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Critical analysis of Challenges Faced by Orphans

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ABSTRACT

Orphan-hood is a natural occurrence event of life and not a personal choice. It is a natural life event of losing a parent or a primary caregiver in the life of an orphan child. This chapter focuses on the problems like psychological and social issues that orphans and other vulnerable children experience when their parents are no longer alive. In this we will focus on emotional problems and impact of orphan hood on the mental condition of orphans. Using literature as a source, most psychosocial issues affecting orphans and other vulnerable children are categorized and justified. Possible solutions and recommendations are clearly illustrated for possible intervention and prevention strategies. Lastly, the chapter ushers future research directions regarding psychosocial issues affecting orphans and other vulnerable children.

Key Terms: Social issues, Loneliness, Child labour, Orphans and Vulnerable children, Well being , Suicidal thoughts, child abuse, Psychological issues.

Introduction

This chapter makes a contribution towards a subject matter of challenges faced by orphans and other vulnerable children. It seeks to expand the debate and create further awareness on the plight of the orphans and vulnerable children globally. By so doing, more intervention and prevention strategies would be invented in order to address the plight of orphans and other vulnerable children. The chapter highlighted the most critical psychological and social issues with the support of evidence as provided in the current literature. This chapter will highlight the emotional difficulties faced by orphans and also the impact of orphan hood on the mental health of orphans.

Orphan hood is a profound and far-reaching experience that affects millions of children worldwide. The loss of one or both parents can have a destructive impact on a child's physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. Orphans often face numerous challenges, including poverty, lack of education, and limited access to healthcare. Furthermore, they may experience social isolation, and discrimination, which can exacerbate their vulnerabilities.

The difficulties faced by orphans are complex and multifaceted, requiring a comprehensive and significance understanding. Orphan hood can result from various factors, including, conflict, poverty, and natural disasters. In many countries, orphans are often confide to institutional care, which can be inadequate and even harmful. For example, studies have shown that children in institutional care are more likely to experience attachment disorders, behavioural problems, and cognitive delays.

Despite the growing body of research on orphan hood, there remains a significant gap in our understanding of the difficulties faced by orphans. Few studies have examined the complex interplay between socio-economic, psychological, and emotional factors that affect orphans. Additionally, many studies have focused on the experiences of orphans in institutional care, with limited attention paid to those living in community-based settings.

This study aims to address this research gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the difficulties faced by orphans. The study will explore the socio-economic, psychological, and emotional challenges encountered by orphans, as well as the coping mechanisms and resilience strategies they employ. The study will also examine the role of caregivers and institutional support in mitigating the difficulties faced by orphans

The findings of this study will contribute to the development of effective strategies and interventions that can lighten the adverse effects of orphan hood. By examining the difficulties faced by orphans, this research can inform policy and programmatic responses aimed at supporting these vulnerable children. Ultimately, this study aims to promote the well-being and resilience of orphans, enabling them to reach their full potential.

The study will be guided by the following research questions:

- What are the socio-economic difficulties faced by orphans?

- How do orphans experience psychological and emotional difficulties?

The study will employ a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods. The study will also draw on existing literature on orphan hood, as well as primary data collected from orphans.

History of orphans and orphanages

The Romans formed their first orphanages around 400 AD. Jewish law prescribed care for the widow and the orphan, and Athenian law supported all orphans of those killed in military service until the age of eighteen.

The most widely recognized and documented first orphanage is the Ospedale degli Innocenti in Florence, Italy, founded in 1419 by Filippo Brunelleschi, a renowned architect, and supported by the Catholic Church .The Foundling Hospital, as it was called, was created to care for abandoned babies and children. The hospital provided a safe place for these children to live and receive an education or other basic facilities.

The concept of the orphanage quickly spread to the America and other parts of Europe. By the 1800s, hundreds of orphanages were operating in the United States. These institutions were often overcrowded due to a lot of children and underfunded. The conditions in many orphanages were very poor, and the children who lived there often suffered from neglect, abuse and from other negative things

Orphanages began to decline in the United States after the Civil War. With the creation of the foster care system, more children were placed in private homes rather than in institutions. The number of orphanages declined in the early 1900s as the foster care system became more widespread.

