



Qualitative Analysis of the Problems and Prospects of Orphanages in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

Irfan Ullah¹, Hamid Alam², Akhtar Munir

¹ M.Phil. Scholar at the Department of Social Work and Sociology, Kohat University of Science and Technology, Kohat, Pakistan. Email: toughyani123@gmail.com

² Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, University of Malakand, Pakistan. Email: hamid.alam@uom.edu.pk

³ Assistant Professor (IPFP) at the Department of Social Work and Sociology, Kohat University of Science and Technology, Kohat, Pakistan. Email: akhtar_psw@yahoo.com

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ABSTRACT

A child who loses one or both of his/her parents and does not have any immediate guardian, so they spend their childhood in orphanages. During their stay in orphanages, these children are confronted with numerous issues. This research was conducted at an orphanage centre at District Malakand. In order to have a more in-depth understanding of the issue, the researchers employed Qualitative method in the study. The study adopted purposive sampling technique for the selection of respondents. Ten respondents, having age 5-12 years were selected among the orphans at the caring institution purposively. The data was collected through in-depth interviews and was thematically analysed using Attride-Stirling (2001) model of basic, organizing and global themes. The study reported that orphans experience numerous challenges; including stigma, social isolation, discrimination, food insecurity, sexual abuse, exploitation and poor health outcomes. The study also provided an interventionist perspective to deal with these issues and develop proper mechanism for the protection of the orphans in the orphanages.

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Corresponding Author's Email: toughyani123@gmail.com

1. Introduction

A child, who loses one or both of the parents, is termed as orphan. Orphans can be divided into different categories including maternal orphans, paternal orphans, social orphans and judicial orphans. When a child is deprived of his/her mother, he or she is considered as maternal orphan while in case of the loss of father, the child is considered as paternal orphan. A child who lives without parents due to poverty, alcohol or imprisonment of one or both of the parents is considered as social orphan, and in case of the missing of father or mother or abandons the child due to divorce is considered as judicially orphan (Kavak, 2014). Generally, orphans live with their families at home in Pakistan. However, due to changing socio-cultural values and poverty, it is difficult for the poor families to afford the expenditure of orphans (Abdullah, Shahzad, Riaz, Fatima, & Abbasi, 2015). Moreover, these children face different problems; such as lack of access to basic services, abuse, neglect, illness, disabilities and emergencies also caused the spread of orphanages. In addition, if a child does not have relatives, then orphanage is the only way to provide him/her with shelter, health care, food, education and housing (Akram, Anjum, & Akram, 2015). An orphanage is an institution which works for the care and education of orphans (Reddy & Ramya, 2017).

Orphanages exist throughout the world; however, it is generally believed that the practice of orphanages emerged from West African countries, where parents used to send their children to live with relatives or non-relatives for long period of time for the purpose of getting formal, religious and vocational education or other opportunities. It involved the independent, partial and informal exchange of children, where the costs were shared between the biological

parents and the foster family and the arrangement was voluntary (Kazeem & Jensen, 2017). Throughout the world, under the age of 18 years 2.7 million children live in orphanages (Browne, 2017). These orphanages provide food, shelter, education, health and other recreational facilities (Saboula, Hussien, & El-Refaei, 2015). Though, orphanages exist throughout the world, but children living in such organizations face various types of serious challenges in the form of malnutrition, hazardous social environment and physical abuse (Reddy & Ramya, 2017).

Orphanage is considered a suitable place for orphans; however, many of these institutions face challenges to provide basic services and to fulfil basic needs of the children; within these orphanages orphans face challenges of psycho-social distress, neglect, abandonment and different types of abuses (Disassa & Lamessa, 2021; Ishola, 2012). Moreover, orphans at orphanages also experience low self-esteem, poor psycho-social care, and different types of labels attached to living in orphanages (Saboula et al., 2015). In orphanages, orphans are prone to different types of abuses. The most common types of abuses reported in the orphanages are corporal punishment, physical and sexual violence. It is commonly reported that children cook, clean and wash clothes to an unacceptable degree in their care home. The most common observed side effects in children are growing up in a residential care include developmental delays, behavioural problems, lack of life skills and difficulty of building and maintaining healthy relationships (Browne, 2017). Furthermore, orphans housed in orphanages, experience learning difficulties as compare to those children who reside in houses (Alvi, Nausheen, Kanwal, & Anwar, 2017).

