

Child Care Institutions in Manipur: Services and Facilities

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ABSTRACT: The present study was conducted to identify the various services and facilities available for children in child care institutions as laid in the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2015. It was carried out in eighteen institutions working for children in need of care and protection. The staffs (Superintendent, Child Welfare Office/Case Worker and Counselor) that are responsible for running the institutions and looking after the children were selected as respondents. The paper is descriptive in nature, purposive sampling and tools like interview and questionnaires were employed in collecting the data. The paper examines the facilities and services provided by the child care institution to the children and the various shortcomings and challenges in regards to the services implemented. The services and facilities were found unsatisfactory, improper functioning of non-institutional care, there is absence of professional staffs, negligence in meeting the special needs of children and also on the part of parents, no separate homes for different types of children and less importance is given to children's rehabilitation and social integration. Besides, the institution lacks the essential basics in providing sufficient prospect for the balance and all round-development of children and for their future career.

Key Words: Children, Child Care Institutions, Children in need of care and protection, Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, Manipur.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Children are considered as the most valuable asset of the nation. The future of every country depends on the welfare and development of the children. So to nourish and protect the children is building a future for the nations. Children need special care and attention in terms of health, physical and developmental rights. Child's best place is believed to be home and with the family, as a result family plays a very important role in the life of the child. The central part of the family responsibilities is to provide love, care, affection, attention, security, and raise and guide them on social values. Thus, every child has a right to a family and home, a right to be care and protected, however not every child has a family and an environment conducive to his/her all round development. A large number of children is deprived of parental or family care because of various aspects such as social, economic and cultural and because of various circumstances some children does not have the care and protection and a family. There are instances where parents are in continued financial strain, where families or relative are not able to cater the responsibilities of looking after the children, which results to a large number of children who are left uncared and unprotected.

It is the duty of the every country/state to provide care, support and protect those children who are orphan, abandoned, neglected, abuse, vulnerable, etc. In view of this the Government and Non-governmental Organizations are providing services for these children through child care institutions where they have an access to basic necessities of life and where they are care and protected. Eventually, child care institution remains to be the easiest and practical mode of care and protection of deprived and vulnerable children.

II. CHILD CARE INSTITUTIONS

The United Nations defines institutional care for children as "the care in residential groups, under public or voluntary auspices and under the guidance of staff especially employed or assigned for this purpose, of children who for a variety of reasons must live apart from their own families. It is distinguished from the boarding out of children in families, commonly known as foster-home placement; from adoption, in which, through an established process, children become permanent members of the adoptive parents; and from other forms of group care away from home in which children regularly return to their own home for a part of each day" (United Nations 1956:1).

Child care institutions have been widely recognized as an integral part of the child welfare programs in order to help children. In fact, India also has a long tradition of looking after the destitute, orphans, neglected and abandoned children in institutional care (V.J. Kochuthresia, 1990). Child care institutions refer to those institutions which provide the requirements and services to children who are in conflict with law and children in need of care and protection. It also aims to provide care, protection, rehabilitation and social integration of children who are in conflict with law and children in need of care and protection in an institutional location under the control and regulation of child care professionals whose actions are managed by the principles as prescribed by the Juvenile Justice Act. The exclusive reason of child care institutions is to balance for the missing family ambience in a child's life. It is to be observed as a momentary understanding rather than long term. The institutions should be able to help the child in equipping themselves with various skills so as to help the child on preparing for the future and also will help the child in his/her family and social rehabilitation. Moreover the institutions should prepare the child for the future.

Alfred Kadushin, in his book *Child Welfare Services*, defines an institution as "place like a boarding home" as it offers temporary alternate care, and some a place of adoptive home like for a permanent stay. In addition, he says that institutions are not like a boarding home or an adoptive home which provides service in group. Kadushin defines children's institution as "a group of unrelated children living together in the care of a group of unrelated adults" (Kadushin 1974:617). K. Browne (2009) in his book, *The Risk of Harm to young Children in Institutional care*, defines institutional care as "a group living arrangement for more than ten children, without parents, or surrogate parents, in which care is provided by a much smaller number of adult carers," where staffs or care givers are not sufficiently and properly educated to look after the children. Further he points out that child in institutional care does not receive the love, fondness, interest of the staff which are the basic things that the child required in his/her early age (Browne 2009:1).