Today, there are very few orphanages operating in the United States. Most children in need of foster care are placed in private or group homes. However, some orphanages are still operating in other parts of the world.

The first orphanage in India is considered to be the "Andhra Orphanage" founded by:

- Father John Richardson in 1715 in Chennai (then known as Madras) , India.

However, some sources also mention the "St. George's Orphanage" founded by:

- The British East India Company in 1707 in Kolkata (then known as Calcutta), India.

But the most widely recognized and documented first orphanage in India is the one founded by Father John Richardson in 1715 in Chennai.

Father Richardson, a British clergyman, established the orphanage to provide care and shelter to orphaned and destitute children in the region.

The first orphanage founded by an Indian is considered to be the "Sishu Bhavan" (Children's Home) established by:

Raja Ram Mohan Roy in 1828 in Kolkata (then known as Calcutta), India

Raja Ram Mohan Roy, a renowned Indian social reformer and educator, founded the "Sishu Bhavan" to provide care and shelter to orphaned and destitute children, regardless of their caste or creed.

This institution was a pioneering effort in India, and it marked the beginning of a new era in social welfare and education for children in the country.

Psychological problems faced by orphans

Amongst orphans housed in orphanages, psychological problems are widespread. The most commonly reported problems amongst them include anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Several causes can be noted for these issues, such as the loss of parents, inadequate social and emotional support, violence, and traumas.

An anxiety condition is one of the biggest problems among orphans. Orphans are anxious because they know not what will become of them. They placed in a new home, or sent to a different country. Again, sometimes these orphans feel that they have no control over their lives, and this situation brings them tremendous anxiety.

Another common problem that orphans experience is depression. Orphans feel depressed because they feel lonely and isolated. They may also feel that they have no purpose in life and nobody cares about them. Losing parents can be hard to handle and lead to depression.

PTSD is one condition that a victim might be facing after undergoing any traumatic experience. Children, on being orphans, mostly suffer through and view the happenings of violence and trauma when in an orphanage. They show symptoms like flashbacks, nightmares, and anxiety, just to mention a few.

 Orphans frequently encounter a lot of difficulties in their life .They might experience feelings of depression isolation and anxiety. Additionally, some of them may suffer from PTSD. Fortunately, there are many individuals and organisations that are dedicated to supporting orphans and assist them in overcoming these types of obstacle. A variety of resources are also accessible to help orphans manage their challenges.

Social problems

Recent research suggests that more than 30 million children in India are orphaned, with several experiencing behavioural and emotional distress due to their own circumstances and while there are many laws and facilities in place, many orphan children continue to be neglected, facing multiple problems that only seem to worsen as new crises like the COVID-19 pandemic which exacerbate their existing issues.

1. Child Abuse

One of the most prevalent issues that is faced by orphan children in India is child abuse both boys and girls across the country are vulnerable to this, and even so within poorly-regulated orphanages and shelters but to this day, most of the orphan population of India is out on the streets, vulnerable to trafficking as well as child abuse among a variety of other dangers.Child abuse in orphanages is a widespread and complex issue that affects millions of children worldwide .child abuse refers to any form of physical, emotional, or sexual mistreatment or neglect of a child. In orphanages, child abuse can take many forms, including:

. Physical abuse: beating, kicking, or inflicting physical harm on a child.

. Emotional abuse: verbal abuse, humiliation, or rejection of a child.

. Sexual abuse: any form of sexual exploitation or molestation of a child.

. Neglect: failure to provide basic needs, such as food, shelter, or medical care.

The prevalence of child abuse in orphanages varies widely depending on the country, region, and type of institution. However, studies suggest that Up to 80% of children in orphanages have experienced some form of abuse or neglect, 2. 40% to 60% of children in orphanages have experienced physical abuse, 3. 20% to 40% of children in orphanages have experienced emotional abuse.

Child abuse in orphanages is a serious and widespread issue that requires immediate attention and action. Preventing and addressing child abuse in orphanages requires a comprehensive approach that includes staff training, improved infrastructure, regular monitoring, and community-based care.