Mental and physical health issues are also common in orphanages. Depression and emotional disorder are a common psychological issue among orphans at orphanages. Depression among orphans can be caused by neglect, feelings of inferiority, feelings of difficulty, loss, frustration, anger and stress (Norizan, Wan Mohd Yusof, Berhanuddin, Zulkifli, & Farah Syazrah, 2017; Shafiq, Haider, & Ijaz, 2020). This research study will help in the solution of psycho-social and economic problems of orphans. Moreover, this research may also help in sensitization of societies in general and orphanages in particular with special reference to overcome the mentioned problems of orphans. Simply, this study not only highlights the problems of orphans but also render certain possible remedies to address the issues of orphans in our society.

2. Literature Review

In traditional societies, care of orphans and other helpless children was the responsibility of the joint family or the child's caste. However, due to various factors, today most of these children have become part of these institutions run by the state or voluntary agencies to get food, shelter and other necessities of life. Orphanages are part of every culture (Reddy & Ramya, 2017). These orphanages are used to provide social care and security to orphans who suffer from disasters, war situations or any other reasons. Most of orphanages are unable to provide a favorable environment than like biological families (Ahmad et al., 2005). Orphanages have attracted children from poor families and separate them from extended family members and communities. The environment of Orphanages exposes them to more physical abuse (Pienaar, Swanepoel, van Rensburg, & Heunis, 2011). A research study found that 72.80% are exposed to physical abuse within the orphanages (Saboula et al., 2015).

Children living in such institutions, face a variety of medical problems (Reddy & Ramya, 2017). Globally, majority of orphanages have failed to provide proper treatment setting and orphans have no or limited access to medical services (Skinner, Sharp, Jooste, Simbayi, & Mfecane, 2013). A research study found that 35.5% of children face skin problems, 28.3% dental problems, 12.9% scalp problems, 11.6% ear problems, 5.7% upper respiratory problems, 3.9% eye problems, and 2.3% face other medical problems. Orphans, who stay in orphanages, have more medical problems as compared to those who live for limited time (Amiri, Furia, & Bakari, 2020; Reddy & Ramya, 2017). Many orphanages are un-organized in the context of staff (Browne, 2017). Due to untrained staff, limited knowledge and skills the care giver is unable to provide quality attachment and their daily interactions with children under their care to present themselves as caring, responsive and readily available to children (Kalembo, 2009). Orphans encountered various types of hurdles within the institution.

Mangoma, Chimbari, and Dhloomo (2008) and Durualp and Cicekoglu (2013) argued that it is difficult for the staff to fully concentrate on a large number of children (Tharner et al., 2012). Moreover, there is no monitoring and accountability mechanism to check the cases of orphans abuses and neglect (Browne, 2017). As a result, children in orphanages suffer from sleeping disturbance, experience shivering after hearing loud voices/sounds, recollect traumatic incidences, and almost all of them miss their siblings that point out how significant sibling relation is for the development of a children (Naqshbandi, Sehgal, & Hassan, 2012).

One of the challenges, orphans face in orphanages is economic insecurity. The orphans face economic challenges to spend money on clothing, food, stationary and other basic life necessities. Orphans living in orphanages are deprived of family environment, which creates various psychosocial problems for such orphans. Feelings of loneliness and lack of social support is experienced by children living in orphanages. Separation from their families adversely affects the personality development of such children, and thus, they have negative expectations about their future. Living in a new environment, being separated from their parents and sometimes from their siblings also makes these children feel hopeless, resulting in a feeling of loneliness. It is a proven fact that in orphanages, children who are away from their families and social environment are at risk of loneliness (Durualp & Cicekoglu, 2013; Mangoma et al., 2008). Self-awareness is viewed very important for child development but in orphanages, the social environment is considered not conducive for the development of self-awareness. A research conducted by Akram et al. (2015) and Helles (2021) found that 76.4 percent of children have very low level of self-awareness. Problems like anxiety, fear, lack of confidence, stress, isolation and depression leads to inferiority and complexes and these all factors create hurdles in self-awareness. In fact, awareness about own self is a necessary initial stage in the direction of their inner qualities. According to Saboula et al. (2015) 88.8 percent of such children face moderate levels of anxiety, low self-esteem and aggression.

