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Challenges Faced By Child Protection Officers in the Rehabilitation of Destitute Children: Case Study of Child Protection and Welfare Bureau, Punjab

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ABSTRACT

The case study is on the Child Protection and Welfare Bureau (CP&WB) in Punjab, Pakistan, as it confronts the difficulties of rehabilitating impoverished and neglected children. Punjab, as the most populous province in Pakistan, has distinct socio-economic and cultural variables that have an influence on the welfare of its children. The CP&WB, established to tackle such matters, plays a key role in safeguarding and rehabilitating children facing challenging circumstances. In-depth exploration of the rehabilitation and protection of children by the Child Protection and Welfare Bureau (CPWB) and the challenges faced by its core team. To achieve this, the researcher opted for the purposive sample technique for the type of population that was available and the study objectives and questions needed to access the population in the study. Interviews were conducted under data saturation, where the researcher realized that there was no new information to be obtained from the interviews. This was done according to the level of saturation in the study, with 45 participants comprising of 15 children and 30 practitioners. Altogether, the analyzed data show that participants share a rather favorable attitude toward safety within the CPB through appreciation of staff assistance and overall trust in care. The interactions between the staff and CPB seem to be generally positive in terms of the reception the organization has received, and some difficulties were mentioned in the areas of either being heard or understood. The answers concerning observing situations connected with abuse or neglect differ, stressing the action of a staff member as the important factor. Lack of equal training on rights, desire substantiation, and proposal to improve CPB services stresses the necessity of complete teaching and augmentation. The implementation of all the listed critical success factors is based on the four crosscutting themes: Communication, empowering, training, and individual support means that the CPB requires a supportive, transparent, and friendly environment that attends to individual and structural GAP children in protection.

Keywords: Child Protection, Rehabilitation Destitute Children, Child Protection Officers, Welfare Bureau (CPWB).

Introduction

Children are considered the fundamental segment of any society. They rely on others to meet their basic need, such as food, clothing, shelter, protection, and education; however, this dependency makes them vulnerable (Younas and Chachar 2018). Children are violated everywhere around the globe and in all areas of their lives, including at home, at educational institutions, at

work, and in society at large. For millions of children in South Asia, violence is extensive and remains a harsh reality in their lives with long-term significance. (UNICEF, 2020).

Child abuse is a complex issue all around the world that remains difficult to address and study. Over the past decade, we have seen significant interest from governments around the world in learning from different countries and associating experiences as systems are adapted and improved. International organizations such as the World Health Organization and UNICEF are gradually ranking activities to prevent children from harm by publishing important reports on violence against children and child abuse prevention strategies. Moreover, every country has child protection laws that require a government agency to manage, regulate, and supervise child protection services. Legislation in most countries in the region does not provide for an accessible and child-friendly mechanism for children in need of care and protection to seek help from a child protection agency (for example, through a hotline) or for interagency communication (UNICEF, 2014).

It is widely recognized that children have the right to grow up in even and safe surroundings, protected from neglect and abuse, and to have their developmental needs cared for. Governments have recognized the need for a social safety net for children to ensure that these basic needs and rights are met, especially in circumstances where the child's parents fail to protect or are themselves responsible for child abuse. The mandate of Child Protection in Australia and many other English-speaking countries is a stand-alone body with limited formal involvement from other service sectors or the wider community (Bromfield et al., 2014).

The UNICEF annual report 2020 revealed that Population of Pakistan in 212 million, out of which 45% are children under 18 years. The population doubles every 29 years with an annual growth rate of 2.4%. Children in Pakistan remain vulnerable to violations of their right to be protected from violence, abuse and exploitation. The review of child labor is currently underway in Pakistan and will provide national data on its prevalence. Other studies have shown that 13.4% of children aged 5 to 17 in Punjab and 14.4% in KP are involved in child labour. 18.3% of women aged 20 to 24 married when they were still children. Gender-based violence remains a serious and least reported problem. In a recent survey, 15% of women aged 15 to 49 reported physical violence in the past 12 months (UNICEF, 2020)

Pakistan has formally approved and implemented numerous international agreements regarding the safeguarding of fundamental rights of children. Of all these treaties, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) of 1989 stands out as the most dynamic and essential. Pakistan has been influenced by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international treaties to pass legislation that align with the UNCRC and provide an institutional structure to safeguard, support, and promote the well-being and growth of street children. (Ashraf and Hasmi, 2020)

Pakistan is alliance of provinces and regions. The system of Child protection in Pakistan is highly influenced by traditional values belonging to different cultures, which prevails in the provinces. This dissected approach highlights that the government of Pakistan has struggled in international obligations and social values towards the child protection. Pakistan is highly populated country, about 53% of the population are children and teenagers. We are responsible for this large group and we need to protect these children and adolescents in order to promote their well-being and protect them from harm. Some progress has been made in recent years in changing the law on this issue, but radical changes are needed in the light of the United Nations Convention on the

Rights of the Child. There is considerable ignorance of these rules among the general population, which prevents them from seeking help in case of incidents (Younas and Chachar 2018).