Section 2(21) of Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 defines "child care institutions as Children Home, open shelter, observation home, special home, place of safety, Specialized Adoption Agency and a fit facility recognized under this act for providing care and protection to children, who are in need of such services". The term child care institutions point towards providing twenty four hours facilities and services to children in need of special care and protection.

2.1 Statement of Problem

Though the child care institutions are providing the basic necessities like food, shelter, clothing, education, etc., children instead of being given love, care, and attention are subjected to abuse, ill treated, and neglected. The institutional cares are often crowded and the environment is not conducive for a child to grow and develop. Further no proper rehabilitation process is carried out. In Manipur, children are simply kept in the institutional care without exploring and optimizing the potential alternative for non-institutional care. Though the children are provided with the basic needs, there is negligence in meeting the special needs of children, absence of trained staffs, lack of adequate facilities, absence of separate homes for different types of children and less importance is given to their rehabilitation and social integration. Child care institutions are unable to provide the affection, attention, personal identity and social connections which families can offer, eventually the children are neglected and vulnerable to abuse.

2.2. Objectives

1. To study the different services and facilities provided by the institutional care as lay down in the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.
2. To examine the various shortcomings and challenges with regards to the services implemented by the institutional care

III. METHODOLOGY

This paper is a part of my doctoral research study on Child care institutions in Manipur with special reference to rehabilitation of children so there can be limitations in the study. The research is both explorative and descriptive design in nature as to have inclusive learning and understanding of the different services and facilities provided by the child care institutions as lay down in the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 and also to examine the various shortcomings and challenges in implementing the services in Manipur. This helps in carrying out the study systematically and better understanding of the concepts of the study.

The study was carried out after receiving permission from the Department of Social Welfare, Government of Manipur, concerned Child Welfare Committee (CWC) and Head/secretary of all the institutions. It was carried out in 5 districts of Manipur namely; Chandel, Churachandpur, Imphal East, Imphal West, and Ukhrul. These districts have more institutional care when compared to other districts, there is also high number cases of children's trafficking, abuse, abandoned, neglected, etc. Eighteen (18) Child care institutions which

solely work with 'children in need of care and protection' were selected for the study. A purposive sampling and tools like interview and questionnaires were used in collecting data. The eighteen institutional cares includes 14 children homes and 4 open shelters. Interviews were carried out with at least two staffs of the organizations which include the Superintendent and Child Welfare Officer/Case Worker or Counselor. The interviews were noted down for after collecting from the interviewee. The author also referred to secondary data like legal provisions, annual reports and documents related to the study. Thereafter the data was transcribed and analyze with the help of SPSS.

IV. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The Juvenile Justice act categorizes two types of children; children in conflict with law and child in need of care and protection. The study is concentrate on the latter category of children. The act lays down various provisions of these children and defines child in need of care and protection as "Children who are in difficult circumstances such as; orphan, semi-orphan, runaway children, children whose family are at risk, mentally and physical challenged, incapacitated parents, vulnerable children who can be a victim of abuse, labor, trafficking, exploitation, children affected by armed conflict, civil unrest and natural calamities"(The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015). The findings of the study are discussed under the followings points;

4.1 Services and Facilities

4.1.1 Building

As per the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Rules, 2007, all the institutions must have separate rooms for dormitory/bed room, classroom/study room, sick room/first aid room, kitchen, dining, store, recreational, library, office, counseling room. However, most of the child care institution does not comply with the rules laid down. Twelve institutions do not have two (2) separate rooms for dormitories which can fit twenty five (25) children each. Regarding having two (2) separate classrooms, not single institutions have two (2) separate classrooms instead three institutions used the study room as a dining room too.

It is noteworthy and in the same way surprising to mention that only four institutions have separate room for sick children. The rules mentioned on having separate counseling and guidance room, however it was observed that except for three institutions all the other institution do not have separate room for counseling and guidance.

4.1.2 Food, Clothing and Shelter

The home provides food, clothing and shelter to every child who is admitted in the institution. Healthy kinds of foods are provided for the child's physical needs. Every institution has a daily food menu/chart and the food is prepared accordingly, special attentions and nutritious foods and fruits are provided to children who are ill and physically weak and a separate room for sick children is arranged separately. However, nutritious expert is not consulted while preparing the menu. There is no inclusion of children in the food committee. The child care institutions provide adequate clothes to every child as per the season and when needed. Children are provided clothing as per needs accordingly such as school uniform, sports dress, sweater, pants, shirts, etc. The institutional care also provides rooms, blanket, bed, and other necessary materials for the children.