2. Health issues

Many orphan children in India are also at risk of malnutrition or are already suffering from it given that most orphans are not in shelters and orphanages. Malnutrition can lead to a broad range of health concerns, such as poor eyesight, stunted muscle and bone growth, impaired mental development, etc. This study compares the differences of mental health conditions among orphan and non-orphan adolescents. The study employed a quantitative approach. The study sampled 240 orphan and 240 non-orphan adolescents aged 13 to 17 years. The findings revealed the difference in the mental health conditions of orphan versus non-orphan adolescents with the orphans exhibiting a significantly greater level of mental health problems that included depression, anxiety, and stress. The findings revealed that all parties including governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), orphanage, and guardians need to organize actions in terms of program implementation and intervention to maintain the mental health of orphan adolescents.

Orphans may face a range of health challenges as a result of their circumstances. Some of the health problems faced by orphans include:

. Malnutrition: Orphans may be at risk for malnutrition due to limited access to nutritious food. This can impact their physical health and development, making it difficult for them to achieve their goals and realize their potential.

. Limited access to healthcare: Orphans may face barriers to healthcare, including lack of financial resources and transportation. This can make it difficult for them to access the medical care they need, leading to a range of negative outcomes.

. Increased risk of illness: Orphans may be at higher risk for illness due to their living conditions and limited access to healthcare. This can impact their physical health and development, making it difficult for them to achieve their goals and realize their potential.

Another major or significant problem that requires further legislation in India is access to healthcare services, specifically for orphans. Given their increased vulnerability to illnesses caused by malnutrition, orphan children in India are in desperate need of healthcare services that can help improve their living conditions and safe them from hazardous diseases.

3. Lack of Schooling

Most orphan children in India do not have access to basic necessities like food, shelter, and clean water, which directly leads to a lack of education. With orphans out on the street doing everything they can to survive. Schooling becomes a farfetched dream for so many orphan children .Orphans may face a range of educational challenges as a result of their circumstances. Some of the educational problems faced by orphans include:

. Limited access to education: Orphans may face barriers to education, including lack of financial resources, transportation, and support. This can make it difficult for them to acquire the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in life.

. Poor academic performance: Orphans may struggle academically due to their experiences and limited support systems. This can impact their future prospects, making it difficult for them to achieve their goals and realize their potential.

. Dropout rates: Orphans may be at higher risk for dropping out of school due to their circumstances. This can perpetuate the cycle of poverty, making it difficult for them to achieve their goals and realize their potential.

5. Homelessness

Less than half a million of the approximately 30 million orphans in India have access to a shelter or are in an orphanage. This increases the risk of other challenges facing orphan children in India, e.g., health problems, lack of education and necessities, etc. A very sad and complex issue. Homelessness in orphans is a widespread problem that affects millions of children worldwide. Homelessness in orphans refers to the lack of a stable and secure living environment for children who have lost their parents or have been abandoned. The causes of homelessness in orphans are complex and multifaceted, which includes

. Poverty: extreme poverty and lack of economic opportunities.

. Conflict and war: displacement and separation from families due to conflict and war.

. Natural disasters: displacement and separation from families due to natural disasters.

. Abandonment: abandonment by parents or caregivers due to various reasons.

Homelessness has severe and long-lasting effects on orphans , which includes Physical and emotional harm, delayed cognitive, emotional, and social development, increased risk of behavioural problems, such as aggression, anxiety, and many more.

Homelessness in orphans requires a comprehensive approach, like

. Family reunification: efforts to reunite children with their families.

. Foster care: providing foster care for children who cannot be reunited with their families.

. Community-based care: providing community-based care and support for children.

. Education and job training: providing education and job training for older children and youth.

. Policy and advocacy: advocating for policies and laws that protect the rights of orphans and vulnerable children.

There are many organizations working to address homelessness in orphans like,

.UNICEF: providing support and services for orphans and vulnerable children.

. Save the Children: providing emergency assistance and long-term support for orphans and vulnerable children.

. World Vision: providing support and services for orphans and vulnerable children.

. Local NGOs and community organizations: providing community-based care and support for orphans and vulnerable children.

Economic problems

Orphans often face significant economic challenges that can impact their well-being and future prospects. Some of the economic problems faced by orphans include:

. Poverty: Orphans may live in poverty, struggling to access basic necessities like food, shelter, and clothing. This can lead to a range of negative outcomes, including malnutrition, poor health, and limited access to education.

