

Teacher's Intention to Report Child Abuse and Neglect in Romania: A Mixed-method Study

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ABSTRACT. Child abuse and neglect (CAN) have long-lasting effects on a child's physical, social, and psychological development. Teachers have a unique position to identify, protect, and intervene in these cases, but they often fail to help children in need. This study aims to describe and investigate the factors associated with CAN reporting behavior of school teachers and counselors from Romania using the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as a framework. *Methods.* We conducted a mixed-method study using a modified version of the Child Abuse Intention to Report Scale (CARIS-R). 1025 teachers (91,7% female) participated in the survey. Quantitative and qualitative data analyses were performed to explore the predictors of intention to report CAN and the reasons to report CAN. *Results.* More than half of the teachers (51.9%) suspected at least one CAN case, but only 28.1% reported their concerns. Attitudes towards child discipline and professional responsibility, direct subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control were significant predictors of intention to report CAN. Eight categories of reasons might influence a teacher's decision to report CAN, including the type of abuse, the teacher's characteristics, or the perceived social support. *Conclusions.* This study's findings contribute to our understanding of the individual factors that can influence teachers' intention to report CAN in Romania. Teachers from Romania should have the opportunity to participate in evidence-based training, which fosters their confidence in making CAN reports.

Keywords: child abuse and neglect; intention to report CAN; teachers; theory of planned behavior; knowledge.

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INTRODUCTION

Every child has the right to be happy, healthy, and live a life free of violence. Unfortunately, each year, millions of children worldwide are victims of child abuse and neglect (Lampe, 2002; Moody, Cannings-John, Hood, Kemp, & Robling, 2018; Stoltenborgh Bakermans-Kranenburg, Alink, & van IJzendoorn, 2015). Child abuse has been defined as: "all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, or negligent treatment, or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development, or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power" (World Health Organization [WHO], 1999, p. 15). Four types of child maltreatment are generally recognized: physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological (or emotional or mental) abuse, and neglect.

CAN is an intergenerationally transmitted epidemic (Anderson, Edwards, Silver, & Johnson, 2018) with a severe impact on children's cognitive abilities, language skills, and academic performance (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013; Irigaray et al., 2013). The majority of abuses occur in the family, and almost half of them occur over long periods of a child's life (Meadow, 2007). In Europe, it is estimated that only 10-20% of the abuse cases come to light and the rest of them go undisclosed (WHO, 2013). In the last few years, many efforts have been made to prevent CAN (Brassard & Fiorvanti, 2014; Czerwinski, Finne, Alfes, & Kolip, 2018), but the problem is far from being resolved and needs to be addressed by evidence-based prevention programs (Jones Harden, Simons, Johnson-Motoyama, & Barth, 2020).

While growing up, victims of CAN spend most of their time in educational settings, and many fail to be recognized by the school system (Admon Livny & Kantz, 2016). Teachers have an essential role in promoting the well-being of children, identifying and supporting those in distress, and referring them to help providers such as school counselors or other types of professionals. Moreover, teachers and children usually have trust-based relationships, making children more willing to disclose the occurrence of CAN to them (Osofsky & Lieberman, 2011). Also, school counselors are bound by legal and ethical mandates for reporting CAN (White & Flynt, 2000). They also provide counseling services, coordinate intervention and prevention programs, and help teachers support children in need. Thus, teachers and school counselors are expected to work together to identify CAN victims, guide them with appropriate educational intervention, or report them to local authorities. Studies have shown that school personnel does report cases of CAN (Krase, 2015; Vanderfaellie, De Ruyck, Galle, Van Dooren, & Schotte, 2018), but they also fail to report some of them (Feng, Chen, Fetzner, Feng, & Lin, 2012; Feng, Huang, & Wang, 2010).

The reporting of CAN is a complex behavior and has no specific definition in the literature, making it difficult to draw clear conclusions (Alazri & Hanna, 2020). However, we can conceptualize reporting of CAN as a two-step decision-making process: in the first step, the teacher must detect and recognize CAN, and in the second step, he must take action such as referring the child to professional help or child protection agencies (Walsh, Bidgstock, Farrell, Rassafiani, & Schweitzer, 2008). Thus, a teacher has to recognize a CAN case and know how to report it at the school level or community level. Unfortunately, the available international research revealed that teacher's lack evidence-based training in child abuse, are unaware of the legal requirements of mandate reporting (Karadag, Sönmez, & Dereobali, 2015; Gilbert et al., 2009), or have erroneous beliefs regarding reporting procedure (Kenny, 2001). In order to explore in more depth the behavior of reporting a case of CAN, we included in the survey an open-ended question regarding reasons for reporting.

In their systematic review, Alazri and Hanna (2020) revealed three categories of factors associated with school personnel CAN reporting behavior: system characteristics, victim characteristics, and reporter characteristics. Teachers were more likely to report CAN if they were elementary school teachers, lived in countries that have mandatory reporting law, had sufficient knowledge about CAN, were self-confident in their ability to identify and report, had social support from those important to them, were sure about the occurrence of abuse, believed that it is their professional responsibility to report, and disapproved child physical punishment (Alazri & Hanna, 2020). Feng et al. (2012) wrote that 18-21% of the variance in the intention to report CAN by school personnel in Taiwan was explained by school geographical area. Still, this difference was not confirmed in other studies (Sikes, Remley, & Hays, 2010). Bryant and Baldwin (2010) revealed that positive experience with reporting CAN increases the school personnel's likelihood to make further reports, but this hypothesis was not confirmed in the study conducted by Bibou-Nakou and Markos (2017). Consequently, this study aims to extend the knowledge regarding CAN reporting behavior of teachers by further investigating the role of the school setting and previous reporting experience in the intention to report CAN.