4.1.3 Medical Care

The child care institution provides a weekly medical check-up by the institution doctor who is engaged in part time basis. Staff nurses are present 24×7 in the institutions who takes care of the children when they are ill, provides them health care services, and helps them in arranging for further medical examination. Children are usually referred to Government Hospital when the child's health condition is serious. Every institution has provision of first aid facilities. However, there is no provision for ambulance services and all the staffs are not trained in handling the first aid.

4.1.4 Educational facility

Education is considered much important and taken seriously by the institutional care for child's growth and development and in preparation for their future. The institutions provide educational facilities to all the children who are in the school going age according to the children's age, and ability starting from kindergarten to higher secondary or college level. Formal education is provided outside the institutions and non-formal class within the institutions. Coaching class for those appearing for board exams and special attention are given to students who are weak in their studies. Most of the institutions send the children for formal education in government school. Tuition, library and computer are also provided to the children. However, there is no provision of formal education in the institutional premises and children are hardly sent to the private schools.

4.1.5 Recreational Activities

The child care institution provides music instruments, equipments which include both indoor and outdoor games and sports, television, picnic, outings. Children are mostly provided with chess, Chinese-checkers, skipping rod, carom, football, volley-ball, badminton-racquet, etc. These are all provided to enhance the child's mental, emotional, intellectual and social development.

The child care institutions promote children's participation in activities in their leisure time such as singing, dancing, playing, painting, cooking, and gardening. The institutions also have a study tour provision as to enhance the child's knowledge, opportunity of exposure and experiencing which will greatly help them in adjusting with others.

4.1.6 Vocational Training

Out of the eighteen institutional cares; eight institutions do not provide vocational training. The other institutions providing the vocational training are also limited to tailoring, embroidery, pickles making, basic computer class, etc. The trainings are provided only for few weeks in the institutional premises and without professional instructor/trainer. Moreover, it is not certificate course and no job placement for the children is arranged.

4.1.7 Social Work and Psychological Services

A case file is open for each and every individual child. The case includes the child's case history, order from Child Welfare Committee, Social Investigation Report, Individual Care Plan, medical reports, school report cards, and other related documents of the children. All these reports help in preparing the child's rehabilitation and social integration. Counseling (both individual and group) is provided in solving the problem and correcting the child's behavior problems.

4.1.8 Sanitation and Hygiene

The child care institution provides sufficient treated and filtered drinking water. The children's are also provided with sufficient water for bathing and washing clothes. However, it was observed that some institutional children are sent for fetching water outside the premises. There is also a proper drainage system with arrangement of garbage disposal. However, insufficient of bathrooms and toilets can be observed in most of the institutions.

4.1.9 Home visits and Follow Up

The institutional care makes a home visit for each individual for a social investigation to the study the child's background and situation. The primary aim is to study and identify the reality of the child and its environment. However, follow up reports were missing except for those children's follow up reports where it was ordered by the Child Welfare Committee or higher authority (case of abuse, minor marriage/elopement, trafficking).

4.2 Shortcomings and Challenges

4.2.1 Unplanned Institutionalization

It is said that child care institutions should be the last resort. However, in the state ad-hoc institutionalization is very common as the most of the children are directly admitted in the institutional care without exploring and optimizing family based non-institutional care such as; adoption, foster care, kinship care, sponsorship and after care.

4.2.2 Absence of requisite professional and trained staff

Most of the child care institution lacks professional and trained staff. The absence of professional and trained staffs has a serious impact in preparing the Individual Care Plan (ICP) of the child which eventually is one of the huge factors that hinders the child's rehabilitation and social integration. There is also an absent of professional psychiatrists, counselors, social workers, in most of the institutions.

4.2.3 Lack of Education in Private Schools

Most of the children in child care institutions have no option to go to a private school for their education. Even if the child wants to they can only go to government schools which hamper their aspiration.

4.2.4 Negligence to the special needs of the children

Education in schools is not at all enough for children for their proper development. They need more attention as child's passes different difficult development stage. However child care institutions give less importance on children's exceptional needs for their proper development. For instance, health education, moral education, sex education are not provided in the institutional care.

4.2.5 No Separate Homes for different Children

All different types of children such as; orphan surrendered, abandoned, victims of rape, abuse, trafficking, child labor, etc. These children are all placed together in same home. No special attention to those victims of rape, trafficking, child labor.

