

Dr. Amir Alam

Lecturer, Department of Social Work, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Sheringal, Dir Upper

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Key Words:Orphans, vulnerable children,
OVC, orphanages, residential care**Corresponding Author:****Dr. Amir Alam**Email: malakamiralam@gmail.com**License:**

Abstract: Worldwide, 2.9 million of children have been placed in residential care either by their parents or guardians and relatives. However, placing the orphans and vulnerable children in residential care facilities is increasing overwhelmingly. For Pakistan, the situation is not bizarre as we too have placed 0.5 million out of 4.2 million orphans in residential care facilities. The aim of this study is to explore the push and pull factors that have compelled parents and guardians of orphans and vulnerable children to place them in residential care facilities. The study is based on document analysis i.e. research papers, books, and research theses. The data reveals that the death of parents, erosion of the joint and extended family system, natural and made-made disasters, stigmatization of illegitimate and disabled children, poverty and unemployment of the biological parents, efficacy of the residential care, and the presence of qualified and well- trained residential care providers have compelled hundreds of thousands parents and guardians to place orphans and vulnerable children in residential care facilities in Pakistan. This study suggests that the government of Pakistan should take serious measures to provide the OVC with basic necessities of life in form of home care model as alongside the negative consequences the residential care model is six times more expensive than the ordinary family based care model.

Introduction

Family is regarded to be the first and universally preferred option for a child's rearing and caring. However, despite of the family based care, children are the most vulnerable group in any human society. Living an independent and happy life is every child's basic right. Nonetheless, a considerable number of children are not fortunate enough to live with their biological parents. Worldwide, natural and man-made disasters, major illness, and other odd circumstances have deprived 153 millions of children from their parents' love and care (Desmond et al., 2020). UNICEF has reported that every day almost 10,000 children become orphans (Nar, 2020).

Being an orphan further exacerbates a child's susceptibilities and vulnerabilities. In such circumstance these children have not options but to be placed in an alternative care system including foster care, and residential care system. Research studies show that 2.93 out of 153 million orphans and vulnerable children have been placed in residential care facilities (Desmond et al., 2020). Virtually all human

societies across the globe have developed their model and approaches in order to protect OVC from maltreatment and inadequate parenting (Abebe, 2009).

Residential care of orphans is one of the common care models societies across the world have adopted. Even the developed economies have very few alternative care models other than the residential care model. Europeans have been using residential care model from the last 200 years (Browne, 2009). They termed residential care model as a traditional response. Nonetheless, in this modern era, the residential care model of orphans is increasing overwhelmingly. In Pakistan, residential care for orphans is not a bizarre or strange phenomena as we have placed 0.5 million out of 4.2 million orphaned children (Desmond et al., 2020). Some of the scholars and child welfare and protection experts are of the opinion that residential care for children have advantages for children and young people. Thus they termed that residential care facilities is a positive and preferred choice for guardians (Whetten et al., 2009).

Though residential care of children have provided children with different care facilities, nevertheless, studies have shown that this model is associated with negative consequences for children (O'Donnell et al., 2009, Shujaat & Mirza, 2015). Furthermore, majority of the OVC experts and analysts have the belief and opinion that residential care is a temporary response on the part of state and society at large.

Problem Statement

The basic philosophy and purpose of the residential care facilities is to provide the OVC with a safe and secure environment and to protect them from harms and maltreatment within their respective communities. However, a bulk of qualitative research studies have exposed that residential care for children has harmful and deleterious effects on children's overall life (Lassi et al., 2011). Some of the scholars have the opinion that residential care system for OVC has deleterious effects not only for OVC rather for society at large (Browne, 2009). In orphanages, children are prone to psychological problems which includes fear, stress, anger, anxiety, tension, low self-esteem, isolation, loneliness, and suicidal ideation or thoughts. Moreover, they are also susceptible to numerous health issues particularly the contagious diseases i.e. scabies (Pruksachatkunakorn et al., 2003). Some of the orphanages are too much overcrowd which further exacerbates their health problems (Chou & Browne, 2016). Being separated from their parents, orphans have developed attachment disorder. Attachment disorder leads to learning disability and poor performance among orphaned children (Khoo, 2005). Besides, orphanages and residential care facilities in Pakistan have not been provided with well trained and qualified residential care staff which eventually deprives the inmates from learning social and life skills (Alvi et al., 2017). The negative and careless attitude on the part of the care providers have amplified their problems.

In response to these potential problems faced by the OVC in residential care facilities, the child protection experts have the opinion that residential care for OVC is a temporary solution, therefore, it should be the last resort. This study is, therefore, an attempt to explore the push and pull factors that have compelled the parents and guardians of the OVC to place their children in residential care facilities in Pakistan.

