

Institutional Child Care Homes: The Promises, Perspectives and Problems

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Abstract:

Institutional child care homes provide shelter and support to children who are without family support. They have a long history and were initiated as philanthropic organisations. Over the years their number went on escalating and more and more children started getting accommodated in such institutional care homes. Children growing in institutional care homes fall into different categories on the basis of their separation or missing of family care. Different perspectives lie at the root of institutional care homes. Over the years these institutional care homes are increasing in number both at the global and the national level. But they have many times failed to stick to their promises. Multiple problems grapple them and obstruct their smooth functioning. Keeping all these in view, the present article has tried to analyse the institutional child care homes from the point of the promises they make, the perspectives that govern them and the problems encountered by them. All these are done from a global to the national perspective. The study has a special focus on the institutional care homes of India with its problems.

Key Words: *Institutional child care homes, Family, foster care, non-institutional care, destitute, orphans*

1.0 Introduction

Children need care to grow. This care is given by homes or families. But, millions of children across countries miss home environment and are divorced from their family support due to multiple reasons. They miss it as they are abandoned by their parents, many are run away from their homes, many are trafficked, many are labourers, many are neglected. Street children, children who are conflict with law and orphans also share the same plight. They are broadly termed as destitute. Some of them are temporarily destitute and some are permanently destitute.

Institutional child care homes are the systems developed to provide care to these destitute for their development. Ideally, they not only provide space for them to live in, but ensure scope to these children to develop as full-fledged citizens and to lead a life of their own.

In the present article the authors have tried to look into the child care homes from the promises they make, the perspectives that govern them and the problems encountered by them. With these objectives in view, the article has tried to delve into the historicity of the institutional child care homes, classify the nature of children who are roofed under the institutional care homes from global and Indian perspective, different types of institutional child care homes, the perspectives that govern them and the problems that grapple the institutional child care homes. Special focus is given on the problems identified with the institutional care homes in the Indian context. The literature and data are retrieved from secondary sources. The major findings are put in the following pages.

1.1 Historicity of Institutional Child Care Homes

Right from the nineteenth century substitute care home for children without families were germinating in the European society. Christian missionaries took up the stewardship to put orphaned and destitute children into foster care homes. Churches and workhouses were the pioneering institutions for arranging child care for the destitute in England. The first well-known foster family care program in the United States was The Placing Out System of the New York Children's Aid Society. This society was founded by Charles Loring Brace in 1853. By 1923 thirty-four states contained private organizations engaged in collecting destitute children from communities and it is estimated that 100,000 children were placed from New York City alone between 1854 and 1929 in care homes (Kadushin and Martin,1988). These were however, foster care homes and there was an allegation that in these non-institutional child care homes children were often trapped into child slavery. There was no monitoring and supervision of the foster care homes. As a result of which children were often encountering the whims of the caregivers and were often put into exploitation.

To overcome the shortcomings of the non-institutional child care homes, institutional care home ideas were thought of. Institutional care home is a residential facility provided to a large group of children irrespective of their age, gender, situations, abilities. Paralleling with the Placing Out system, about twenty states in United States opened public orphanages to provide

temporary homes for destitute children. These orphanages were brought into operation as a replacement to the non-institutional child care systems prevalent in the country and the alms houses, which housed children along with insane, senile, and diseased adults. At this point of time debate was growing about the desirability of institutional and non-institutional child care. But finally, keeping the safety, sociability of children in view, institutional care homes won out. The institutional care homes were given an attestation in a White House Conference on Children in 1909 (Kadushin and Martin, 1988). The rate of children in substitute care home facilities peaked in the early 1930s. The great depressions weakened the family incomes and parents failed to maintain their children and a lot of children had to witness distressed transfer to care homes. This started taking an escalated trend in different parts of Europe following the end of the Second World war when many children lost the bread winners of their families.