4.2.6 Adoption Related Challenge

Majority of Adoptive parents prefers children who are below the age of two or three. This has greatly affected those children in the homes who are above the age of three. As such some children who are abandoned and surrendered are yet to be adopted and are still in the homes.

4.2.7 Untimely and Insufficient of funds

Most of the time the child care institutions does not received funds from the government in time and the funds received are also insufficient to provide the children needs and run the institutional care effectively.

4.2.8 Improper and Non-functional of Non-Institutional Care

There is a provision of non-institutional care such as adoption, foster care, sponsorship, after care under Juvenile Justice Act. However, except for adoption, the other non-institutional cares are not properly implemented and functional in the state. Not a single child care institution is availing the sponsorship and foster care.

4.2.9 Limitation in Vocational Training

Most of the child care institutions do not provide vocational training to the children, few institutions that provide vocational training to the children in the institutional care are also limited to embroidery, tailoring, pickles making, music class, and basic computer class. The training is also limited to a week or two with no professional constructor/trainer.

4.2.10 No Job Placement Service

The child care institutions in Manipur has no provision in providing job placement for those who children who have graduated from the institutional care with either from formal education on vocational training in their individual capacity and aptitude.

4.2.11 Poor Infrastructure

Some child care institutions breach the standards of care specified in the Juvenile Justice Act by not having and providing proper rooms, bathrooms, water supply, and other basic amenities for children.

4.2.12 Lack of Training and Supervision

The staffs in the child care institutions are supposed to train with all the acts and others related for effective functioning of the institutional care and to provide proper care to the children. However, training on Juvenile Justice Act, POCSO ACT and other related acts organized are infrequent and insufficient. This has a greatly affected the staffs in carry out their duties and responsibilities effectively.

4.2.13. No awareness

The institutions and not even the concerned authority from the state government are taking initiative in organizing awareness program on child care institutions and non-institutional care. Most of the people are not aware of what child care institutions and non-institutional care is and sometimes confuses foster care with that of adoption.

V. SUGGESTIONS

5.1 Child care institutions should appoint adequate trained and qualified staff. The staffs should be provided with adequate training (various acts, documenting, reporting) related to working with children in particular and institutional care in general before and even while in service.

5.2 The child care institutions should make necessary arrangements in providing vocational training with proper trainer/constructor which includes certificate to the children which can help them in preparing and applying for jobs in the future. Further provision of job placement should be arranged for children in accordance with their aptitude and capacity.

5.3 For effective functioning of the child care institutions, the central and state government should increase and release the funds in time so that the institutions does not faced problem in executing their responsibilities towards the children.

5.4 The government should establish more homes where there are separate homes for different categories of children so that the children (with different problems/issues) are not mixed up.

5.5 The concerned authority and the institutions can organize seminars and workshops in the community on the importance of non-institutional care. It can be publicize in news both in print and electronic media and even radio. Poster campaign can be also one of the options.

5.6 The government should ensure that non-institutional care is implemented and it reaches to out to every child. This will minimized institutionalization and increase de-institutionalization of children. The government and concerned authority should see that delays in adoption are minimize and should frame its own guidelines for effective implementation of the non-institutional care.

5.7 Create robust monitoring systems so as to ensure effective monitoring, inspection and supervision. A combine meeting between the committees and representatives staffs of the child care institutions should be held

regularly to identify the challenges face by the institutions and how the solutions to the problems. The concerned authority must take stringent actions against child care institutions who do not comply with the Juvenile Justice Act.

VI. CONCLUSION

A child's best place for his/her growth and development is home and with the family. They are many negative effects attached to institutional cares and several studies have suggested as a last resort and calls for non-institutional care. Further the present study reveals various shortcomings and challenges of child care institutions, so the author would definitely suggest for a non-institutional care to be implemented effectively. However, because of improper and non-functional of non-institutional care till date, child care institution turns out to be the most viable place for helping children who are vulnerable and difficult circumstances through its services and programs. Though institutional care has negative effects, efforts can be made in making the child care institutions a safe haven for these children by providing them the love, care, attention, conducive and congenial environment, and other basic necessities for its proper growth and development. Further quality education and other life skills can be provided so as to fully prepare them for their future.

For its improvement and effective working of child care institutions, few suggestions have been made. However, since the suggestions are based on the researcher's and staffs perspective; it would be appealing to look at the insight of the children in the institutional care for further investigation in strengthening the findings.

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