A STUDY ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS FACED BY GIRL CHILDREN IN CHILD CARE INSTITUTIONS OF COIMBATORE DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU

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Abstract

This study investigates the psychological issues faced by girl children in child care institutions in Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu. The research made an attempt to identify prevalent psychological problems of institutionalized girl children in Coimbatore. Data was collected through structured interviews, Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL) –by Achenbach, Thomas M. was applied to find out their psychological state. A sample of 200 girl children from 16 Child care institutions in Coimbatore district has been interviewed. Findings revealed high incidences of anxiety, depression, and behavioural disorders, influenced by factors such as previous trauma, institutional environment, losing their child freedom, desires and lack of familial support. Recommendations for policy changes and therapeutic interventions are discussed in order to build a safe and secure institutional care for girl children.

Key Words: Psychological Problems, Girl Children, Child Care institutions

1. Introduction

Child care institutions are often perceived as safe havens, places where vulnerable children find refuge from the harsh realities of life. For many, these institutions represent a last resort, a shelter from neglect, abuse, or the loss of parental care. Yet, beneath the surface of these well-intentioned establishments' lies a complex reality that is often overlooked the psychological challenges faced by the young girls who reside within their walls.

Many of these girls have already faced significant trauma before entering these institutions, dueto lossof their parents, exposure to violence, or severe neglect and various abuses. The transition to institutional care, while providing physical safety, often fails to address the deep-seated emotional wounds these experiences leave behind. However, the absence of tailored psychological support can

exacerbate existing mental health issues, leading to a range of problems such as anxiety, depression, and behavioural disorders. The rigid structure of institutional life, with its emphasis on conformity and discipline, can further compound these challenges, leaving little room for the expression of individuality or the processing of past trauma.

Moreover, the gender-specific challenges faced by girls in these environments often go unnoticed. These young girls may experience gender-based discrimination, both within the institutions and in the broader society, which can negatively impact their self-esteem and mental well-being. The pressure to conform to traditional gender roles, coupled with the stigma often associated with being in institutional care, can create a potent mix of psychological stressors that are difficult for these children to navigate on their own.

This study aims to delve deep into the psychological problems faced by girl children in child care institutions, drawing attention to the urgent need for more comprehensive and sensitive approaches to their care. By exploring the root causes of their psychological distress, this research seeks to provide a clearer understanding of how these institutions can better support the emotional and mental well-being of the girls in their care. Through in-depth interviews, case studies, and a review of existing literature, this study will offer a nuanced perspective on the challenges these children face and the steps that can be taken to mitigate their psychological struggles.

In shining a light on these issues, the hope is to spark a broader conversation about the importance of mental health care in child care institutions, and to advocate for reforms that prioritize the holistic development of every girl child. After all, providing a roof over their heads is only the beginning; ensuring that they emerge from these institutions as emotionally healthy and resilient individuals is the true measure of success.

Child care institutions (CCIs) serve as crucial support systems for children deprived of family care. In India, these institutions are designed to provide shelter, education, and emotional support to vulnerable children. However, the psychological well-being of children, particularly girls, in these institutions often remains neglected. This study aims to explore the psychological problems faced by girl children in CCIs in Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu, and to propose strategies for improvement.

2. Literature Review

The establishment of Child Care Institutions is introduced to save children from complicated and destructive situations. Institutional care is considered to be one of the best ways of meeting the needs of children. Those who are not in parental care for some reasons and need a safe location, help, and

care can be for a long or short period depending on the needs identified by the competent authorities (Hrishika & Rai, 2020).

The quality of services in the child care and the child's perspective plays a critical part in their successful preparation in their future. Many of these children in care have a harmful childhood where they are abuse and neglect. These young people and their interpersonal skills are adversely influenced by feelings of isolation and separation from their families. In treating these mental injuries, the residential care home plays a vital role in maintaining a healthy future (Höjer & Sjöblom, 2014).

Child care institutions become the most viable place for both children in need of care and protection and children in conflict with the law. The institutions provide all the necessities to the children in terms of food, children, shelter and education. However, less importance is given for their plans and preparations in their rehabilitation and social integration. Moreover, various studies have identified different child care institutions other problems concerning children's rehabilitation and social integration. Most children care institutions failed to acknowledge the importance of rehabilitation, so children were sent back to their homes without proper plan and preparation (Kochuthresia, 1990).

Child care institutions used the means of family restoration in rehabilitating the children back to the society. The children are rehabilitated when the family conditions improved or when the child attained adulthood (Dutta, 2016).

3. Statement of the Problem

Child care institutions (CCIs) in Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu, are home to numerous girl children who have been orphaned, abandoned, single parent, broken families or are in need of care and protection. These institutions, while providing basic necessities and safety, often fail to address the complex psychological needs of these children. Despite the critical role of CCIs in safeguarding vulnerable children, there is a significant gap in understanding the psychological problems that these girl children face.