The majority of studies conducted so far used different instruments to measure reporting behavior, and only three studies had a theoretical background (Feng et al., 2005; Schols, de Ruiter, & Öry, 2013; Goebbels et al., 2008; Toros & Tiirik, 2016). Accordingly, to support a systematic examination of the factors that influence the intention to report CAN, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) was used as a theoretical background. Not all school teachers encounter CAN cases; therefore, the TPB model is appropriate for investigating the factors associated with the intention to report CAN. According to the TPB model, an individual's

behavior is influenced by the intention to perform that behavior, which in turn is influenced by three factors: attitudes towards the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 2006; Feng, Huang, & Wang, 2010). In previous studies, knowledge and experience in working with CAN cases were correlated with nurses' intention to report (Fraser, Mathews, Walsh, Chen, & Dunneet, 2010; Kraft & Eriksson, 2015); thus, both knowledge and work experience were included in the theoretical framework of our study.

Children can be CAN victims at any age (Akmatov, 2011). Studies conducted so far focused on the experience of teachers who work at one grade level, except for a few ones that investigated the experience and knowledge of all school staff members (Kenny, 2004; Choo, Walsh, Marret, Chinna, & Tey, 2013; Bibou-Nakou & Markos, 2017; Greco, Guilera, & Pereda, 2017;), or school counselors (Bryant & Baldwin, 2010; Sivis-Cetinkaya, 2015). As previously mentioned, teachers and school counselors have essential roles in helping out the victims of CAN in the educational settings; thus, we included both categories in our study. Moreover, teachers from all school levels were included to explore whether the level of the school has an influence on reporting behavior and draw a complete picture about the factors associated with reporting behavior.

The Romanian context

In Romania, data on violence against children are provided by: the National Statistics Institute of Romania; sectorial statistics from Child Protection Agencies; research studies like Adverse childhood experiences (Băban et al., 2013) and Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children (starting from 2013, researchers have included a subscale on child abuse; Meinch, Cosma, Mikton, & Băban, 2017); and several organizations which develop and implement prevention and intervention programs for CAN (United Nations Children's Fund; World Vision Romania; Salvați Copiii Romania).

In 2018, 15 000 children were victims of CAN [National Authority for the Protection of the child's rights and Adoption (ANPDCA)], but the prevalence is likely to be much higher because most of the cases are not identified/reported. World Vision Romania (2015) emphasized in a report that "violence is a part of the vicious circle of poverty (...). At least 1.5 million Romanian children are directly exposed to a degrading and violent environment" (p. 12). Even if Law no. 272/2004 establishes that violence against children is forbidden, only 1 in 10 parents say they would never hit their child (World Vision Romania, 2015).

Article no. 89 from the Law no. 272/2004 specifies that employees of public or private institutions who have a suspicion that a child is a victim of CAN should immediately notify Child Protection Services (CPS). Otherwise, they will

be sanctioned according to the law" (Law no. 272/2004), but no sanctions are mentioned. Anonymous or not, the notification of a CAN suspicion can be given directly, by phone, or by email to DGASPC (The General Direction of Assistance and Protection of the Child). Following the notification, the social workers will investigate the child's home and will decide whether the suspicion of CAN is sustained. The child will be left in the family or relocated in a shelter, depending on the decision.

In a qualitative study conducted by Salvați Copiii Romania (2018), most teachers were unaware of the legal requirements to report CAN. They emphasized that they do not have the instruments and professional preparation to deal with these cases. Moreover, Romania lacks a systematic collection of data regarding the detection and reporting of CAN cases; thus, we don't know how many reports to CPS are made by teachers.

Current study

Teachers are in the unique position to identify, intervene, prevent, and report CAN cases. Previous research has investigated factors that influence teachers' decisions to report CAN. Still, each country's cultural factors may influence teachers' personal motivation to get involved in these cases (Schols, Ruiter, & Öry, 2013). Moreover, children can be victims of abuse at any age; thus, teachers and school counselors should know how to deal with these cases and report them to the school principal or local authorities. Therefore, teachers from four educational levels and school counselors were required to participate in this study. The four educational levels were: preschool education (kindergarten; children aged 3-6 years), primary school (children aged 7-11 years), secondary education (gymnasium; children aged 11-15 years), and high school (covers grade 9 through 12 or 13). The specific objectives of this study were to:

1. Identify teachers' reporting behavior of CAN in the Romanian context.
2. Identify the main reasons of Romanian' teachers for reporting and not reporting CAN.
3. Explore differences in knowledge, attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and intention to report between primary, secondary, high school teachers and school counselor.
4. Assess which factors from the TPB model significantly predict teachers' intention to report severe and less severe CAN cases.

This study is the first one conducted in Romania that investigates teachers' reporting behavior and factors associated with the intention to report CAN.

METHODS

This cross-sectional study was conducted in two phases. Phase one was the translation, adaptation, and validation of the Child Abuse Report Intention Scale - *Kindergarten Teacher's Version* (CARIS; Feng et al., 2010) on Romanian teachers. Permission to adapt the CARIS was obtained from the authors, and care was taken to contextualize the questionnaire for Romania-specific legislation. In phase two, the CARIS-R was used to conduct a national survey, of which results are reported in this study.

Participants

The study sample included 1025 teachers (91.7% female and 8.3% males, $M_{age} = 42.56$, $SD = 9.62$) who voluntarily completed the online questionnaire. The majority of the participants were married (72.5%) and had at least one child (75.9%). Regarding their last form of graduated education, 2.8 % had a high-school diploma, 43.9 had Bachelor's degree, 49.2 % had a Master's degree (49.2%), and 4.1 % had a doctoral degree. Most of the schools were located in the North-East and North-West of Romania, with 72.1% in urban areas. The years of work experience as a teacher varied between 3 months and above 25 years: 15.5% were early career teachers (1-5 years experience), 23.6 % were mid-career teachers (6 -15 years experience), and 60.9 were late-career teachers (with 16 or more years experience).