In Pakistan, child protection authorities vary provincially according to the respective law. Punjab was the first province to pass specific child protection legislation in Pakistan. To provide rehabilitation, care, education, and training for destitute and neglected children, the Government of Punjab established the Child Protection and Welfare Bureau in March 2004. One of the goals of this bureau is to protect these children from criminals. This institution not only provides food and shelter, but also provides education and skills to these children to make them valuable citizens (Jabeen 2016).

This bureau is working to reunite these children with their families. In addition, child psychologists take various measures for the rehabilitation and mental development of such children. Furthermore, a child protection court has been established to deal with problems such as guardianship and legal reunification of children with their parents. In order to provide guidance, a child helpline has also been set up, assistance and coordination for their rescue and protection. The core of CPWB includes psychologists, law enforcement officers, child protection officers, social welfare officers and doctors. The bureau was established under the Punjab Destitute and Neglected Children Act, 2004, later revised in 2007, which constitutes an effective legal framework within the UNCRC. It is not only working for the protection for destitute and neglected children, but also provides rehabilitation such as medical care, shelter, education and other essentials. There are currently eight district offices of the Child Protection and Welfare Bureau in Punjab, including Lahore, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Rawalpindi, Multan, Faisalabad, Bahawalpur and Rahim Yar Khan. The Child Protection and Welfare Bureau has facilitated more than 50,000 children not only in the Punjab province but throughout Pakistan. The CPWB is considered a haven for destitute and neglected children. The Bureau progress in areas such as family care, institutional care, rescue, education and rehabilitation is excellent (CPWB, 2018-19)

According to the American Association of Psychology, "Child protection encompasses a range of strategies, actions, and measures aimed at preventing and addressing instances of child abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence. Its primary objective is to guarantee the safety, welfare, and growth of children. This encompasses strategies to protect children from physical, mental, and sexual abuse, while also addressing matters about their entitlements". Child protection includes the efforts to prevent and address instances of child abuse and exploitation, including child labor, trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, and detrimental cultural practices. This study focuses on child protection concerns in Pakistan, which is situated in the Indian subcontinent and is one of the South Asian nations. Pakistan, as a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child [UNCRC], has committed to granting children specific safeguards and safeguards. Therefore, the government must safeguard children (Pulla and Tarar, 2018).

Implementing child justice services necessitates the collaboration of multiple disciplines. This may encompass several professionals, such as social workers, psychologists, nurses, doctors, law enforcement officers, magistrates, church clergy, and instructors. Social workers are responsible for conducting assessments of kids before their court appearances, providing counseling services, enabling rehabilitation programs within prisons, and ensuring the successful reintegration of youngsters into society (Chitembwe, 2006).

The presence of social welfare officers for detained juvenile offenders can significantly impact their welfare. Social work activity in correctional institutions has two primary sorts of

opportunities: supporting roles and connection roles. The supportive function is offered in the supplementary domains of mental health and substance misuse, vocational rehabilitation, and education, and it is typically restricted to the specific issue at hand. Social welfare officers in correctional institutions have a second job which includes advocating for and facilitating connections between jailed offenders and their communities. Social welfare officials can exert influence over the provision of services for families of incarcerated individuals in the community, as well as for the residents within the institution (Cantwell, 2013).

Various practice perspectives, theories, and models can be employed in the implementation of social work activities for rehabilitating destitute and neglected children. The research focuses on examining the strengths perspective. The study has great importance on the fundamental principle of the strengths perspective, which is considered one of the more recent paradigms in the field of social work. This perspective emphasizes strengths rather than shortcomings. The emphasis is therefore placed on the destitute child's abilities and how these might assist in the process of restoring the youngster's self-assurance. In addition to adopting a strengths-based approach, it is crucial to evaluate a theory that prioritizes addressing the negative consequences of unlawful actions by offering a purposeful chance for both the child (Mirsky, 2005).

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed at reaching the following objectives.

1. To investigate the challenges faced by practitioners working in the Child Protection and Welfare Bureau in implementing the Punjab Destitute and Neglected Children Act, 2007.
2. To recognize the approaches to improve the rehabilitation scheme for children.
3. To examine the extent to which the Child Protection and Welfare Bureau is facilitating children.

Literature Review

(Tidey, 2017) explained that Children become increasingly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse when left unprotected. Child protection systems in many states face significant challenges in providing children with the services they need. Usually, border administrators and law enforcement are the only government agencies children encounter during their travels - prison cells are considered the only "safe place" available to hold them in case they are intercepted, especially in backward areas (EPRS, 2016). All over the world, in both high and low-income countries, the ministries of the interior deal with immigration, including for children on the move. This means that authorities are unable to determine the best interests of the child, and are often responsible for making decisions about their protection. When children arrive in a State, they should be treated as children first because it is a requirement of the CRC.