However, it was soon felt by the child activists and planners that destitute children will not only be wastes, but liabilities for the society in the long run. It was felt, without care and support, their cognitive, physical and emotional development will be ruined. By this there would be a serious deficit of human resource in the society. This led to the thinking about their care and protection issues. Thus, to provide home and hearth to the destitute children and to ensure them a safe and sound childhood leading to matured adulthood, child care homes were designed.

1.2 Nature of Children Roofed under Institutional Child Care Homes

Institutional child care homes provide shelter to different categories of children. This classification arises from the nature of loss of family a child suffers from. Child right protectionist classify the children in care homes as falling into the following categories.

1. Abduction
2. Missing
3. Runaway
4. Orphans
5. Destitute

Child Abduction is defined as taking away a child by persuasion, by fraud, or by open force or violence. It is also one of the factors for which a child goes missing. These children are forced

to get involved in many illegal activities such as beggary, prostitution etc. Normally they are from poor families and parents of such children lack financial strength to search for their missing children. Finally, they land up in care homes after being identified by individuals or agencies.

Children often run from their respective homes and try to lead their life by their own. Under the situation of exploitation, torture by their family members and their relatives' children leave homes and run away. Encountered with survival issues they often get engaged in delinquent activities. They are afterwards mentally and emotionally tortured and exploited. Some are also physically abused.

Children are often thrown away or are abandoned by their biological parents or foster parents. Poverty, disasters, distressed migrations, conflict situations force them to do so. Children abandoned become roofless and rootless. They are rescued and are deposited in care homes.

Parents often find their children missing. It occurs due to accidents, when the child is separated from the parents. These children find no home to stay in. To ensure them a safe place, Government or agencies place them in the custody of child care homes.

Orphans are the children who lose their biological parents to care for them due to some reason. Millions of children encounter such situations during wars, disasters. These children are provided with care by child care homes.

Destitute is a broad term to include all the aforesaid categories of children who lack a proper care giver. At the end of 2019, an estimated 46 million people were internally displaced by conflict and violence. More than four in 10, or 19 million, where children had lost their Homes. Millions of displaced children around the world are already going without proper care and protection for whom care home is an urgent need.

However, children are now recognized as the supreme asset of a nation. All the nation states which are committed to the cause of child welfare try to ensure that each child needs to enjoy his/her rights and a safe childhood to groom the child into perfect and productive human beings to contribute his/her best to the society. These nation states try to intervene in child protection and welfare by arranging foster care. This foster care is facilitated by placing the child in a family, with relatives or strangers, in a group home (where up to a dozen foster children live under the continuous supervision of a parental figure), or in an institution.

The destitute children have been categorized into two categories in India under The Juvenile Justice Act, 2015. These categorizations are: Children in need of care and protection and Children in conflict with law.

However, it needs to be noted here that the “worst among the worst” and “the vulnerable among the vulnerable” are the destitute children. Destitute children are either orphaned, or forced out from their original homes or are runaways. Poverty, insurgencies, conflicts, wars, economic depressions, disasters, AIDS, broken family situations pandemics like Ebola, COVID19, distressed migration, helplessness of parents, death, disability, suicides leave many children as destitute.

As per the UNICEF data in 2015, the world was home to 140 million orphans. Out of them 61 million belonged to Asia, 52 million to Africa, 10 million to Latin America and the Caribbean, and 7.3 million to Eastern Europe and Central Asia (UNICEF,2015).

1.3 Typology of Institutional Child Care Homes

Child care homes fall into different categories. These different forms arise on the basis of the character they take and the nature of children they house within them. These types are: The Observation Homes, The Shelter Homes, The Children’s Homes, The Special Homes, and After-care Organizations etc.