Sampling procedure

In order to reach the participants, schools databases and social media accounts (Facebook) were used. In the first step, 1753 public schools were selected from an official database (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020) using a proportionate stratified random sampling technique in which strata were: school residence (urban and rural), school level (preschool, primary, secondary or high school) and administrative district. Specifically, from each administrative district, we randomly selected 5% of the schools from each of the four school levels included in each setting (urban and rural). Regarding social media accounts, a systematic search was performed to identify teachers' Facebook groups across Romania. The groups were selected if the members were only teachers, had above 500 members, were national groups, and the group moderator agreed to post the information about the study. A total sample of 12 Facebook groups met the selection criteria. The initial sample of participants who completed the questionnaire was 1073; 48 were not included

in the data analysis because they were working in special education or were not teachers (e.g., secretary, librarian, social worker, kinetotherapist). All participants had to read an information letter about the study protocol, the rewards for participation, and sign the informed consent before completing the questionnaire.

Measurement

CARIS-R (*Child Abuse Report Intention Scale – Romanian version*) is a revised scale from the CARIS - *Kindergarten Teacher's Version* (Feng et al., 2010). The scale was developed according to the TPB model and consisted of 6 sections. The first section included demographic data, experience of encountering and reporting CAN, the professional training of teachers regarding CAN, and an open-ended question: "What reasons would make you report a case of CAN?". The following sections included five individual scales measuring the major study variables: 1) attitudes; 2) subjective norms; 3) perceived behavioral control; 4) knowledge; and 5) intention to report CAN (eight vignettes). (See Table 2 for scale characteristics).

The attitudes scale consisted of three subscales that measured the attitudes toward child discipline, the punishment of perpetrators, and professional responsibility to report CAN. Participants rated their responses on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Items that were negatively worded were reverse-coded. Items were added up separately on each subscale, in which low scores represented that teachers strongly disagree with harsh discipline, firmly believe that perpetrators should not be punished for their acts, and that it is not their responsibility to report CAN. *The direct and indirect subjective norms* were each measured with one question, with response options ranging from 1 (definitely no) to 5 (definitely yes); low score represented: 1) direct subjective norms - teacher believes that most of the people from the general population believe that teachers should not report CAN; 2) indirect subjective norms - teacher believes that most of the people of whose opinion he/she respects believe that they should not report. *The perceived behavioral control* over reporting was measured with 8 items and response options were 1 (definitely no) to 5 (definitely yes), a low score was equivalent to low perceived behavioral control. *The knowledge subscale* included questions about signs and symptoms of abuse and CAN legislation and the teacher had to answer with 1 (yes), 2 (no), or 3 (I don't know); a low score indicated poor knowledge. The last section included eight vignettes, four with severe cases of abuse and four with less severe cases of abuse, and measured *the intention to report CAN* based on a 10-point continuum (1 = almost certainly would not report; 10 = almost certainly would report).

Previous studies have reported good construct and content validity of the CARIS questionnaire (Feng & Levine, 2005; Feng et al., 2010). In this study, the internal consistency of the subscales was increased by deleting all items that did not have at least one correlation above 0.3 (two items from the attitude towards child discipline subscale and two from the attitudes towards professional responsibility subscale). The deleted items were excluded from the inferential analysis but maintained for the descriptive statistics.

PROCEDURE AND STUDY DESIGN

Data collection methods and study design

A mixed-method study was performed combining the following: 1) a cross-sectional study in which the focus was on investigating the knowledge, attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and intention to report CAN of preschool, primary, secondary, high school teachers, and school counselors; 2) a qualitative approach in which we analyzed teachers' answers to one open-ended question regarding reasons for reporting CAN.

The responses to the survey were collected in two phases. First, a link to the questionnaire and a study poster was distributed on 12 Facebook groups created for teachers. Second, an email was sent to 1753 school secretaries requesting to forward its content to all teachers. The email contained information about the study (objective, rewards, the people involved and their email addresses) and a link to the questionnaire in Google forms. Fifty-seven email addresses were not valid, resulting in only 1696 emails reaching their destination. To increase the number of participant, we offered three incentives: the chance to win a package of books on Self Development, a brief report of the study results, and free participation in an online course "*Methods of identification and intervention in child abuse cases in schools*". The questionnaire was available online for two months, and the responses were saved confidentially to a password-protected computer. Teachers interested in receiving one of the incentives provided an email address saved in a separate excel document.

Given that CAN is a sensitive matter, teachers received the email address of the principal investigator if they felt the need to talk about the questionnaire or other issues regarding the research subject. The principal investigator received 43 emails from teachers across Romania who wanted to talk about their experience with CAN in school, the training needs of the teachers, or to collaborate further in the research project.

Data analysis strategy

The data were analyzed quantitatively in SPSS-20 software and qualitatively with content analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Padgette, 2008) in MAXQDATA-10 software. All questions were mandatory in the Google forms questionnaires except those with open-ended answers, which led to no missing data. Descriptive analysis was performed using Means, Standard Deviation, and percentages to describe teachers' answers to the survey. Pearson's chi-square tests were performed to test the association between demographic characteristics of the teachers (school level, teaching experience, participation in evidence-based training, previous reporting experience), setting of the school, and intention to report CAN. Further, parametric and non-parametric statistical analyses were conducted to compare differences in the main variables among preschool, primary, secondary, high school teachers, and school counselors. The distribution was normal, skewness and kurtosis did not exceed the value of ± 2 (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2014). Consequently, one-way analysis of variance ANOVA followed by the Scheffe tests were used to compare the perceived behavioral control and attitudes toward the punishment of the abusers, and the Kruskal-Wallis test was used to compare the rest of the variables. Pearson and Point-biserial correlation coefficients were calculated to investigate the correlates of intention to report CAN. Predictors of intention to report CAN were investigated with hierarchical multiple regression. Each variable was added to the model according to the TPB theory to investigate the amount of variance each dimension explains.