Rapp & Goscha (2006) researched that the formal child protection system in Pakistan is relatively new. Pakistan, being a federation, protects children at the national and provincial levels. Hence, progress in enacting child protection legislation differs from province to province. Presently, some authorities have umbrella laws. However, either this is not in line with international standards, or such legislation leaves too much space to be covered, such as bylaws and rules.

Sibanada and Lombard, (2015) researched that most of the institutional barriers to law enforcement come from officials who lack uniformity, who are unfamiliar with the provisions of the law, and who look down on social workers and overburden them with unrealistic demands. Infrastructural barriers hinder the establishment of effective child protection services and make child protection services a dream.

Khan et al. (2018) explained that any kid who is not receiving the care they need, even if their parents are still living, will be referred to as a destitute child. For example, if the mother is unwell and the father is a criminal who is incarcerated, there will be no one to care for the child. These youngsters are unable to meet their basic needs because they are handicapped, orphans, or street children. Approximately 100 million children worldwide are homeless and without access to basic necessities, according to UNICEF.

As stated by Murchana, (2022), although the streets offer chances for employment and independence, they also infringe upon a child's dignity and have negative consequences on their physical, mental, emotional, and general well-being. This is especially applicable to youngsters who consider the street their "home," since they face challenging circumstances such as unemployment, poverty, hunger, and homelessness. A significant number of individuals reside in slums, improvised camps, or hovels. Some individuals rest on the verandas of shops, pavements on the streets, in obscure alleys, and on dumpsites.

Cullen, (2019) explained that A significant number of homeless youngsters engage in their initial sexual encounters within their peer group, seeking amusement, solace, and the assertion of authority to establish dominance. Engaging in sexual activity without using protection increases the likelihood of children developing sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. As a result, they are more susceptible to experiencing the negative social consequences associated with stigma.

According to Zafar & Ahmad, (2019), girls are at an increased risk of becoming pregnant. Some of them go on to give birth and experience the challenges of early motherhood. This perpetuates the cycle of living on the streets and being trapped in poverty. Some individuals may opt for risky abortion procedures without receiving enough medical attention afterwards. These children are challenging to access services for because of their transient lifestyle, and when they do seek care, they are hesitant to provide comprehensive information.

According to Tobin & Cashmore, (2020), Destitute children who have families may go back home to sleep. However, their homes are usually small and located in unsafe places, which provide limited chances for social growth. The challenging conditions alone can force these adolescents to resort to prostitution or engage in criminal activities. This is attributed to the fact that a significant number of youngsters residing on the streets originate from disadvantaged origins marked by poverty and unsupportive domestic environments, which encompass different types of mistreatment, disregard, and discord.

One in six Bangladeshi youngsters, or around 7.4 million children, are employed nationwide, according to Barkat et al. (2009). Most of them obtain the means to sustain their lives by begging and other forms of squalid labor that are turned down by the casual wage workforce.

Subarna et al (2014) researched that in Bangladesh, About 18.7% work as beggars, 13.3% sell flowers or newspapers, 60% are "tokai," or those who pick up trash or items from the street and sell them somewhere else, and the other 13.8 are employed in various occupations. Due to the low value placed on child labor, these kids earn a pitiful 362 BDT a day, while putting in an average of 10.6 hours a day in filthy conditions. Furthermore, the majority of individuals are acting badly toward these impoverished kids; around 76.7% of them experience harassment of some kind. Of the 8% of kids working in various occupations, a large number may be connected to criminal activity, prostitution, or other occupations where they endure severe mistreatment. Roughly 41% of the impoverished kids have never heard of HIV/AIDS. Additionally, a startling 88% of these

homeless kids use drugs in some capacity, which is bad for their physical or emotional health. According to Jalal (2013), these youngsters are susceptible to being victimized, exploited, and having their civil and economic rights violated. A corrupt society is ultimately the result of these abuses and exploitations.

Jabeen, (2019) researched that while certain youngsters acquire these habits at a young age, others progressively get engaged. At the outset of their street life, they engage in activities such as begging, car guarding, and shoe shining, scavenging, selling confections and flowers, or undertaking other informal occupations that offer meager compensation and often expose them to hazardous circumstances. As individuals become accustomed to the challenges of living on the streets, they gradually transition to engaging in activities such as stealing wallets, committing robberies, selling illegal substances, or engaging in prostitution. Their main preoccupation revolves around ensuring their daily survival. From a young age, homeless children acquire the ability to evade both aggressive individuals and law enforcement officers.

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design using purposive sampling to select participants directly relevant to the research objectives. A total of 45 participants—15 children residing in Child Protection Units and 30 practitioners working with the Child Protection and Welfare Bureau (CPWB), were interviewed until data saturation was reached. Data collection was carried out through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, conducted either face-to-face or via phone/video calls, guided by a self-developed interview schedule featuring open-ended questions. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity. Additionally, secondary data sources such as official documents and reports from CPWB were used to support the findings.