Orphans are one of the most sexually exploited groups (Ncanywa, 2014). Due to it, sexually transmitted diseases are increasing rapidly (Abebe, 2009). They are unable to concentrate in their activities as a result they feel guilty and some ended committing suicide. Sexually abused orphans tend to be absent minded and instead of being involved and concentrating on learning, their thoughts flashed back to the abuse scene. They also develop a low level of self-esteem, feelings of powerlessness, and lack of confidence, feeling isolated or lonely and ended up engaging in destructive behaviours (Disassa & Lamessa, 2021; Ephias, Newman, & Lilian, 2015). Similarly, there is another very common issue that exists in orphanages is nutritional deficiency among the inmates. Throughout the world, majority of orphanages cannot provide proper nutrition. In general, poor nutrition increases the risk of starvation, disease and death for orphans. The assessment of the nutritional status of the orphans revealed that the prevalence of stunting, wasting and underweight are high among them (Adeomi, Atiyu, & Sabageh, 2020).

There is a limited social circle in orphanages. This limited social circle usually makes it difficult for the orphans to adjust themselves in society. The Naqshbandi et al. (2012) found that it is difficult for the orphans to live outside the orphanage and to adjust themselves in the society. Children learn and experience less within the institutions as compare to those children who are getting support of their own families (Pienaar et al., 2011). The gap between them and the socio-cultural aspect of society plays a sound role in their adjustment in society. People who are living in such institutions raise questions about their identities. The individual picks up the institutional values and attitudes, which differ from their previous culture. Therefore, the same individuals are facing difficulties in interaction with others in general society. No matter how attractive institutions may seem, they cannot meet the developmental needs of children. Institutional care at an early stage and for a longer period can cause a number of problems (Naqshbandi et al., 2012). The above-mentioned research studies are carried out by researchers on the problems of orphans in orphanages in different areas of the province (Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa), and they found out that orphans faced a lot of challenges in the orphanages, but in case of District Malkakand, there is no such study available. Therefore, this research aimed to fulfil the gap by self-reported challenges faced by orphans during their stay at *kafalat-e-Yateem Welfare organization* District Malakand.

3. Methods and Procedures

This research study was conducted at Kafalat-e-Yateem Welfare Organization District Malakand, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The purpose of the study was to sociologically analyze the educational and socio-economic status of orphans living in the orphanage (*Kafalat-e-Yateem welfare Organization*) and to provide research-based policy guidelines for effective intervention in the orphanages of North West of Pakistan. The present study is qualitative in nature. Field data was collected during the month of June and July 2019. Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews using interview guide. Interview guide was used as a tool of data collection because the age of the respondents ranged from 5 to 12 years and it deemed difficult to collect effectively the primary data through another data collection tool. The collected primary data was analysed thematically. Thematic analysis is a method of data analysis to understand life experiences and behaviour of the respondents across the collected data (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). In this study, purposive sampling technique was used. 10 respondents were selected purposively on the basis of willingness and communication skills.

The researchers were aware that every orphan has the right to dignity and privacy. Therefore, it was vital to explain the purpose of the study to participants. So, the participants were fully informed regarding the objectives of the study, while they were assured confidentiality and anonymity. The collected data was also analysed thematically.

4. Results And Discussion

4.1 Sexual Abuse with Orphans in Orphanage

In the current era, homosexuality is a challenging issue in every society particularly in Pakhtoon culture. All religions including Islam strictly forbid all sexual activity outside of marriage. Marriage is allowed only between men with women. Therefore, homosexuality is considered a sin. Islam, being a major religion of Pakhtun society forbids "lewdness" between men and men, women and women, and men and women who are not married to each other. However, due to lack of religious and moral knowledge, some people particularly at young age are involved in fulfilling their sexual desires illegally i.e. through homosexuality. In this regard, Orphans are reported to face sexually abuse by their teachers/care takers. Sexual abuse of Orphans takes place because they are at the mercy of others. It is traumatizing at any stage of life but for children it is exceedingly common. Orphans do not always have the full support and protection like other children; therefore, they are more vulnerable towards sexual abuse. The cases of sexual abuses are rarely reported in Pakistani society, particularly in Pakhtun society. In Pakistani culture, sex abuse is considered a stigma for the abused and resultantly the abused person usually does not report such case to the police. The abused person or his family takes revenge from the offender at personal level. Moreover, if such cases are reported then it will damage the image of services provided by orphanages. Like our culture and society sexual abuse practice in orphanages is common throughout the world. Interestingly, the same problem is also found by (Mahmood, Ullah, & Shah, 2020).