The content analysis was performed by the main investigator and one school counselor to enhance the reliability of the data analysis, Cohen's kappa coefficient was also computed. The following steps were used in content analysis: 1) reading all the answers to gain an understanding of their nature; 2) coding the answers through repeated reading; 3) the author and the school counselor discussed the findings and permanently compared and refined the codes; 4) similar codes were grouped in themes; 5) all the answers were reread to extract quotes that represented the themes. In the text, the quotes are presented with R (from the response) and the participant's number (e.g., R29).

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics

The descriptive statistics for each subscale are presented in Table 1. Regarding the items that were only maintained for the descriptive analysis, 81.3% of the teachers agreed that physical punishment is child abuse, 30%

reported that parents have the right to decide how they discipline their children, 33.6% agreed that reporting a case is troublesome for them, and 82.1% said that is time-consuming to deal with these cases.

Regarding the knowledge subscale, 45.6% of the school teachers indicated that they *do not know* if they have to report a CAN case, and 47.9% stated that *they must have concrete evidence before reporting CAN*. Between 23.1% and 65.5% of teachers revealed that *they do not know* the correct answer to the law-related questions. The school counselors had more correct answers at the knowledge subscale than all other teachers $F(5, 1019) = 14.86, p < .001$; all posthoc comparisons performed with Scheffe test between the school counselors and the teachers from different levels were statistically significant at the level of $p < .001$.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and internal consistency of CARIS subscales

Subscale	Item	Mean	SD	Actual range	Potential range	Cronbach's α
Intention report	8	61.52	14.69	8-80	8-80	.87
Attitudes toward:						
Child discipline	4	5.13	2.16	4-24	4-24	.72
Perpetrators	5	24.60	5.01	9-30	5-30	.67
Professional responsibility	5	26.60	3.76	6-30	5-30	.65
Subjective norm						
Norm-direct	1	4.23	.95	1-5	1-5	-
Norm-indirect	1	4.29	.90	1-5	1-5	-
Perceived behavioral control	8	31.06	5.64	13-44	8-48	.75
Knowledge	13	4.66	2.68	0-12	0-12	.76

Note. $N = 1025$, SD = standard deviation;

Descriptive statistics for intention to report severe and less severe cases of CAN are presented in Table 2. The mean for intention to report *severe vignettes* was 31.61 ($SD = 6.94$) and for *less severe vignettes* was 29.91 ($SD = 8.45$). Teachers did not significantly differ in their intention to report severe and less severe cases, regardless of the school level to which they teach and the gravity of the case. Teachers were more likely to say that they will report physical and sexual abuse than psychological abuse and neglect, in the case of both severe and less severe vignettes. Regarding work experience, early career teachers had a slightly stronger intention to report ($M = 64.46$) than mid-career teachers ($M = 59.85$) and late-career teachers ($M = 61.42$), but the differences did not reach statistical significance.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of intended reporting behavior

Intended reporting behavior	Mean	SD
<i>Severe cases of abuse:</i>		
Psychological abuse: dress a girl like a boy and tell her they wished for a boy	6.24	3.04
Physical abuse: beat a child resulting in facial bruising and fractures	9.36	1.60
Sexual abuse: engage in sexual intercourse with their child	9.35	1.61
Neglect: left a child home alone until midnight and child started a fire	6.68	2.78
Total mean/standard deviation	31.61	6.94
<i>Less severe cases of abuse:</i>		
Psychological abuse: ridicule and criticize the child	6.01	3.02
Physical abuse: hit a child's palms and legs with a cane	8.27	2.30
Sexual abuse: show pornographic pictures to the child	8.21	2.50
Neglect: delay medical treatment for their child	7.42	2.72
Total mean/standard deviation	29.91	8.45

Note. $N = 1025$, $SD =$ standard deviation

Reporting history and educational preparation for dealing with CAN

A third of the teachers (28.1%) indicated that they had reported at least one CAN case. The majority of them were females (90.6%), had at least one child (81.5%), worked in urban areas (71.2%), were 40 to 50 years old (45.1%), and had no personal experience of victimization in their childhood (52.9%). There was a statistically significant association between the school educational level of the teacher and previous experience in CAN reporting ($\chi^2 (5) = 96.49, p < .001$). The association was moderately strong (Cohen, 1988), Cramer's $V = .307$. Specifically, school counselors (57.7%), secondary (31.1%), and primary school teachers (30.3%) had the highest rate of reporting CAN, while preschool teachers had the lowest (8.4%). Similar percentages of teachers from rural and urban areas reported at least one case of CAN, $\chi^2 (2) = .716, p = .699$.

More than half of teachers (51.9%) failed to report at least one case of CAN identified in the school. The majority of them were preschool teachers (67.3%), followed by high school teachers (55.7%) and primary school teachers (54.2%). The most prevalent reason for not reporting was lack of evidence (39.1%), followed by lack of trust in local authorities (20.4%), and fear of repercussion (6.6%). It is worth mentioning that a third of the teachers (32.3%) who said that they did not encounter cases of CAN were late-career teachers (above 16 years of work experience).