. Unemployment: Orphans may struggle to find employment, perpetuating the cycle of poverty. This can be due to a range of factors, including limited education and job skills, lack of connections and networking opportunities, and discrimination.

Family and relationship problems

. Lack of Parental Guidance

Orphans may lack parental guidance, which can impact their emotional and psychological development. Without parents, orphans may struggle to develop a sense of identity, self-worth, and belonging.

. Difficulty Forming Relationships

Orphans may have difficulty forming and maintaining relationships due to their experiences. They may struggle with trust, intimacy, and emotional connection, making it challenging to form healthy relationships.

. Increased Risk of Abuse

Orphans may be at increased risk of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse due to their vulnerability. Without parents to protect and care for them, orphans may be more susceptible to exploitation and abuse.

. Disrupted Family Ties

Orphans may experience disrupted family ties, which can impact their sense of belonging and identity. They may struggle to connect with their extended family members or feel a sense of disconnection from their cultural heritage.

. Difficulty with Attachment

Orphans may have difficulty with attachment, which can impact their ability to form healthy relationships. They may struggle to trust others, form emotional connections, and maintain relationships. Orphans may experience emotional detachment, which can impact their ability to form and maintain relationships. They may struggle to express their emotions, empathize with others, and develop emotional intimacy.

. Lack of Role Models

Orphans may lack positive role models, which can impact their emotional and psychological development. Without parents or caregivers to provide guidance and support, orphans may struggle to develop a sense of purpose, direction, and motivation.

. Increased Risk of Social Isolation

Orphans may be at increased risk of social isolation, which can impact their mental and emotional well-being. Without a support system, orphans may struggle to connect with others, form relationships, and develop a sense of belonging.

Recommendations

1. Increase access to education

 Policymakers and practitioners need to work to increase access to education for orphans, including providing scholarships, building schools for orphans, and training teachers who can teach them or handle them in every situation or work as a guide book for them.

2. Provide emotional support:

Practitioners must provide emotional support to orphans, by including counselling sessions, therapy, and mentorship for them.

3. Address poverty and economic exploitation:

 Policymakers and practitioners must work to address poverty and economic exploitation among orphans, including providing economic support, job training, and vocational education to them.

4. Improve access to healthcare:

 Policymakers and practitioners must work to improve access to healthcare for orphans, including providing healthcare services, building healthcare facilities, and training healthcare workers.

Future Research Directions

Future research should focus on developing effective interventions to address the challenges faced by orphans. Researchers should also work to develop more comprehensive and complex understandings of the experiences of orphans.

Future research on the difficulties faced by orphans is crucial to understanding the complex challenges they encounter. Some potential areas of focus for future research include:

- Mental Health: Investigating the mental health problems faced by orphans, such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Research can explore the prevalence, causes, and consequences of these issues, as well as effective interventions.

- Social Stigma and Discrimination: Examining the social stigma and discrimination faced by orphans, including their experiences of isolation, rejection, and marginalization. Research can investigate the impact of these factors on orphans' well-being and identify strategies to address them.

- Education and Employment: Investigating the educational and employment challenges faced by orphans, including barriers to accessing education, job training, and employment opportunities. Research can explore effective interventions to support orphans' education and employment goals.

- Family and Community Support: Examining the role of family and community support in the lives of orphans. Research can investigate the impact of supportive relationships on orphans' well-being and identify strategies to strengthen these relationships.

- Cultural and Contextual Factors: Investigating the cultural and contextual factors that influence the experiences of orphans. Research can explore how cultural norms, values, and beliefs shape the challenges faced by orphans and identify culturally sensitive interventions.

Some potential research methodologies for studying the difficulties faced by orphans include:

- Qualitative research: Using methods such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, and ethnography to gather detailed, contextualized data on the experiences of orphans.

- Quantitative research: Using methods such as surveys and statistical analysis to gather numerical data on the prevalence and correlates of difficulties faced by orphans.

- Mixed-methods research: Combining qualitative and quantitative methods to gather a comprehensive understanding of the difficulties faced by orphans.

Overall, future research on the difficulties faced by orphans should prioritize a nuanced, contextualized understanding of their experiences, and seek to identify effective interventions to support their well-being.