Data Analysis

Theme 1: Challenges Faced by Practitioners in Implementing "The Punjab Destitute and Neglected Children Act, 2007"

Despite the positive attitudes towards the Act, the respondents identified a number of difficulties and obstacles that may influence the process of the Act's enactment and implementation and the delivery of the remaining services to destitute children. Limited financial resources and manpower were identified as potential obstacles, as one respondent noted: Limited financial resources and manpower were identified as potential obstacles, as one respondent noted:

"Some of the challenges include: Lack of finance and manpower may result in compromise of the implementation of the Act, thus compromising the provision of services to children in need.

This constraint may limit access to all children who may need a helping hand in different presentations. Also, the possible lack of awareness by the public, parents, and even the bureau of more details of the Act and its requirements, as well as the possibility of gaps in the implementation of the Act, was highlighted fully. One respondent expressed,

Possible reasons for deficiencies in the implementation of the Act are as follows: There may exist a public and parents' Limited awareness of the provisions and requirements of the Act, as well as the bureau's limited awareness of those provisions and requirements.

This can lead to situations when certain provisions of the Act are not being applied properly or at all. Lack of training for the practitioners was another challenge to be highlighted as this made them unsuitable to offer the best care and protection to children. A respondent stated, some of the challenges that the practitioners may encounter in his/her understanding or implementation of

the provision of the Act include inadequate training, which in-effect greatly hinders him/her from providing adequate care and protection to children.

The aforesaid lack of training may result in poor qualification of services offered by the practitioners. Large organizational structures and bureaucracy, and little organizational flexibility were some of the reasons that might result in slow responses in emergent cases. This delay can further pose a problem to practitioners in the sense that they can be slow to respond should a situation call for immediate action. One respondent pointed out,

"Cumbersome bureaucratic processes and red tape may slow down the response time, making it difficult for practitioners to act swiftly in cases that require urgent attention."

Some of the hazards highlighted also include the complex legal structures of the Act, which had some areas left undefined, making it difficult to make sound decisions during the implementation of the Act. One respondent averred that "lavish as this may sound, loopholes which may exist in Legal Rules Regarding the Act may intertwine the Act and create uncertainties in the system resulting in compromise decisions."

If there is uncertainty with the legal requirements, then this is unlikely to work as well as if the rules that agencies and officers have to follow are well defined. It was mentioned that handling child protection concerns as cultural issues was considered a challenge since the specialist has to work with the cultural sensitivity of the community to protect the children from abuse. One respondent said it in this regard when he/she noted that

As a result, it may become quite challenging for practitioners to promote child protection while at the same time taking into consideration cultural beliefs system of people in the society, presumably a cross road between the cultural system and safe protection of the vulnerable children. Other implementation issues were the need for coordination and collaboration with other entities such as government agencies, NGOs among others that is essential for a complete implementation process.

Subtheme 1.1: Awareness regarding the Punjab Destitute and Neglected Children Act, 2004?

The above responses showed that the respondents were well informed on the Punjab Destitute and Neglected Children Act, 2004 as they understood it as an important legal instrument required to address the welfare and protection requirements of the destitute and neglected children of the Punjab. One respondent stated,

The majority of the respondents have heard about the Punjab Destitute and Neglected Children Act, 2007 this is a legal regime meant to address the welfare and protection concerns for destitute and neglected children in the area of Punjab.

Measures that the Act provided were recognized for their effectiveness with regard to the welfare support and protection of these children from abuse or even neglect. A respondent highlighted:

However, the Act mentions numerous provisions and requirements in order to promote and protect these children's welfare and prevent them from being abused or neglected.

The results show that although the respondents acknowledge the services of the Child Protection and Welfare Bureau they also gave some recommendations on areas of improvement. They also observed that the Bureau has a huge service portfolio which incorporates counselling, rehabilitation, and legal. Nevertheless, the respondents were more optimistic about the generalizability of the concept where more of a focus could be placed on both the prevention and early intervention otherwise known as community-based interventions. One respondent expressed,

The problems concern the CPS and CPWB's scope of services that combines counseling and rehabilitation services and legal aid; however, the focus might be widened further regarding the wider range of preventive services and community-based interventions to address the issues at their source.

Such recognition of the significance of the Act and the delivered by the Bureau services accompanied by recommendations for improvement reveals the rather deepce understanding of the issues related to the protection and assistance of deserted and abandoned children in the area.

Subtheme 1.2: PDNC Act is aiming

Respondents in the study demonstrated a strong familiarity with the PNDC Act and its overarching objectives, which are centered on providing a robust legal framework for child protection. They articulated that the Act is designed to uphold and safeguard children's rights, emphasizing their well-being, safety, and welfare as paramount considerations. One respondent elaborated,

"Respondents explain that they are familiar with the PNDC Act and its objectives, which aim to provide a legal framework for child protection. This includes ensuring that children's rights are upheld and safeguarded, implementing legal guidelines and mechanisms for child protection, emphasizing the importance of children's well-being, safety, and welfare."