Regarding school teachers' preparation in dealing with CAN, only 18.4% participated in child maltreatment courses. The majority of them were school counselors (37.4%), followed by secondary and high school teachers (19.2%) and primary school teachers (17.4%). More than half of the teachers (57%) considered that the courses meet their expectations, 85% of the teachers continued to read about CAN after the course ended, and 94.2% applied the acquired knowledge in the school. Although they did not participate in formal training, 7.5% of the teachers learned about CAN through reading studies or reports provided by organizations involved in child protection.

Comparisons of major variables by teachers' position

The ANOVA results indicated a group effect on both perceived behavioral control, $F(5, 1019) = 4.62$; $p < .001$, and attitudes towards the punishment of the abusers $F(5, 1019) = 3.92$, $p < .01$. Post-hoc analyses using the Scheffé test indicated that teachers from secondary school ($M = 30.32$, $SD = 5.36$) and high school ($M = 30.25$, $SD = 5.67$) perceived significantly lower levels of control over reporting CAN than school counselors ($M = 33.43$, $SD = 5.42$). In addition, school counselors ($M = 23.32$, $SD = 5.17$) were more lenient in their attitudes regarding punishing the abuse perpetrators than kindergarten teachers ($M = 25.38$, $SD = 4.82$). No other significant differences emerged from the data.

Kruskal-Wallis H tests were run to determine if there were significant differences in attitudes towards child discipline, professional responsibility, and direct and indirect subjective norms. The distribution of scores was similar for all groups and variables, as assessed by visual inspection of the boxplot. The results showed that teachers had different attitudes regarding child discipline $H(5) = 14.99$, $p < .05$, professional responsibility $H(5) = 21.21$, $p < .001$, direct subjective norms $H(5) = 23.33$, $p < .001$, and indirect subjective norms $H(5) = 15.59$, $p < .01$. Pairwise comparisons revealed that high school teachers (mean rank = 547.79) were more likely to say that physical discipline is a good method to discipline children than primary school teachers $H(5) = 471.93$ and school counselors $H(5) = 457.98$. Moreover, high school teachers perceived less responsibility to report CAN (mean rank = 451.97) than preschool teachers (mean rank = 563.25) and primary school teachers (mean rank = 551.60). Regarding direct subjective norms, preschool teachers (mean rank = 575.82) perceived that people important for them felt that they should report CAN cases, while the high school teachers (mean rank = 463.80) perceived the opposite. Finally, preschool teachers (mean rank = 569.63) also perceived that friends, family, colleagues, or school principals expect them to report CAN, while school counselor (mean rank = 466.38) and high school teacher (mean rank = 493.65) perceived that others do not expect them always to report.

Correlates of intention to report CAN

The correlations between main variables and intention to report severe plus less severe CAN cases were examined with Pearson and Point-biserial correlation coefficients (Table 3). Teachers who had a solid intention to report CAN ($r > .30$) were more likely to believe that it is their professional responsibility to report, perceive that family and other people felt that they should report, and perceived more behavioral control in reporting.

Table 3. Person's correlation coefficient between main variables and intention to report CAN

Variables	Intention to report CAN
Work experience	-.037
Having children	-.023
Previous experience of victimization	.012
Participation in courses about CAN	.142**
Previous reporting of CAN	.090*
Reasons for not reporting CAN	-.159**
Attitudes toward:	
Child discipline	-.180**
Perpetrators	.230**
Professional responsibility	.432**
Subjective norms:	
Norm-direct	.443**
Norm-indirect	.411**
Perceived behavioral control	.484**
Knowledge	.144**

Note. $N = 1025$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$.

Predictors of intention to report CAN

Hierarchical multiple regression was run to determine if the attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms (independent variables) contributed to teachers' intention to report (dependent variable) severe and less severe CAN cases while controlling for reasons for not reporting CAN, the previous reporting of CAN, participation in courses about CAN, and knowledge. All assumptions for conducting hierarchical regression were met (Field, 2013, p. 132-154). In Table 4, full details on each regression model are presented. The full model was statistically significant, $R^2 = .346$, $F(10, 1014) = 53.699$, $p < .001$,

adjusted $R^2 = .340$. The addition of attitudes to the prediction of intention to report CAN (Model 2) led to a statistically significant increase in R^2 of .161, $F(3, 1017) = 70.976$, $p < .001$. The addition of subjective norms (Model 3) also led to statistically significant increase in R^2 of .064, $F(2, 1015) = 46.075$, $p < .001$. The addition of perceived behavioral control (Model 4) also led to statistically significant increase in R^2 of .050, $F(1, 1014) = 76.830$, $p < .001$.

Table 4. Hierarchical Multiple Regression Predicting Intention to report CAN

Intention to report Severe and less Severe cases of CAN								
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
Variable	B	β	B	β	B	β	B	β
Constant	59.06**	-	21.96**	-	12.53**	-	2.47	-
Reasons for not reporting	-3.15**	-0.19	-2.16**	-0.13	-1.20*	0.07	-0.36	-0.02
Previous reporting of CAN	2.34*	0.07	1.45	0.04	1.04	0.03	0.16	0.01
Participation in courses	4.27**	0.11	3.14*	0.09	2.69*	0.07	0.71	0.02
Knowledge	0.73**	0.13	0.40*	0.07	0.33*	0.06	0.11	0.02
Attitude - child discipline			-0.62**	-0.09	-0.45*	-0.07	-0.39*	-0.06
Attitude-perpetrators			0.19*	0.06	0.09	0.03	0.11	0.03
Attitude-Professional responsibility			1.38**	0.36	1.03**	0.26	0.76**	0.19
Norm-direct					2.77**	0.18	2.37**	0.16
Norm-indirect					1.99*	0.75	1.23	0.08
Perceived behavioral control							0.72**	0.28

Note. $N = 1025$; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$.