1.4 Different Perspectives of Institutional Child Care Homes

Child care homes for destitute carry with it four different perspectives. They are: the economic perspective, the societal perspective, the personal perspective and the natural perspective. These perspectives describe the situation under which child care homes become highly essential and functional for the children. The economic perspective relates to the standard of living of a family to which a child belongs. Very often in the poverty ridden families where the income is below the minimum threshold, children either run away or leave the family in search of a better life and even parents sometimes abandon their children without the ability to rear them up properly. Of late institutional care is increasing in many countries of the globe. Countries witnessing economic transition cast their repercussions on many families and communities. Economic transition results in unemployment, migration, family breakdown and single parenthood (Carter, 2005; Tinova et al., 2007). In these countries, poverty becomes the

predominant factor for placing a child in institutional care. Further, with family breakdowns with single parents and parents with large unplanned families challenged by poverty and unable to cope the maintenance needs send their children to care homes (Sigal et al., 2003). Finally, these children after becoming roofless and rootless find no alternative place to survive and their placement is institutionalized in care homes which try to fulfill some of the basic needs of these category of children.

Social causes like family disorganization, family discord, inability of the single parents to maintain and manage the child, lack of the support of the joint family system, separation between parents, unwed motherhood, distress migration, conflict, insurgency, disaster, pandemics leading to the death of parents' force parents to leave their children in institutional care homes. Browne et al. (2005) found vast majority of children (69percent) are placed in residential care because of abuse and neglect, 4percent due to abandonment, 4 percent because of disability and 23 percent for social reasons, such as family ill-health or parents in prison. In such situations, the care homes come to the rescue of the children and provide them the care and support to grow in society. Sometimes children personally are found missing, runaway and abandon their families and look for an asylum. Under such situations, care homes provide a safe place to these children and protect them from assault, exploitation and violence. Finally, natural disaster separates children from parents and divorce them from their home environment. Many children are found missing during this period. To provide them safety and care, child care homes appear as the alternative family support system.

1.5 Institutional Child Care Homes and their Inmates: The Global Scenario

Institutionalized Child Care Homes started mushrooming in the world when child rights became a priority area in the global agenda of development. Global developments started casting their negative impacts on many children rendering them to lose their families and kins. Diseases, disasters, conflicts, wars, migrations, displacements left many children forced out of their homes. The government and the non-government organizations took a lead role in establishing child care homes to accommodate these children and allow them to enjoy their child rights.

The statistics relating to child inmates of institutional care homes do not provide a clear picture. Various estimations are projected at various periods by various researchers and organisations.

Estimation projects that approximately 2.7 million children under the age of 18 years are living in institutional care worldwide (Petrowski, Cappa, and Gross, 2017). This is a lower side of the number as many of the child care institutions are till date unregistered and as such children continuing to live in such institutions are not brought into the ambit of enumeration (Petrowski, Cappa, and Gross, 2017, p. 394; UNICEF, 2009, p. 19; Bunkers et al., 2014). While UNICEF estimates that at least 2.2 million children in the world live in orphanages Bunkers et.al. project approximately 153 million children in the world have lost a parent; 17.8 million of them have lost both parents. But all are not put into orphanages. Further, many children continuing to live in care homes without being orphans. It is estimated that 50 to 90 per cent of them have at least one living parent (Bunkers et al., 2014). Lumos (2015) establishes around 8 million children live in care institutions worldwide. Over 80 percent of the children have a living parent. Surveys of the family circumstances of children in children’s homes in both Asia and Latin America reflect that 90 percent children continuing in care homes have one or both parents alive. In Eastern Europe, only 2-3 percent of children in institutions are genuinely orphans.