The Act was mentioned to respond to a number of emergent and fundamental concerns, which current and future generations of children were facing in one way or the other in their upbringing, these concerning; child abuse, neglect, exploitation, Discrimination, and Children's Justice. The respondents were prompted by the Acknowledgement that the Act spells out measures and procedures to prevent risk and protect the well-being of children in a number of settings. A respondent mentioned,

The Act covers a number of aspects like; abuse, negligence, exploitation, discrimination and juvenile justice, giving measures and practices to be taken in order to protect the child.

In addition, respondents agreed that the PNDC Act is a policy framework that contains key principles for integrated child protection service and intervention programmers. The research associates the agency with response to child abuse protection by assembling the relevant players so that kids can be protected and nurtured properly while at the same time the agency also influences the rest of the population on what is allowed and what is not when it comes to harming children. One respondent emphasized,

It acts as a basis for the overall Child Protective Services and Programs, where all those involved contribute to establishing protective environment for children, as well as informs child protection, policies, practices in the society.

The understanding of respondents on individual and collective level emphasizes the importance of the PNDC Act as the legal base of child protection in the country and as the guideline for development of strategies that provide rights and protection of children.

Subtheme 1.3: Received training on PNDC

Respondents' experiences with training on the PNDC Act vary widely, reflecting diverse approaches and levels of engagement. Some respondents reported receiving formal training during onboarding processes and ongoing workshops, enabling them to stay updated on the Act's provisions and implementation strategies. They emphasized the importance of staying informed and trained to effectively carry out their responsibilities in child protection.

One respondent stated, "Some have received formal training during onboarding and ongoing workshops, staying updated on provisions and implementation strategies."

On the other hand, other respondents said that they had to self-Learn or consult their colleagues on the provisions of the Act or use organizational resources to understand the provisions of the Act. The following approach emphasizes the practical ways and strategies used by practitioners in obtaining knowledge and skills in child protection laws.

A respondent observed,

"Others practice self-learning, consulting peers or utilize the organizational information, support, and learning materials."

In addition, respondents stated pervasive training being received with a cross section of them having gone through extensive knowledge of the key provisions of the PNDC Act, legal considerations and practical applications. This was considered to be effective grounding that practitioners would be required to sort out child protection matters as required. However, they were also perceived as devoid of initial training without follow-up sessions which gives an implication that there may be a gap in continuous education and training.

One respondent said:

"While some workers have been trained intensively through the basic provisions, the law, and interactions for implementing it and practical experience, others have been trained initially but do not have revisits".

In general, the respondents stressed the need for occasional training sessions to clear the confusion of the laws, arm themselves with new information concerning the protection of children, and improve outcomes of measures envisaged by the PNDC Act. Such an emphasis upon training and professional development is aligned to the highly fluid nature of child protection work and the ethos of never standing still and always being updated.

Subtheme 1.4: Sources of Training on the PNDC Act

A variety of sources of training on the PNDC Act have been of response from which the respondents have gathered enough knowledge in child protection. A good number of respondents attended organized in-house workshops from their organization and received information from legal personnel as well as other practitioners in the field. These workshops turned out to be informative sessions on such knowledge on the legal requirements under the PNDC Act and operations.

One of the respondents said, "There were some who had followed in-house workshops that were conducted by their company with inputs from legal professionals and veterans of the job. "

Also, to enhance knowledge and skills in the country's laws and policies pertaining issues of children, respondents enrolled in online courses from accredited institutions, majoring on the provisions of the PNDC Act on Adoption of Children and case studies related to the protection of children. With this mode of training, it was possible to train the participants and provide them with enough knowledge at their own convenient time.

One respondent said this, "Others obtained online certificates from accredited universities, in the laws and best practices in child protection."

Another most important method of training mentioned by the respondents was attend regional seminars, being organized by the government of the country. Such seminars offered a chance to work with child protection specialists, to find out more about nationally and internationally recognised current practices and trends. In addition, training by external trainers including legal

consultants and child protection specialists provided on-site sessions that enhanced the participants' knowledge and deeper appreciation of the fine details of the PNDC Act as well as ways of implementing such provisions.

Pertaining to the improvement of child protection principles, respondents also noted the usefulness of integrating theoretical knowledge that was taught in school with the practical workshops conducted by knowledgeable practitioners, as the latter method, in addition to the former, gave them an overall view of the necessary foundations and their use. Training by government institutions, NGOs that focus on the rights of the child, legal entities and other reputable child rights organizations also helped respondents in acquired their knowledge. An integrated training method by organizations involved training sessions conducted by the specialist teams of the organization was deemed most effective, because it would be targeted towards specific internal contexts and operational methodologies.