Girl children in these settings are uniquely vulnerable to a range of psychological problems that can have lasting effects on their mental health and overall development. These issues stem from a combination of pre-existing trauma, the emotional impact of institutionalization, and gender-specific challenges that are frequently overlooked or inadequately addressed. The rigid structures of these

institutions, combined with a lack of individualized care, often exacerbate feelings of isolation, anxiety, and depression among these young girls.

Moreover, the stigma associated with being institutionalized, coupled with societal expectations and gender norms, further compounds their psychological distress. These factors create a complex web of challenges that these children must navigate, often without sufficient support. The failure to recognize and address these issues can lead to long-term emotional and psychological damage, hindering their ability to lead fulfilling lives as they transition out of institutional care.

This study seeks to highlight the psychological problems faced by girl children in child care institutions, bringing attention to the urgent need for a more holistic and gender-sensitive approach to their care. By examining the root causes and manifestations of these psychological issues, the study aims to inform policy changes and practical interventions that can better support the mental well-being of these vulnerable children.

4. Research Objectives

1. To find out the socio economic profile of the girl children in CCIs.
2. To identify the prevalence of psychological disorders among girl children in CCIs in Coimbatore District
3. To provide policy recommendations for improving the mental health of institutionalized children.

5. Methodology

Research Design: This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Data was collected using the following tools: To gather personal histories and institutional experiences.

Psychological Assessments: Utilizing standardized tools such as the Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL) – Author name Achenbach, Thomas M.

Children's Depression Inventory (CDI) – Author Name Kovacs,M

Procedure: Sampling was collected from 16 CCIs Coimbatore district, Tamil Nadu.The permission was granted from the CCIs local directors through the oral permission. I have visited child care intuitions and there searcher have given orientation to the children and explained about the questionnaires' and observed the children's interactions and behaviours within the intuitional environment. Than the procedure was conducted and data was collected from 200 girl children. Out of 16 child care institutions.

6. Results

Socio economic details

1. More than half of the respondent 62% of the girl children belongs to the age group of 8 to 14years.

2. Nearly 72% are Hindus.

3. Majority 85 % of the respondents are coming from Poor family background and broken families.

4. Most of the girls 75 % of the respondents are economically very low and not highly educated family members.

5. Most of the girls 75 % are coming from socially uncultured and immoral life of their families .

Psychological problems of girl children in institutions

S. No	Problems	Total	Percentage
1	Anxiety	136	68%
2	Depression	41	20.5 %
3	Behavioural disorder	23	11.5%
4	Total	200	100 %

The study identified several psychological problems among the participants:

Anxiety: 68% of the girls exhibited symptoms of anxiety, often related to uncertainty about their future and separation from family.

Depression: 20.5% showed signs of depression, lowness with higher rates among those who had experienced abuse or neglect before institutionalization.

Behavioural Disorders: 11.5% displayed behavioural issues, including aggression and withdrawal, linked to their coping mechanisms for previous trauma and the institutional environment.

7. Interpretation

The study reveals that most of the girls are from single family, broken family, orphan, widows abused, neglect, and facedabuses withintheir own family people. For all that leads to over thinking and become more anxiety, depression thinking about their fear of future and become aggression and feeling loneliness become behavioural disorders. The Institutional Environment is Overcrowding, lack of personal attention, and insufficient mental health resources exacerbated psychological issues. And lack of family support and they felt the absence of a stable family structure and emotional support significantly impacted the children's mental health.

8. Suggestions and Discussion

The findings underscore the urgent need for comprehensive mental health services within CCIs. Interventions should include:

Trauma-Informed Care: Training staff to understand and respond to the effects of trauma.

Counselling Services: Regular psychological counselling and support groups for children.

Improved Caregiver-Child Ratios: Ensuring more personalized attention for each child.

Family Reunification Programs: Efforts to reunite children with their families where possible, or facilitate stable foster care arrangements.

9. Policy Recommendations

1. Implementing Trauma-Informed Care Training: Mandatory training for CCI staff on trauma-informed care practices.
2. Enhanced Mental Health Services: Provision of regular psychological assessments and counselling services within CCIs.
3. Improved Infrastructure: Ensuring adequate living conditions and reducing overcrowding in CCIs.
4. Strengthening Family Reunification Efforts: Developing programs to support family reunification or stable foster care placements.

10. Conclusion

Girl children in CCIs in Coimbatore District face significant psychological challenges. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach, combining improved institutional practices with targeted

psychological interventions. Policy changes at the state and national levels are essential to ensure the mental well-being of these vulnerable children.

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