Teacher's reasons for reporting CAN

The qualitative content analysis revealed eight themes presented in Figure 1, along with their sub-themes and absolute frequencies. The themes are: 1) abuse characteristics (teachers talked about the gravity, frequency and types of child abuse that they would report more frequently); 2) signs, symptoms, and consequences of abuse (specific and general indicators of abuse and long term consequences); 3) the teacher (teachers' characteristics that would increase their probability in making a report); 4) the child (teacher's concerns about the children's safety and their future); 5) family characteristics (attributes of the family that would influence teacher's decision to report); 6) respecting the law (teacher's thoughts about the child rights, punishment of the abuser, and what should be done to improve the legislation regarding CAN); 7) receiving social support (the need of teachers to work in a team in CAN cases); 8) concrete evidence (teachers talked about the importance of having concrete evidence before making a CAN report). In the following, some of the themes and sub-themes are briefly presented.

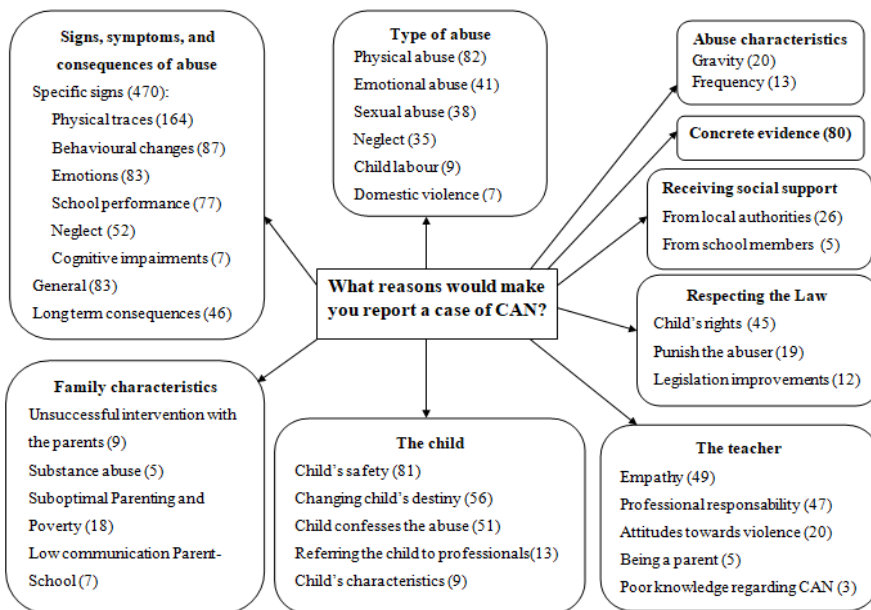


Figure 1. Themes and sub-themes (absolute frequencies in parentheses) revealed by qualitative content analysis

Three of the themes that emerged from the data are around the phenomenon of abuse. Physical abuse was the most frequent type of abuse mentioned by teachers, followed by emotional abuse and neglect. When it comes to signs, symptoms, and consequences of abuse, teachers described them in general terms ("*child suffering*", "*changed behavior*", "*emotional state*", "*physical health*", "*emotional consequences*") and specific ones ("*bruises*", "*cuts*", "*injuries*", "*sadness*", "*aggressive behavior*", "*low concentration*", "*dirty clothes*", "*no food package*", "*low grades*", "*absenteeism*"). Some teachers included among their statements the gravity of the abuse ("*I have to suspect that it is a serious case of abuse*" R8) and its frequency ("*the student is repeatedly abused and his behavior changes*" R470).

Some of the reasons are reflecting teachers' traits like empathy ("*I was abused in childhood. I cannot be indifferent to the child suffering. I care about the children from my class. I need to help them*" R846), strong professional responsibility ("*from the perspective of a teacher, I believe that we have to teach children about their rights, to notify the authorities and get involved in solving cases of abuse of which we are aware*" R1069), and negative attitudes towards violence ("*violence in my view is intolerable, destructive, with negative consequences for the future adult*" R98).

All references regarding the child and its well-being are gathered in one theme. Teachers are more inclined to report CAN when the child's life is in danger ("*for the child safety*", "*child would die*", "*child is in danger*"), if they strongly believe that the child's destiny would change ("*saving the child*", "*better future for the child*", "*give him a chance*"), and if the child confesses the abuse and asks for help ("*the preschooler's confession about their home environment and abuse; when he asks for help!*" R516).

A few teachers mentioned parents and their influence in the process of identifying and intervening in CAN cases. Teachers would report the case if the intervention in the family has no results ("*if I reported my complaints to the parents and they would do nothing to change their behavior towards the child*" R478), parents have risk behaviors ("*children from families in which one of the parents is an alcoholic*" R1012) and lack parental skills ("*some parents are not intellectually and emotionally prepared to raise a child. The child is a simple biological accident*" R545).

Receiving social support, respecting the law, and concrete evidence were other three themes that emerged. Some teachers need concrete evidence before reporting a case of CAN ("*clearest evidence of abuse – the ability to trust what the victim is reporting. Another teacher that confirms that the child story is real*" R197). Sources of social support mentioned by the teacher were colleagues ("*if I knew for sure that other colleagues would be involved in the case*"

R27), and local authorities (*"to have the help and involvement of local authorities, to find various solutions and sources of support for the whole family"* R521). Regarding the sub-theme clear legislation, teachers emphasized the issues of the current legislation which would make them think twice before reporting (*"too much paperwork"* R15, *"no real solutions for the child"* R46, *"I would report cases of child abuse, but I do not trust the Child's protection system"* R154).