Theme 2: Challenges faced by Child Protection Officers in the rehabilitation of children

Subtheme 2.1: financial challenges faced by practitioners in the rehabilitation of children

People giving their response describe the following factors as potential financial problems, Lack of adequate funds for the rehabilitation programs. It becomes a challenge for us to deliver all out services in helping these children restore their normal lives and be welcomed back into society. "Another side of the problem, which requires more attention, is the issue of resource scarcity in the rehabilitation process." However, lack of funding is a major problem that hinders the provision and impact of rehabilitation as it narrows down the activity and capacity that we have in delivering our programs. "

One person responded, "Deficiencies in funding greatly affect the delivery of expertise in the support received in the rehabilitation process". More funding is required to cater for the various needs of children that have been neglected and abused. "

One of the most difficult aspects of such programs continues to be the acquisition of funding for long-term rehabilitation. Lack of money is one of the challenges; available cash most of the time goes to urgent needs rather than spending on constant support of the rehabilitation processes thus impacting the successful outcome of the work. >Issues of finance come up to do with the inability to support vocational training and skill development activities. This makes our work very difficult because a consistent stream of funding is not always available to ensure that we are able to provide training which will enable the neglected children become independent. "

The following is an illustration of one of the respondents' comments:

"In regard to mental health services in rehabilitation, budget restraints significantly determine the quality and availability."

Sufficient funding is very vital so as to ensure the needy children get the required counseling and therapies. There is also the financial factor seen by the fact that we cannot afford to provide a holistic education support.

" Due to scarcity of resources, they can offer minimal resources that include educational materials, and a chance at rehabilitation of children."

The problem of insufficient funds hinders the creation and provision of adequate, safe shelter for children and adequate housing. Availability of funds is of critical importance in the process of forming appropriate conditions for a patient during the process of rehabilitation. "The role of funds in rehabilitation is that it has a limited impacting on execution of community based rehabilitation interventions. Lack of funding is a major factor that hampers the initiative of carrying

out a number of projects that deals with the reintegration of neglected children in local communities. >Preventive measures are extremely vital but what is difficult is getting funds to support such measures.

Subtheme 2.2: challenges, constraints and gaps (legal, administrative and procedural) in the planning, development and implementation of programs and activities for the protection

Another is that there is a lot of legal uncertainty in existing laws, which translates into a lack of objective criteria when facing the issue of protection planning and protection programs. Difficulties arise in making one's way through the legal system and as a result instituting safeguards against violations of current laws and policies. Sometimes protection programs are most hampered by the bureaucracy of an organization in terms of planning and implementation. Red tapes and other procedures hinder the implementation and the timely delivery of services leading to time wastage. A respondent stated, "Legal issues are a challenge, whereby, ambiguous laws lead to problems during planning and development process since, to develop sound protection programs that would meet legal requirements is complicated due to insufficient legal frameworks."

There are also a number of procedural shortcomings which influence the efficiency of protection activities. This is because lack of proper procedures may lead to lack of efficiency and orderly implementation of procedures formulated for the welfare of the people.

This was echoed by one of the respondents who said, 'Another challenge is cooperation issues due to bureaucracies, which may affect the sharing of information and / or the protection of individual programs'.

Some barriers are: Retention of laws that are out dated and do not support the planning and implementation of proper protection programs. To cover new challenges and the focus on the subject, it is necessary to find the relevant gaps in current legislation and improve them. Manner issues like lack of guidelines lead to procedural gaps in inventory planning and development stages. The procedural guidelines need to be well defined and adhered to so that there is an effective and efficient implementation of protection programs. Administrative problems such as those of resource and staff limitation hinder the effective planning and development of protection programs. Proper staffing together with appropriate resources is important while conducting activities.

Another respondent shared, "Legal gaps in defining roles and responsibilities can impede the planning and development of protection programs. Clear legal guidelines are essential for establishing accountability and ensuring the smooth execution of activities." Coordination challenges among different agencies contribute to gaps in planning and implementation. Strengthening inter-agency collaboration is necessary to address these coordination issues and enhance the overall effectiveness of protection programs."

Subtheme 2.3: human resource challenges in the rehabilitation of children

Respondents said that one of the key human resource challenges in child rehabilitation is the apparent shortage of social welfare officers. The insufficient number of officers often leads to increased caseloads, potentially affecting the quality and timeliness of rehabilitation services.

One respondent said that "CPWB appears to lack adequate support professionals, creating a gap in the range of services offered for child rehabilitation. Additional support from professionals such as counselors and therapists is crucial for addressing the diverse needs of children in rehabilitation." Delays in cases at the high court seem to be a human resource challenge impacting

child rehabilitation. This could be attributed to a shortage of legal personnel or administrative bottlenecks, affecting the prompt resolution of cases involving children."

One can note the lack of some understanding among the staff in the implementation of rehabilitation programs. This human resource challenge aggravates the poor implementation of programs aimed at raising the welfare and rehabilitation of children who need it most. "

One of the significant problems is the lack of personnel training for staff. Another crucial area is the obvious deficiency in staff capacity building. There is a shortage of social welfare officers, and this has implications for children's rehabilitation efforts; a lack of enough personnel may be a cause of reduced childcare attention and support, hence reduced quality of the rehabilitation programs."