Poverty, health related disabilities, expectations for better health care and education often propel parents to place their children in care homes. The selected country wise distribution of children in care homes provided by the authors is presented in table No. 1.A

Table No. 1.A

Selected country wise distribution of children in Institutionalized Child Care Homes

Sl. No.	Name of the Country	No. of Children in Care Homes
1	Argentina	17000
2	Bolivia	15000
3	Brazil	50,500
4	Cambodia	12,000
5.	Dominican Rep	3,200
6.	Ghana	4,500
7.	Haiti	30,000

8.	Indonesia	5,00,000
9.	Japan	35,000
10.	Malwai	10,136
11.	Mexico	30,000
12.	Morocco	65,000
13.	Nepal	15,000
14.	Paraguay	5,000
15.	Russia	4,00,000
16.	Rwanda	2,500
17.	Sri Lanka	21,000
18.	Turkey	20,000

Source: Children in Institutions the Global Picture,
https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/1.Global%20Numbers_2_0.pdf

As it becomes perceptible from the above table, disaster prone, conflict prone and poverty ridden countries have maximum children in Institutionalized Care Homes. These children have been abandoned or are left destitute which have forced them to take shelter in intuitional care.

However, as per the latest data of the United Nations, there are approximately 8 million children are living in institutional care across the globe presently(Gupta,2019).But institutional care is always prescribed as the last resort for the children. To quote the interpretation of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Article 20 institutional placement of children should be seen as the very last resort, when no other options are available (International Development Cooperation,2001).

The national survey conducted by Euro child (2010) estimated that around 1percent of children amounting to approximately 1 million children are taken into care homes. This proportion is not homogenous among countries. While in Latvia around 2.2 percent of children are taken into care homes, in Sweden approximately 0.66 percent of the child population are under the support of institutional care. In Romania, approximately 1.6% of the child population is under special protection of care homes.

The period following the onset of globalization and the collapse of geopolitical boundaries with greater transport revolution has led to a proliferation in the number of children in care homes.

Children in institutional care rose by 3 percent between 1989 to 2002(Carter,2005). In Sri Lanka, the number of officially registered children's institutions increased from 142 in 1991 to 500 in 2007(Roccella, 2007)). In Zimbabwe, 24 new care institutions for children were built between 1994 and 2004 and the number of children in residential care doubled. In Ghana, the number of homes has increased from ten in 1996 to more than 140 in 2009. In Indonesia, the number of homes at least doubled within the last decade, and may even have quadrupled.

Children under institutional care homes suffer from one form or more disabilities. Information captured by *Children in Institutions the Global Picture Report* from different countries establish the typical reason that drives children to child care homes in different countries. The report discloses in Sierra Leone poverty becomes the driver for 52 percent of children under institutional care (Lamin, 2008), disability determines children's move into care homes in Russia and the share of such children being 45 percent (Human Rights Watch,2014). Indian care homes flood with girls. 90 percent of the 11 million 'abandoned or orphaned' children in India are girls (The Guardian,2007). In Malawi, over 50 percent of institutions push parents to place their children there. Abuse or neglect drive 14 percent children to get admitted into care homes in European countries (Browne,2009). This is the scenario in 11 European countries. Thus, due to discrimination and cultural taboos in some countries, a disproportionate number of girls, disabled children and children from minority ethnic groups are relinquished or abandoned into care institutions.

Children under three often dominate the child care homes. Browne et al. (2006) averaged the total number of children under three years in institutional care to be 90.4 percent for 47 out of the 52 countries in the European and Central Asian region. The highest numbers of under three children in institutional care were found in Russia (10,411), Romania (4,564), Ukraine (3,210), France (2,980) and Spain (2,471).

Child care homes fall into three categories as suggested by Gunnar (2001). This classification has been made by him on the basis of the quality of care they provide to the inmates. The first category of child care institutions are marked with all sorts of deficits from nutrition to relation, the second category of child care institutions are those characterized by adequate health and nutrition support, but marked with deprivation of the child's stimulation and relationship needs and the third category of child care institutions are fulfilling for the child by meeting all

needs except stable, long-term relationships with consistent caregivers. But still a fourth category of child care institution is observed with stable and consistent caregiving facilities depriving the biological intimacy of a family (Wolff and Fesseha 2005).