Theoretical Framework

The existence, relatedness, and growth (ERG) theory of human needs, being developed by the prominent psychologist Clayton Alderfer, has been used as theoretical framework for this study. He proposed that existence needs i.e. oxygen, food, water, and pay are important for human's existence and survival. According to Alderfer, the second human need is relatedness needs which includes developing and maintaining social and interpersonal relationships with other human beings. The growth need, which he termed as upper-level needs, are fundamental human needs necessary for personal growth and development. This need can be meet by a person's healthy and productive struggle only.

According to Alderfer, there exists a prostration regression relationship among these human needs. He proposes that if a person, due to some reasons, is not in a position to satisfy his/her relatedness or growth needs (upper-level needs), eventually, he has to focus on satisfying the existence needs and this will become the main factor for his behavior and motivation. For instance, if a human's self-esteem is suffering then he/she will strive to achieve the lower level needs i.e. food, water, and pay etc.

Objectives of the study

This study has been carried out with the following objectives and research questions:

- To explore the push and pull factors of placing orphans and vulnerable children in orphanages in Pakistan;
- To suggest measures and strategies for policy makers and residential care providers to deal with orphans and vulnerable children effectively.

Research Question

In order to achieve the above objectives, the researchers have developed the following research questions:

- What are the push and pull factors of placing orphans and vulnerable children in orphanages in Pakistan?
- How policy makers and residential care providers in Pakistan can deal effectively with orphans and vulnerable children?

Research Design

This study is qualitative in nature. Qualitative research is a family of research which involves an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern human behavior (Bryman, 2012: 116). The researchers have used documents analysis as tool for secondary data collection. Document analysis is a qualitative research instrument wherein the researcher review, examine, interpret and evaluate the documents (words or text and images) in order to gain knowledge and meaning, and to gain understanding and develop empirical knowledge (Bowen, 2009). One of the main advantages of document analysis, as a research instrument, is that it is least time consuming and is more efficient than other methods of qualitative research. For this study, all the data have been analyzed thematically. Themes were developed from the data being obtained from different documents. The American Psychological Association (APA) 7th edition style has been used for all the documents and references being provided.

Significance of the Study

This study will be beneficial for policy makers, social workers, and the society at large as they are concerned with welfare and protection of OVC. Based on the results of this study, the government of Pakistan, especially the policy makers shall revisit all the policies and protocols with regard to child residential care facilities in Pakistan. They should focus and devise child welfare policies so that to re-integrate the OVC within their families and respective communities. The social workers, the true advocates of OVC, can use informed decision which can persuade the care providers, management, and guardians of OVC to consider the residential care as a last resort. This study will also be fruitful to the society at large as they will understand the merits and demerits and the cost associated with the residential care model.

The push and pull factors of placing orphans and vulnerable children in orphanages in Pakistan

A happy and prosperous life is every child's basic right. The International Convention on the Rights of Child (ICRC) has set that the biological parent have the responsibility to provide children with care and protection. However, owing to unavoidable situation some of the unfortunate OVC have to be placed in

residential care facilities. Afterward, the state has the responsibility to take care of OVC. For this purpose, states have established orphanages and residential care facilities to meet the needs of OVC. The first basic purpose of such placement is to provide them with a secure, nurturing environment and to protect them from further maltreatment and vulnerabilities (Foster, 2002). Secondly, since OVC are susceptible to many threats and harms, therefore, residential care facilities are places that could ensure the reintegration of OVC in their respective communities. After successful transition from residential care facilities they are expected to live a happy and responsible life. This study will explore why OVC are placed in residential care facilities in Pakistan. Death of parents is not the mere reason where children are placed in residential care facilities rather multiple factors are responsible for this phenomena. We have elaborate these factors as under.

Loss of Biological Parents

Deprivation of parental love and care is a universal phenomenon. Owing to death of parents, orphans face severe mental health and economic hardships. Though mother is regarded to be a primary care giver in many traditional societies that's why there is an attachment relationship between mother and a child. The death of a mother causes severe mental health problems for a child (Dillon, 2008). Studies reveals that the loss of a mother is more stressful and harmful for a child than the death of a father (Foster, 2002). Nonetheless, the critical situation for a child is when he /she losses his/her father. In traditional societies like Pakhtun society, father is mainly responsible for satisfaction of basic necessities and amenities of life.