According to the research work in the mentioned area half of the children in the orphanages are reported suffering from sexual violence and harassment. They point out that in most orphanages their staff members are involved in sexual abuse and harassment. They are further recommended that the teachers are needed to provide smooth environment and focus on religious and modern education and skills should be encouraged. The same results were also found out by (Embleton et al., 2017) orphans are more vulnerable and facing more sexual abused in orphanages setting as compared to other children who are living in general society with their parents or other family members. During the study, they are reported that 17% of children living in orphanage are facing the problem regarding sexual abuses. They also suggest that care environment is responsible for increasing sexual behaviours among orphans and by others. According to their views, parents and other caretakers play a key role regarding the reducing of sexual abuses within the orphanages. Further (Ncanywa, 2014) add that those orphans who are abused sexually facing a lot of challenges and experiences such as self esteem, disappointment and physical contact with other peoples. There are various types of causes that lead to sexual abuse in orphanages such as lack of parents, lack of religious knowledge, lack of guidance of orphanage staff etc. They do not get full support and protection like other children in the family and that makes it even difficult for them to discuss their issues freely with someone. During data collection of this study, an official of the orphanage reported the case of child sexual abuse as;

"We are conscious/worried about the sexual abuse of orphans. However despite of our supervision one teacher and one servant (khadeem) were noticed, who were involved with children in their sexual abuse and hence removed from the organization"

4.2 Nutritional challenges in orphanages

Generally, orphanhood and malnutrition are interlinked. Orphans face malnutrition in community and orphanages due to various reasons including poverty and lack of breast-feeding of the mother. Not all orphanages provide poor and improper nutrition. Throughout the world there are orphanages that provide healthy food menu which resulting orphans are feeling satisfied and healthy. Adeomi et al. (2020) studied that orphans living in orphanages faced less nutritional problems as compared to other children according to their findings the respondents food patterns were encouraging, with most children eating a variety of healthy foods. Further they add that the food quality were frequently high in observed orphanages. According to their statistics three children out of five (3/5) were high dietary diversity. However in developing countries like Pakistan the case is different this is because due to poverty, corruption and low check and balance it is difficult for the masses to take balance nutrition and resultantly they face the issue to malnutrition. In the present study the age of our respondent in the mentioned orphanage was (5-12) years this is the stage of childhood where some growth and a lot of maturation occurs.

Poor nutrition at this stage can have lasting effect on overall growth, which comprises not only deficiency (malnutrition), but also any excess of a nutritional element (over nutrition). A bad diet results in lower core strength, slower problem solving ability and muscle response time, and less alertness. It also creates many other negative health effects as well which further lead to underweight, impaired immunity and slow growth. In present orphanage, the variety of food was not too good; children were get one type of meal at a time. The menu was so poor therefore, the children were unhealthy. The same result is also found by different researcher regarding nutrition within orphanages according to (Hearst et al., 2014) and (Bashir et al., 2020) orphaned living in orphanages are more vulnerable to growth and development due to improper nutrition. Nutrition-related growth and development deficits reduce both the child's current potential for adoption and potential for a productive life. There is a great difference of nutritional status among children who are living with their parents and orphans living in orphanages. Orphans in orphanages are more likely to have micronutrients deficiencies than children living with their families. Further (Huq, Chowdhury, Roy, Haque, & Hossain, 2013) reported that about 62% of orphans in orphanages are malnutrition's, 43.4% of the children are stunted (low height for age), but not wasted (low weight for height) and 9.3% of the children are wasted but not stunted. This show that children in orphanages get lack of variety for that reason to prove our argument we interview A 9 year old boy he told that:

"We are bored from the food items available at the orphanage. The reason behind is that the food provided to us is usually not cooked properly. Moreover, we are fed up from the food of the orphanage because it lack variety and quality".