DISCUSSION

Millions of children are referred annually to Child Protection Services. Still, the true extent of child maltreatment is underestimated, mainly because those required by the law to report CAN cases often fail to do so. In Romania, the law states that all school teachers should report suspected cases of CAN. However, data on how many reports are made by teachers, the extent to which they are knowledgeable about legal regulations regarding CAN reporting, and how well-prepared they are in dealing with these cases is missing. Therefore, this study aimed to identify the teacher's reporting behavior of CAN in the Romanian context and explore which factors from the TPB model best predict the intention to report CAN.

In the current study, 1025 teachers participated from all regions of Romania. The majority of teachers were female and lived in urban areas; over a quarter of teachers reported at least one CAN case. Primary and secondary school teachers reported more cases than high school teachers. The same result was obtained in the study conducted by Webster et al. (2005), in which the number of reports of child maltreatment decreased as the victim's age increased. Although preschool teachers should be the ones that protect defenseless young children, similar to previous findings (Feng et al., 2010), the rates of reporting were low. An explanation for this could be that apart from physical traces, other pieces of evidence of abuse are difficult to obtain from young children. As Feng et al. (2009) stated, preschool teachers might feel that they are "dancing on the edge" and maintaining the relationship with the family and overlooking the signs of CAN might seem a better option in some cases. The school counselor reported more cases than other teachers. Possible explanations might be that other teachers ask for their help when they suspect that a child is a victim, children have more confidence in school counselors and confess the abuse, and school counselors are more knowledgeable and prepared to help them (Bryant, 2009).

Almost half of the teachers suspected that a child was victimized but failed to report their suspicions. Other studies also revealed that school teachers do not report a significant proportion of CAN cases (Kenny, 2001; Schols et al., 2013; Webster et al., 2005). Unfortunately, more than half of the kindergarten

teachers did not make a report despite their suspicions. Preserving a relationship with the parents, avoiding further harm for the child, maintaining the balance between reporting a case and risk to face negative consequences, and maintaining trust-based relationships with the child might explain underreporting (Feng et al., 2009). However, the difference between reported and suspected cases is overwhelming; further studies should investigate whether teachers used other means to help the children despite their failure to report.

An interesting finding is that a third from the late-career teachers said that they never encountered a case of CAN. Other studies revealed that one in five children in every class is a victim of abuse (Daignault & Hebert, 2009, as cited in Dănilă, Tăut & Băban, 2019). Accordingly, we can only suppose that teachers did not encounter these cases, failed to identify child victims due to their insufficient knowledge, or maybe they have chosen to ignore the case and focus on teaching their lessons.

Similar to other studies (Briggs & Potter, 2004; Dinehart & Kenny, 2015; Feng et al., 2010; Kenny, 2004; Schols et al., 2013; Toros & Tiirik, 2016; Walsh, Farrell, Bridgstock, & Schweitzer, 2006; Walsh et al., 2008), the teachers had insufficient knowledge regarding signs and symptoms of CAN and mandatory reporting law, except for school counselors (Bryant & Milsom, 2005). Poor knowledge could be a barrier in intervening in CAN cases (Dienhart & Kenny, 2015; Gilbert et al., 2009; Greco et al., 2017; Kenny, 2001). These findings might also be explained by the fact that only a quarter of teachers from this study participated in CAN courses. Although teachers did not participate in CAN training, a small proportion of them improved their knowledge through reading about child maltreatment.

Along with a solid knowledge base, personal motivation also has an essential role in helping victimized children (Alvarez, Kenny, Donohue, & Carpin, 2004; Delaronde, King, Bendel, & Reece, 2000). Perceived barriers identified by teachers were the fact that they feel uncomfortable when reporting and that it is time-consuming to deal with these cases. In other studies (Alvarez et al., 2004; Schols et al., 2013), teachers revealed that lack of trust in authorities, fear of repercussions, and lack of evidence prevented them from reporting.

In addition to other studies conducted with school staff members (Choo et al., 2013; Greco et al., 2017; Kenny, 2004), we investigated the differences in attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and knowledge between kindergarten, primary, secondary, high school teacher and school counselors. The majority of teachers, except for high school teachers, reported that they disagree with harsh discipline, in opposition to other studies (Briggs & Potter, 2004; Feng et al., 2010; Ibanez, Borrego, Pemberton, & Terao, 2006; Kenny, 2004). In Romania, 1 in 10 parents reported that they would never hit their child, while 1 in 2 said they hit the child for his good (World Vision România, 2015). Therefore, this

study findings gives us hope that, at least in the school environment, children will not have to face physical discipline, and teachers might be an essential agent of change who can advise parents to use positive disciplinary practices.

School counselors reported more positive attitudes towards the punishment of the abusers. Simultaneously, kindergarten teachers were more likely to say that severe penalties are the best way to stop the abuse. The professional background might explain this difference in opinions. School counselors might be more inclined to support the rehabilitation of the abuser and end the circle of violence. At the same time, kindergarten teachers agreed to severe punishments because they work with younger children who, in comparison with older children, are more vulnerable and can be severely affected by the experience of CAN. School counselors had the highest scores in terms of perceived behavioral control, while secondary and high school teachers had the lowest. Therefore, we can argue that the school counselor is an essential pillar of support in reporting abuse in the school environment.

There was no significant difference among teachers regarding the intention to report severe and less severe abuse cases. We found significant, but low correlation coefficients between intention to report CAN and participation in courses about CAN, previous experience in reporting, knowledge, the belief that perpetrators should be punished for their acts, and that others important expect them to intervene, and perceived behavioral control. These results are supported partially by other studies (Feng et al., 2010; Schols et al., 2013; Toros & Tiirik, 2016). Furthermore, work experience did not significantly correlate with the intention to report, as previous studies stated (Greco et al., 2017; Toros & Tiirik, 2016), but the quality of previous reporting experiences. We could only observe a slight tendency of early career teachers to report higher scores at the intention to report.

