Psychosocial Challenges among Orphaned Children Based on Gender and Religion: A Review

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ABSTRACT

Orphaned children refer to those who have undergone the loss of one or both parents. The absence of parental figures holds considerable significance for a child's social and psychological development. This absence gives rise to a wide range of psychosocial challenges. While certain orphaned children devise distinct coping mechanisms, acquiring skills and internal motivation to bolster their resilience and self-esteem, others encounter difficulties in these pursuits. This chapter extensively investigates both scenarios. The influence of gender and religion on the psychosocial difficulties encountered by orphans is correspondingly significant. Noteworthy is the fact that female children often grapple with more pronounced issues compared to their male counterparts due to societal norms that impose specific expectations on girls, the enduring absence of parents further compounds the intricacies of their survival. Additionally, certain religious principles shape the actions of adherents, particularly in matters involving the adoption or institutionalization of children. The intersection of religion with Indian politics and policy formulation can yield outcomes that are either positive or detrimental. By delving into these complexities, the chapter strives to investigate the dimensions mentioned above and provide insights into overcoming the psychosocial issues faced by orphaned children. It underscores the necessity for reshaping policies to foster inclusivity for orphaned children, considering gender and religious contexts. Furthermore, it explores diverse intervention strategies that are employed and the necessary modifications within orphanages, all of which converge to promote the comprehensive development of children.

Keywords; Orphans, Gender, Religion, Psychosocial, Discrimination

Introduction

Orphanhood poses a worldwide challenge that surpasses borders and cultural divides. Globally, numerous children confront the harsh reality of losing their parents due to various factors such as conflict, illness, poverty, and natural disasters. These children encounter a multitude of psychological and social obstacles, often complicated by factors like gender and religion. Gender, as a significant social determinant, results in boys and girls experiencing different treatment and circumstances within orphanages. Girls face increased vulnerabilities and adverse situations compared to boys. Fink et.al. (2019). Additionally, religious distinctions introduce additional layers of discrimination within society, affecting the well-being of orphaned children from diverse religious backgrounds. Hence, understanding the nuanced experiences of orphaned children while taking these factors into account is essential for developing effective support mechanisms and interventions. The challenges faced by orphaned children serve as a poignant reminder of the vulnerabilities inherent in society. Globally, millions of children are forced into orphanhood due to a variety of factors such as conflict, illness, poverty, and natural disasters. However, beneath the stark statistics lies a complex array of psychological and social challenges that orphaned children must navigate, often influenced by factors as intricate as gender and religion. Upon examining the psychological and social landscape of orphaned children, it becomes apparent that gender plays a crucial role in shaping their experiences. Boys and girls follow different trajectories within orphanages, encountering distinct treatment and confronting varying challenges. The implications of gender extend beyond mere social categorization, with significant consequences affecting the well-being and futures of orphaned children. Furthermore, religion exerts a considerable influence on the lives of orphaned children, impacting their experiences in profound ways. Religious norms and practices intersect with the institutional frameworks of orphanages, shaping the support systems available to children from different religious backgrounds. Discrimination based on religious affiliations exacerbates the challenges faced by orphaned children, amplifying inequalities, and hindering fair access to resources and opportunities. Sunée Lægaard. (2018). Understanding the intricate interplay between gender, religion, and the psychological and social challenges faced by orphaned children is crucial for formulating effective interventions and support systems. By exploring the complex dynamics at play, efforts can be directed towards creating environments that foster the holistic development and well-being of all orphaned children, regardless of their gender or religious affiliation.

Psychosocial Challenges Among Orphaned Children

Psychosocial challenges among orphaned children encompass a wide range of issues, including grief and bereavement, identity formation, attachment disorders, emotional regulation difficulties, behavioural problems, and social isolation. The absence of parental guidance and support can leave orphaned children feeling vulnerable, insecure, and uncertain about their place in the world. Moreover, they may struggle with feelings of abandonment, rejection, and loneliness, which can exacerbate their psychological distress. Additionally, orphaned children often face stigma and discrimination within their communities, further complicating their psychosocial adjustment. They may be marginalized, or treated differently due to their orphan status, leading to feelings of shame, inferiority, and low self-esteem. Consequently, they may struggle to form meaningful relationships, trust others, and engage in social interactions. Furthermore, the psychosocial challenges among orphaned children are compounded by external factors such as economic hardship, inadequate access to education and healthcare, and lack of social support systems. These environmental stressors can contribute to the development of mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among orphaned children, further compromising their overall well-being. Psychosocial needs of orphaned children require a comprehensive and holistic approach that integrates psychological support, social interventions, and community-based initiatives. Efforts to promote resilience, enhance coping skills, and foster positive relationships are essential for mitigating the adverse effects of orphanhood and promoting the healthy development of these vulnerable children. Psychosocial challenges among orphaned children are multifaceted and complex, stemming from the loss of parental care, social stigma, and environmental stressors. Recognizing and addressing these challenges are crucial for ensuring the well-being and resilience of orphaned children and enabling them to thrive despite their adverse circumstances.