During data collection, another respondent in the same orphanage also argued that:

"I am not satisfied from the diet offered to us by the orphanage. It lacks regular change in menu. In addition, its quality is poor and quantity also cannot fulfil my biological needs".

4.3 Depression and Isolation among orphan

Isolation is itself a problem that leads to various types of psychological challenges including depression. It affects badly the development of orphans in orphanage. The separation of children from their parents is a serious issue to cope it. Both isolation and depression are interrelated and inter connected terms. Depression is the product of isolation, which can also be triggered by the loss of parents. The breaking bond between the orphans with their relatives and parents compel them to live in orphanage. The changing environment

from home to orphanage is a difficult situation for children to adjust themselves. In developing countries like Pakistan, the established orphanages under government system or Charity organizations have no adequate resources to fulfill the basic and major needs of children. Majority of orphanages in this point of view are unable to provide home like environment. Majority of children are found depressed during collection of data in mention orphanage for this research paper the main cause is point out that on one hand the orphanage is unable to fulfill the internal demands of children due to lack of organizational resource and the other hand the death of parents become them isolated. Different researchers in different organization have find out the same issue one of them demonstrated that the loss of a parent and the placement of orphans in orphanage are stressful and bring negative effect on a child's psychological well-being (Yendork & Somhlaba, 2014).

Traumatic experiences of early childhood, parental conflict, trauma of separation from one or both parents, emotional pain, and lead to psychological distress and depression among the orphans (Ibrahim, El-Bilsha, El-Gilany, & Khater, 2012). Once a child enters into the walls of the orphanages, then the outside society door is locked on them and no one come from their relatives and families to ask about their situation. Within orphanage due to poor relationship and ignoring attitude of staff and other responsible members and memory of the loss of parents children experiences continuous stress as result they faced problems in sleeping (Tadesse, Dereje, & Belay, 2014) the same result also found by Naqshbandi et al. (2012) according to their report most of the children in orphanages are suffered from sleeping disturbance, experience shivering after hearing loud voices, recollect sad traumatic incidences, and almost all of them miss their parents. While conducting the interviews the above mentioned problems (including sleeping) children living in the current orphanage were also feel isolated A young 10-year old boy mentioned:

"I feel cut-off from the outside world. No member of my family visit this place nor to meet with ask about my problems. Even if I want to, we can't go out from here. We don't get to interact with them."

During our study we also noticed that children thinking about their parents all the day that's make them mentally ill, due to it they often see their parents in dreams. One of 11-year-old boy mentioned that:

"During day time i see other children with their parents. At night, when I sleep, I often see my parents in dreams. Their (parent's) memorieskeep hounding me so I cannot sleep peacefully"

4.4 Stigmatization and Orphanage Children

Children living in orphanages facing stigmatization, it is due to the label of "Yateem"/Orphan on it. They are growing up with an inferiority complex. They are treated badly within the orphanages. In the mentioned orphanage, they have no basic facilities such as specific type of uniform, no proper education etc for such children, which increase the chances of stigmatization among them. Living in orphanage, the outside society easily stigmatized them means they are more vulnerable to it, as there is no one to protect them from such psychological trauma. In our regional area, the word Yateemkhana is a term, which also leads to stigma among orphans. It is due to the negative attitudes of common masses towards it. Generally, in Pakhtoon society children in orphanages are discriminated on the bases of having no biological parents for their caring and have no properties and homes for their living, ultimately, these factors lead to stigmatization in *Kafalat-e-Yateem Welfare organization*. According to the findings of other researchers, the biggest problem faced by orphans is social stigma in orphanages. They are discriminated against other children, and this stigma has a special effect on their psychology. Orphans who reside in orphan homes are more prone to develop depression, anxiety and behavioral problems as compared to other children (Bano, Fatima, & Naz, 2019).