The situation becomes worst when a child losses both his/her father and mother. Children who losses both father and mother are called as biological orphans. The biological orphans are more susceptible to numerous mental health problems (Akram et al., 2015). In such circumstances, the relatives or guardians strives to take care of these orphans, however, sometimes, the weak socioeconomic condition and poverty does not allow them to do so (Abdullah et al., 2015). Consequently, they have left no option except to place them in a nearest child residential care facility. In Pakistan, owing to severe poverty and economic hardships, relatives and guardians have placed a reasonable numbers of orphans in orphanages and residential care institutions.

Destruction of Joint and Extended Family Care System

The joint and extended family system is considered to be a potential informal social safety net for all family members (Freeman & Nkomo, 2006). Nonetheless, in the absence of strong support on the part of the state the traditional family or kinship system is incapable to absorb the ordeal of OVC. In many developing countries, an overwhelming number of orphans are still living with their relatives in joint or extended family i.e. siblings, paternal uncle, aunt, grandfather, grandmother. Nevertheless, studies have shown that the kinship care system is associated with poor socialization of the orphaned children. The lack of interest on the part of the blood relatives have caused psychological problems amongst orphans (Akram et al., 2015).

Modernization, urbanization, and boom of nuclear family system has further deteriorated the role of joint and extended family system (UNICEF, 2011). The inability and poor response of the joint and extended family system has ultimately led to placement of millions of orphans and vulnerable children in residential care facilities (UNICEF, 2011). United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (UNCRC) has stressed on the importance of family based care and due to its negative consequences termed the institutional care system to be the last resort.

Poverty and Unemployment

Parents are responsible to satisfy the basic needs of their offspring. However, economic constraints particularly the unemployment does not allow parents to fulfill the basic needs of their family members.

The current inflation and lack of economic activities has worsened the condition for underprivileged class of the society. Studies suggest that parents have even sold their children for money in return due to unemployment (Akram et al., 2015).

Similarly, poverty is the most cited factor that contributes to deprivation of the parental care which ultimately leads to the institutionalization of the children (Roelen et al., 2017). Parents' poverty and weak economic condition can influence interaction process between parents and children (Prince and Howard, 2002). Poor parents compromise children's nurture and becomes careless and ignorant (Abebe, 2009). Consequently, such parents admitted their children in an orphanage or a residential care facility Children who are placed in a residential care facility due to poverty or economic hardships of their parents are known as social orphans. Technically, a child whose parents don't provide him/her with basic amenities of life due to poverty, drug addiction, disability, hate and negligence is called social orphan. Hough (2005) investigated that Russia had 95 % of the children who were living in orphanages due to poverty and economic constraints. In Pakistan, studies have shown that parents have sold their children in order to meet the basic necessities of life (Shujaat, & Mirza, 2015). Placing children in orphanages is not a big deal for such parents.

Stigmatization of Illegitimate and Disabled Child

No child has an option to be born without a disability or limitation. Being mentally or physically handicapped is nothing but a misfortunate and bad luck. Studies have found that disability and physical abnormalities have forced reasonable number of disabled children to be placed in orphanages and residential care facilities (Erol et al., 2010). Parents have been reported who are reluctant to own or take care of their disabled children due to stigma.

In addition, illegitimate children have no status in traditional society rather they are dishonored for being illegitimate. People particularly the relatives and neighborhood have developed a negative attitude towards them. Brown (2009) showed that 60 % of the children in the developed countries i.e. France, Denmark, Portugal, Belgiu, Sweden, and Greece were forced to residential care because of disability, abandonment, abuse, and parental negligence.

Moreover, some of the guardians perceive OVC under their supervision as weak, naughty, problematic, and a source of misfortunate for them. Some of the relatives have even the opinion that taking care of the OVC is the sole responsibility of the state and that they have nothing to do with them. In developing country i.e. in Rwanda, communities have the belief that OVC are children of the state. They show jealousy and hate for OVC and regarded orphans as stigma for their families and communities (Thurman et al., 2008).

Mass illiteracy and Ignorance

Studies have exposed that residential care for OVC is associated with myriad negative consequences for its inmates. An early placement of a child in residential care facility has more deleterious impact on his overall life. The more a child is young, more would be the negative impacts for him/her. Children in orphanages have developed multiple psychological issues which includes aggression, anxiety, depression, high-risk behavior, low self-esteem, inferiority complex, suicidal thoughts or ideation, early sexual activity etc. Haludilu (2005) concluded that children who spent the first two years of their lives in residential care facilities were more likely to develop social and emotional problems. Besides, being in residential care, OVC faces serious issues in learning and show poor performance in social and life skills (Cluver & Gardner, 2006).