Another respondent answered

"I think CPWB seems to lack the right workforce when it comes to rehabilitation professionals, examples being psychologists and social workers, which are some of the human resource impediments in child rehabilitation".

There is evidence of delay in high court cases contributing to human resource constraints in the rehabilitation of children, and this may be due to inadequate personnel or resources required in the management of such cases. High turnover of staff implies that staff within Supporting Children and Families Programs and Services do not understand enough to be able to implement the program. Any rehabilitation program needs to be delivered optimally and in the right manner by training and enhancing the knowledge of the people who are in charge. One area that appears to be a weakness is staff capacity building, which could be considered an important aspect of human resource management. Given the nature of this organization, it is important that staff undergo updates in their practice in child rehabilitation.

2.4: Lack of coordination between the social welfare department and the police department?

Respondents answered that yes, there seems to be a lack of coordination between the social welfare department and the police department. This can hinder the seamless collaboration needed to address cases of child protection and rehabilitation effectively."

One respondent explained that "Coordination challenges between the social welfare department and the police department are apparent. A more synchronized approach is crucial for ensuring a comprehensive response to child protection issues and improving overall outcomes."

This paper reveals that the social welfare department of Hong Kong does not coordinate with the police department of the city. This will require a greater integration, especially with regard to the sharing of information and cooperation in handling cases that affect children. Indeed, it is clear that there is no collaboration between the social welfare department and the police department. Communication is critical in enhancing harmony, which is vital in addressing challenges in the child protection initiative. There are several evident lacks of coordination between the social welfare department and the police department; hence, proper coordination would improve the timely response to cases that concern child welfare.

There is bureaucracy, especially between the social welfare department and the police department, as efforts need to be improved to ensure a flow in an efficient manner and cohesiveness in managing cases concerning the vulnerable children. In conclusion, it is important to emphasize that better collaboration and communication will be beneficial for handling child protection cases more effectively and comprehensively. "

When asked, the Respondent responded thus.

"There is a clear disconnect between the social welfare department and the police department. Some strategies that may help improve cooperation in regard with child protection issues include better documentation of the roles and responsibilities as well as the communication process. "

Some of the perceived weaknesses are: there is little integration between the social welfare department and the police department. It is imperative that there is development of a stronger relationship between these entities in a bid to ensure a more synchronized and comprehensive response to child protection concerns. "

Another respondent asked, "Yes, coordination gaps seem to exist between the social welfare department and the police department. Improving collaboration is crucial to ensure a coordinated and timely response to cases involving the welfare of children."

Theme 3: overall experience with CPB services, focusing on the aspects that have contributed to your satisfaction or dissatisfaction

Respondents express overall satisfaction with CPB services, highlighting prompt and empathetic staff responses, comprehensive child protection approaches, and commitment to children's well-being, educational initiatives, rehabilitation programs, collaboration efforts, cultural sensitivity, and community engagement.

Respondent explained that they appreciate the accessibility of support programs, focus on prevention, protection, and rehabilitation, and efforts to provide a safe environment. However, they also note areas for improvement, such as transparent communication, timely updates on case developments, streamlined communication channels, addressing delays in case resolution, enhancing public awareness campaigns, improving clarity in available services, addressing administrative bottlenecks, and ensuring quicker response times in emergencies. Respondents have had a positive experience with CPB services, especially appreciating their focus on rehabilitation and skill development. They highlight the commitment to the well-being of children but note the need for better communication channels for updates on ongoing cases and available support services.

Subtheme 3.1: interactions with CPB staff that have positively or negatively influenced your perception of their behavior and the quality of service provided

Some of the useful comments from the respondents included good communication with CPB staff, detailed explanations about rehabilitation, listening to patients' issues and concerns, understanding in special cases, cooperation with other organizations, involvement of community in preventative measures, organizational participation in outreach programs, and cooperation with educators, consideration of cultural diversity and engagement of families in rehabilitation.

"One respondent, for instance, said,

"Respondents highlighted the following: provision of detailed explanations on the rehabilitation process, attentiveness to concerns, extending support and understanding to sensitive cases, liaison with other agencies, active public participation in preventive measures, assertiveness in conducting outreach activities, and cooperation with schools, cultural understanding, and inclusion of families in the rehabilitation process."

But they also expressed some negative feedback such as no proper notification about the advances in those cases, slow response to critical issues, no feedback information at all, slow in organization of services, no information given about the available resources, slow in providing information regarding the support services, no proper information given about the progress of a case, slow in providing the legal aid and no information given on existing cases.

One respondent quoted this, "But they also talk of the negative things such as; lack of information on case progress, delays in addressing concern issues, inadequate feedback, delays in replying to emergent issues, no call back on status of cases, delays in organizing services, no information on available resources, delays in providing information on support services, no clear information on issues being worked on, delays in getting legal services, and no constant feedback on cases.

