binh Phuoc Province, our research expands the understanding of the child welfare population and its specific dynamics in relation to Facilitators' practice skills and Family engagement. Overall, these

strengths highlight the unique and valuable contributions of our study, informing future research endeavors and aiding the development of effective interventions and policies in the field of social work.

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Declaration of Conflicting Interest

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Authors' Contribution

All of the authors participated in the study, conception and design, investigation, and production of the research materials. The essay was written by all authors, who also helped with the logistics and authored both the first and last drafts. The content and similarity index of the paper have been examined and authorized by all authors. The completion of research is likewise all authors responsibility.

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