Many residential institutions for children also lack the necessary resources and qualified and well -trained staff that are necessary to provide children with supportive, caring, and

healthy environment to grow up in (Saboula et al., 2015). Usually, orphans are forced to live in orphanages, where they miss every emotional attachment like sibling, relatives and social relationship, and importantly they miss the customs, culture, tradition, norms and regulations of the society. They grow up in orphan-home culture where they do not enjoy these things (Naqshbandi et al., 2012). Despite not having the best facilities, they are thankful to Allah to it. And because of no choice with them they make the best relationship with others here and they are known as a family. They have a special type of orphan labeled as depression all the time. This cause them to feel inferior that is lead to further jealous and aggressiveness. An 8-year-old boy mentioned:

"I am thankful that I got to live here at least I am not roaming on streets. I have made many great friends here, and now this is my only family"

Another 12-year-old boy argued that:

"I feel jealous of my friend outside the institution Staying with their parents. I always wish if there were some secret magic, I would bring back my mother. "

4.5 Discrimination and rejection is faced by Orphans

Orphan children are already rejected by their relatives and society. In developed countries, orphanages provide quality of care and fulfil the needs of the children. Unfortunately, in countries like Pakistan due to lack and mismanagement of resources majority of orphanages are unable to provide the quality services. The situation of the current orphanage was also not satisfied; children faced discrimination and rejection on one side from their step parents and society on the other hand. The same issues were also faced by them in the current orphanage. Majority of orphanages who are under the support of charity system have no professional staff members. Therefore, they have no skills to treat all the children in the same way. The mentioned orphanage was under the support of two staff members, which is a huge burden, and they have no enough time to give attention and love to all children. Sometimes, they have expressed their aggression on them and these children are growing up in an abusive environment. According to the study of other orphanages, the same issue orphans face discrimination in the community and orphanages as well. Orphans who are living in orphanages, face discrimination in terms of education, healthcare and others aspects of life (Abdullah et al., 2015).

Orphans also faced discrimination due to the abominable attitudes and behaviours of poorly trained staff in orphanages (Saboula et al., 2015). Due to the negligence of the step-parents, they are compelled to live in orphanages. The inappropriate behaviour of step-parents compelled the orphans to join orphanages. The grief and feelings of not having parents' shadow on their head kill them every day and they miss them all the time. Children who are raised in orphanages also, feel rejected and disowned by society. Due to the inappropriate attitude of people, they are so tired that they are willing to live in outdated environment. The steps father/mother cannot take care of the orphans as biological parents do. Usually, steps parents ignore to fulfil the needs of orphans. In Pakhtoon society, most of the step-mothers perform their domestic responsibilities with the support of their step children/orphans. Sometimes, the orphans get tired from their attitude and as a result, they become part of orphanage. According to a 12 years old boy:

"In one side I am rejected by my step parents and other hands the of orphanage and my peers not treated me in a good manner"

Another 9 years old respondent mentioned that:

"My step mother sent me here after the death of my biological mother. The idea of living here seemed weird to me but I had no choice. In vacation, I spent most of the time with relatives because my step mother treated me harshly as compare to her own children"

5. Conclusion

The present study identified problems and challenges of at orphanages. The study revealed that abuses such as physical and sexual were related to increase the level of anxiety, aggression and low self-esteem in orphans. Lack of quality services provided in the orphanage home was among the main sources of abuse. Lack of necessities among orphans was widespread in the selected orphanage. Additionally, orphans experience challenges of food insecurity, poverty, psychological distress, discrimination, poor health outcomes and social isolation. Separation of children from their families, poverty, death of parent/s, loss of other close family member and family discord have made it mandatory for orphans to get shelter at every expense. Very high percentage of anxiety disorders exist among orphans in the institution. Cultural and recreational activities of orphanages seem to be very much limited and the necessities in the orphanage are not much satisfactory, including entertainment and other activities. Furthermore, the study revealed that the shelter, clothing, bedding and educational facilities were not up to the mark in orphanage.

In the light of the present study, it is necessary to bring awareness regarding the rights of orphans at community level and they should be allowed to interact with general society as well. To appropriately address the matter, a more systematic research is needed to explore it fully. Similarly, the issues related to institutional care in Kfalat-e-Yateem Welfare Organization can be addressed with further research. Consequently, some clear guidelines should be given regarding the establishment of orphanage center.

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