Ordinary children at home can easily learn different social and life skills. In residential care setting the care providers give very little attention to social and life skills of the inmates (Alam, 2021). Life skills include; how to deal with people and a problematic situation, how to cook food, how to shop, self-care,

and how to develop and maintain social relationship with others.

People in Pakistan, particularly the rural people, are not well aware about the negative consequences associated with residential care services. They just want to ensure the satisfaction of physical needs of children under their supervision. Owing to illiteracy and ignorance, people don't know the negative impact of residential care facilities. Without knowing the deleterious effects of residential care facilities, people will continue placing OVC in these institutions (Akram et al., 2015).

Efficacy of the Institutional/Residential Care

Orphanages or residential care facilities for children are the substitute of family based care which provides its inmates with all facilities and amenities of life. These are spaces being designed for OVC regardless any discrimination of class, creed, color, sex, language, and political association. These spaces are home for abandoned, illegitimate, and disabled children. Nevertheless, poor and destitute families have also placed their children in these care facilities. Parents have the belief that these institutions could better satisfies the needs of their children. Such parents and guardians fulfills only the physical and material needs of their children and don't know the psycho-social and emotional health of the inmates of orphanage (Serey et al., 2011).

In advanced countries, orphanages are mainly built for children who are suffering from maltreatment in the birth families. Pecora et al. (2006) have concluded that 93% of OVC were being placed in residential care facilities due to maltreatment of their parents. Besides, physical and sexual abuse by the family of origin of the child has also been a major cause for such placement (Pecora et al. 2006). In contrast, in developing economies, the inmates are placed due to death of parents, poverty, and negative response of the joint and extended families system.

In developing countries i.e. Pakistan, 47 % guardians have admitted their children in residential care facilities due to being incapable to provide these children with food, care, safe, and a better healthy environment at home. Browne (2009) has emphasis that people regards institutional care as a potential substitute for children than other care models and that's why a significant number of parents and guardians in the developed countries have been placing their children in residential care institutions. In nutshell, for poor people, residential care facilities are effective as they meet the physical needs of their children.

Qualified and well- trained residential care providers

In orphanages and child residential care services children are living under the complete supervision of care providers. These care providers are qualified, well equipped, and trained in service provision. They are trained in how to deal and interact with children under their supervision (Lassi et al., 2011). Normally, orphanages don't allow a person or employ to be care provider until and unless he/she has experience of working in other orphanages or child residential care facilities. The beneficiaries or the parents and guardians of the OVC are better aware of the fact that their children well be safe and protected while living under the supervision of these staff. Such attitude and thinking have placed a reasonable number of children in residential care facilities.

Conclusion

Growing up with biological parent is every child's legal and constitutional right. However, due to multiple factors 0.5 % OVC have been moved to residential care services in Pakistan. Among these, more than 90% of the OVC are social orphans and only a fraction of total of the population in residential care institution is biological orphans. The findings of this study indicates that myriad factors have forced these OVC to move to out of home care. These factors includes loss of parents, erosion of joint an extended family system, stigmatization of illegitimate and disabled children, poverty and unemployment of the biological parents, efficacy of the residential care, and mass illiteracy and ignorance, Qualified and

well- trained residential care providers. The basic aim of placing OVC in residential care facilities is to alleviate their poverty. Studies also concluded that child residential care system is six time expensive (to government and tax-payer) if it is compared with family based care for children. This study concludes that Pakistan is a lower-middle income state where more than 36% of the population is living below poverty line. Owing to this situation, the residential care institutions for OVC in Pakistan have focused only meeting the physical or basic human needs i.e. food, shelter, health, and education etc. While the relatedness and growth needs of the OVC are not met in residential care institutions in Pakistan.

Recommendations

The government of Pakistan should prioritize the alleviation of poverty. Without the alleviation of poverty society will continue placing OVC in residential care facilities. Similarly, each provincial government in Pakistan should devise child welfare policies in a way that could determine that placing OVC in orphanages and child residential care facilities should be the last resort.

Each provincial government should effective social safety nets program for poor families so that guardians can support OVC under their supervision. In addition, the orphanages and residential care facilities should design their services that may have the essence and spirit to ensure the successful re-integration and rehabilitation of the care leavers. The successful reintegration and rehabilitation of the care leavers depends upon the induction of well-trained and qualified, and professional care providers. Apart from psychologists, well trained and professionally competent social workers should be hired in all residential care facilities in Pakistan so that they may help the psychologists, the care providers, and teachers in transforming the inmates of these facilities in independent, content, resilient, confident, and fruitful citizens of Pakistan.

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