Subtheme 3.2: feel safe and protected while living in the child protection bureau

Each of the respondents offered a number of accounts of their residence in the child protection bureau (CPB). Few respondents have conveyed the feeling of security and safety, they liked the staff and environment of the institute. .

One of the respondents said,

"Some conveyed feelings of security and safety; able, for instance, to acknowledge the proper staff and encouraging atmosphere. "

On the other hand, some participants admitted to recalling instances of their weakness and pointed out that there were things that could be enhanced in some regard to safety and treatment within the CPB.

A responder concurred with this by saying,

"Some may recognize that each person is or has been at their most fragile and recommend points of change for some aspects of safety and care."

About the feelings regarding their current situation and staff members, some respondents expressed gratitude for the shelter CPB provided and trust in the staff; meanwhile, the others pointed to the concerns regarding their security and safety, emphasizing that more effort should be made towards protecting the clients of the center.

One of the respondents pointed out:

Some of them appreciate the shelter offered by the bureau and have confidence in the staff, while others focus on the fact that there are still many problems within the system, which need to be addressed to ensure the safety of women. '

Further, this thematic analysis reveals that beneficiaries' experiences in CPB facilities are multi-faceted, thus pointing to aspects that can be embraced and issues that require redress in delivering safety and welfare for all residents.

Subtheme 3.2: to communicate your needs and concerns effectively to the CPB staff members

Respondents provided varied experiences in communicating their needs and concerns to CPB staff members. Some respondents expressed satisfaction with open communication channels, feeling heard, and receiving support.

One respondent mentioned, "Some express satisfaction with open communication channels, feeling heard, and receiving support."

On the other hand, others mentioned challenges in effectively communicating their needs or feeling understood.

One respondent noted, "Others mention challenges in effectively communicating their needs or feeling understood."

Additionally, there were respondents who highlighted positive interactions where their concerns were addressed by CPB staff members.

One respondent shared, "Some highlight positive interactions where their concerns were addressed."

Conversely, some respondents noted instances of feeling dismissed or overlooked when communicating their needs and concerns.

One respondent expressed, "Others note instances of feeling dismissed or overlooked."

This thematic analysis highlights the importance of effective communication, empathy, and responsiveness in fostering positive interactions between residents and CPB staff members within the facility.

Subtheme 3.3: Witnessed any incidents of abuse or neglect in the CPB

Several diverse views on cases of abuse or neglect related to the CPB were provided by the respondents. Some respondents stated they did not observe any such times and appreciated the efforts of the staff because they were keen on residents' safety.

The following is what some of the respondents said:

As per the observations, some have not personally observed any such incident and appreciated the efforts of the staff for being so cautious for the residents' safety.

Others, unfortunately, reported having seen neglectful or mistreatment behaviors; concern and urged that the right measures be reported.

In their responses, one said that,

"Others, however, report seeing neglectful or, at least, some level of mistreatment behaviors and state concern coupled with a call for action.

Moreover, other signs of rumor or concerns of the rest of the people in the area were also observable, showing that there is still a sense of security and alertness within the community.

Another respondent said,

'Rumors, or concerns reported by other residents, can also be seen, which also shows a level of awareness within the community.'

This thematic analysis also stresses constant patrolling, disclosure, and compliance among the CPB facilities for the needs and protection of the residents.

Subtheme 3.4: received any training or education regarding your rights as a child living in the CPB

Respondents provided different accounts of training and education on their rights as children in the CPB. Several respondents noted that they feel good if they receive strict and ennobling training organized by the staff to establish their rights.

The following was cited by one of the respondents,

"Some said that they received satisfactory training sessions from the staff, which empowered them and made them aware of their rights."

On the other hand, other respondents complained of insufficient training or absence of adequate knowledge on rights; hence, they asserted that much effort should be made in that respect so that every resident is well informed of his/her rights and how to safeguard them.

Another respondent noted that 'Some of the individuals, however, pointed at a lack of training or remarked that while some people are trained on rights, there is a lack of training or education on rights, and therefore there should be efforts to ensure that all residents are informed on their rights as well as how they can protect them. This analysis demonstrates the need for extensive and enabling resident orientation in the CPB facilities based on the residents' rights and their capacity to defend their rights in the CPB facilities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study shows that safety was well-regarded within CPB, and participants were thankful for the support offered by staff and the care they received from the organization. The frequency of communication with the staff of CPB is generally positive, but occasional difficulties in being given an audience or being understood are experienced. The answers related to the observations of cases of abuse or neglect are also diverse, stressing the activity of the staff in these matters. Gaps in training on rights and recommendations on how to improve the CPB services also remind the need for more extensive education and better service on an equal basis. The repeated paradigms of communication, capacity building, training, and personal development suggest the general requirement of an open and effective environment within the CPB that would also regard the child in protection as an individual, a system, and a complexity. However, all these are only perceived, and for more definite conclusions, one has to measure and make an effort to possibly quantify these perceived strengths and opportunities for improvement.

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