Gender-Based Disparities

Gender-based disparities are pervasive inequalities that exist between individuals of different genders, often resulting in differential access to resources, opportunities, and rights. These disparities are deeply ingrained in social, economic, cultural, and political structures, and they can manifest in various forms, including unequal access to education, healthcare, employment, and decision-making power. Throughout history, societies have assigned different roles, expectations, and values to individuals based on their gender, perpetuating a system of inequality and discrimination. Women and girls have been disproportionately affected by gender-based disparities, facing systemic barriers that limit their full participation and potential in various spheres of life. One of the most glaring manifestations of gender-based disparities is in the realm of education. Despite progress in recent decades, millions of girls around the world still lack access to quality education due to factors such as poverty, cultural norms, and gender stereotypes. This lack of educational opportunities not only deprives girls of essential knowledge and skills but also perpetuates cycles of poverty and inequality.

Religious Influences

Religion is a powerful force in the lives of many orphaned children's religious beliefs and practices can both support and hinder their psychosocial well-being religious institutions, rituals, and community support networks highly impacts in shaping the experiences of orphaned children.

Intersectionality of Gender and Religion

Intersectionality of gender and religion among orphaned children investigates how religious beliefs and cultural norms related to gender impact the psychosocial well-being of orphaned children, highlighting cases where gender-based discrimination is perpetuated or challenged within religious contexts.

Support and Interventions

Addressing the psychosocial challenges of orphaned children requires a multifaceted approach. Support systems and interventions designed to improve the well-being of orphaned children, considering their gender and religious backgrounds. Also, the culturally sensitive programming is important to aware about the cultural values without any discrimination.

Review of Literature

M. Pooja. (2020). Gender differences on mental health problem among orphans and non-orphan children. This study shows that gender exert a considerable influence on the mental well-being of both orphaned and non-orphaned individuals. The findings revealed a positive correlation between gender and mental health. Specifically, the research underscored that within both orphaned and non-orphaned populations, girls tend to be more susceptible than boys. This vulnerability manifests in higher exposure to stressful circumstances and emotional challenges, as well as a greater likelihood of encountering adverse conditions and negative emotions.

Sobana R.M. (2019). Comparison of resilience between male and female orphan children. This research indicated that when comparing resilience traits across different age groups, a significant majority of older children demonstrated superior resilience characteristics compared to their younger counterparts. Majority of the girls found to have high level of resilience (40%), compared to 48% of boys who had low level of resilience. Most of the

older orphan children (65%) found to have high level of resilience than younger children (7%). There existed a significant difference in resilience of older children and girls than older age group and boys (p<0.001).

Sune Lægaard. (2018). Discrimination and religion. Religion may exhibit distinct behaviors as a category used for justification, depending on whether it is the target or source of discrimination, as well as whether the justification leans towards consequentialist or deontological reasoning.

Wirawani. Kamarulzaman (2017). Gender Differences in the Relationship between Gratitude and Happiness among Orphans in Perak. In this study, female reported higher degree of gratitude compared to male. This finding is consistent with the findings of Kashdan, Mishra, Breen, & Froh (2009) where females tend to feel more grateful than males. However, there is no significant difference in happiness score between male and female orphans.

Ombuya, Benjamin Dickens. Yambo, John M. Onyango Omolo. Tom Mboya (2012). Effects of Orphan hood on Girl-child's Access and Retention in Secondary School Education: A Case of Rongo District, Kenya. This study shows that being an orphan has a notable impact on the access to and retention of secondary school education for girls in Rongo District.

Conclusion

The psychosocial challenges faced by orphaned children are multifaceted and deeply influenced by gender and religion. This review paper underscores the importance of recognizing and addressing these intersectional challenges to ensure the well-being and development of orphaned children worldwide. By adopting a comprehensive and culturally sensitive approach, we can better support these vulnerable children and offer them opportunities for a brighter future.

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