Except for indirect subjective norms and attitudes towards perpetrators, this study's findings support the TPB model. Similar to other studies (Feng & Wu, 2005; Feng et al., 2010; Goebbels et al., 2008), attitudes towards child discipline, professional responsibility, and perceived behavioral control were significant predictors of the intention. An interesting result is that the most important predictor of intention was direct subjective norms, which means that for teachers from Romania, societal expectations to report child abuse significantly influence their decision. In the study conducted by Feng et al. (2010), subjective norms did not predict teacher's intention to report CAN. Taken together, the results of hierarchical regression emphasized the importance of attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms in the intention to report CAN among teachers from Romania.

In order to explore in more depth, the personal motivation of teachers for helping a child in need, answers to an open-ended question were analyzed.

The content analysis revealed a broad spectrum of motives. A close examination of sub-themes frequencies shows that, first of all, teachers pay attention to physical traces of abuse, followed by changes in behavior and emotional consequences. Teachers are more inclined to report physical and sexual abuse and minimize the effect of emotional abuse and neglect. The reasons for these discrepancies might be that physical traces are indisputable evidence of physical abuse and sexual abuse it is socially unacceptable. Emotional abuse is more difficult to detect, and teachers might not have the instruments to investigate. At the same time, neglect is common in low-income families or those in which parents have gone abroad, and teachers might feel powerless in helping the child in need. Other reasons for reporting are related to the intervention's benefits, like the child will be safe and will have access to professional help, which will ensure a better future for him. Some teachers emphasized that a child's confession is a crucial factor for a teacher's intervention. Moreover, empathetic teachers who believe that it is their professional responsibility to intervene and have negative attitudes towards violence will not let a child down when victimized. Finally, like other studies showed (Kenny, 2001; Greco et al., 2017), teachers might be more inclined to report if other colleagues or local authorities are involved in the case and find plausible solutions for child' safety.

Practical implications

This study's results emphasize the importance of attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms in designing training programs for all school teachers to help them detect, recognize, and take action in CAN cases. Although previous studies revealed mixed results about the impact of training in identifying and reporting CAN (Kenny, 2004; Walsh et al., 2008), there were also a few studies that indicated that participation in training increases teacher's confidence over the recognition of CAN (Baginsky, 2003; Baginsky & Macpherson, 2005). Training programs should focus specifically on the legal aspects regarding child maltreatment, signs, and symptoms of CAN in the school environment, and the most common barriers in reporting.

Moreover, training should emphasize the importance of professional responsibility towards reporting, address the attitudes regarding child discipline, and enhance teachers' perceived behavioral control. All schools should have written policies about CAN reporting, accessible and known by the school personnel. The school principal and teachers should work as a team and collaborate with Police and Child Protection Agencies.

The school counselors also have an essential role. The results revealed that they have more knowledge and confidence in reporting CAN than other teachers. School principals and teachers should be more supportive of the school

counselors and assist them in reporting procedures. Moreover, school counselors should promote their school activity and educate the children, teachers, and parents regarding their role in promoting children's well-being. Also, the school counselor could offer additional training to the school teachers regarding CAN signs, symptoms, and consequences.

Finally, this study revealed that kindergarten school teachers have the lowest reporting rate and the highest rate of suspecting abuse without reporting. Therefore, they should participate in mandatory educational programs about recognizing and reporting CAN.

Limitations

There are several limitations of the present study which must be taken into account when interpreting the results. First of all, this study used vignettes presenting hypothetical situations about CAN cases. Therefore, the results are limited only to the cases presented. Second, although the participants' sample was diverse in socio-demographic variables and a stratified random sampling technique was used, the findings' generalizability is limited. Only those teachers who were interested in the subject have likely chosen to complete the questionnaire. Third, we cannot confirm the validity of teachers' answers regarding participation in training about CAN and the number of cases reported. The reporting system data are kept confidential; thus, the actual reports of teachers remain unknown. Forth, we used a self-report questionnaire, which can conduct to response bias, given that CAN is a sensitive subject and teachers might be more tempted to respond in a socially desirable manner. Finally, the knowledge of teachers was only partially covered by the subscale questions. Other studies should test in more depth the actual knowledge of the teachers.

CONCLUSIONS

This study explored the reporting behavior of school teachers from Romania and demonstrated how the TPB model could help us understand the factors associated with the teacher's intention to report CAN. In addition to other studies, school teachers from different educational levels participated, which enabled us to describe more broadly what factors might influence their intention to report. The majority of teachers disapproved of the child's physical punishment, and except for school counselors, they had insufficient knowledge about signs and symptoms of CAN and mandatory reporting law. Also, school counselors, followed by primary and secondary school teachers, make most CAN reports. In contrast, preschool teachers reported the fewest cases of CAN.

Almost half of the teachers said that they did not make a report even if they suspected that the child was a victim. Teachers are more inclined to report physical and sexual abuse than emotional abuse and neglect. Teachers who had a solid intention to report CAN were more likely to disapprove child's harsh discipline, believed that it is their professional responsibility to report, felt that others important for them expect them to report, and perceived more behavioral control in reporting.

In conclusion, this study's findings contribute to our understanding of the individual factors that can influence teachers' intention to report CAN in Romania and add up to understanding the reporting behavior cross-culturally. In the school environment, teachers are the key to early detection and intervention, and they must be aware of their responsibility to intervene and report these cases to social services. Training programs designed for teachers should address all factors related to the intention to report to enable teachers' recognition and reporting of CAN and foster their confidence over intervening in these sensitive cases.

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