1.6 Institutional Child Care Homes in India and their Inmate Position

Millions of children in India are without childhood protection. They fall short of living in a stable home and family. These children fall into one of the categories like abandonment, voluntarily surrendered by parents, trafficked due to poverty, false promises or for the purpose of commercial use, orphaned or without having a biological or foster family to look after them. These are the children who are in the urgent need of care and protection and due to some adversaries mentioned above are placed in childcare institutions.

Proper census of children in child care homes is still in its doldrums and debatable. No exact figure has been generated on the number of children under the support of care homes. The Juvenile Justice Act of 2000 had mandated for the mapping of child care homes and children therein. However, the government and research agencies were silent on the issue for a long time. The first mapping of children in child care institutions was launched in 2013 vide a Supreme Court order. The census of such institutions and child inmates revealed that there were about 9,589 homes, including observation homes, special homes and open shelters, across the country. In 2017, Childline India Foundation (CIF), supported by the WCD ministry under the Integrated Child Protection Scheme calculated the number of children living in institutions to be 470,000. But in a court declaration in 2018, the WCD declared that children living in care homes amounted to be 261,000. Nearly a quarter of all shelter homes i.e. 2,309 are exclusively meant for housing the destitute girls (Bhandare, 2018). The NCPCR data projects that there are about 5,850 registered CCIs in the country as of 11 July, 2018. The same report states that if the unregistered ones are taken into account, their number will cross 8,000. More than 1,300 Child Care Institutions (CCI) in the country are not registered under the mandates of the Juvenile Justice Act. The NCPCR data also indicates that there are 2,32,937 children in all the registered and unregistered CCIs taken together (Firstpost, 2018). As per a study enumeration by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, there are more than 9,500 child care institutions in the country hosting over 3,70,000 children (Jain, 2019). The UNICEF notes 2,27,518 children residing in child care institutions in India. The pre lockdown scenario saw 1,20,169 boys and 1,05,516 girls in child care institutions in 32 states and union territories

of India(Pandit,2020). This vital; statistics was shared with the supreme court of India. Very recently. 2020 September the NCPCR has recorded that there are about 2.56 lakh children in care homes in the country. The lead eight states having children in care homes are Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Mizoram, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra and Meghalaya. They host nearly 72 percent children amounting to 1.84 lakh in child care homes (The Hindu,2020).

1.7 Problems of Institutional Child Care Homes in India

Children in huge numbers in India are away from their families due to desertion and destitution. This has led to the designing and instituting of Child Care homes in different parts of the country. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)is committed to the cause of these children and has tried to encourage child care homes as alternative family support system to protect the best interest of these children. But it is felt that till date the performance of these childcare homes in the country is far from satisfaction.

Very recently, the social audit report of Government of India (2020) has recorded that there are as many as 7,163 childcare institutions across the country. 2,039 CCIs constituting 28.5 per cent of the such homes are still not registered. The audit makes it clear that 88 per cent of the child care institutions in Maharashtra, 51 per cent in Himachal Pradesh and 46 per cent in Delhi are till date not registered .40 per cent of such homes 2,764 in absolute numbers run with deficit provisions to prevent different forms of physical, emotional abuse of children. The report also found that 1,504 of the homes lack basic facilities like toilet facilities, 434 do not have privacy in toilets and bathing areas for the children. The report also discovered that 373 such homes lack provision for individual, clean, seasonal and age-appropriate clothes, articles and toiletries, and 1,069 homes do not have individual beds for these children. Further child care homes in India are running with deficit staff and deficit training. It has been recorded that 29 percent childcare homes have staff who do not have training on the rehabilitation process of children. About 70 percent of the homes have not given training to its staff in child rights protection Care giving training is absent with 61 percent staff members. Thus, many startling facts have been unearthed by this report.

So far as physical resources are concerned, almost all the child care institutions run with deficit infrastructure. They lack the basic amenities needed for the health and hygiene of the children. 73.5 percent of care institutions lack emergency medical care equipment to address to the urgent health needs of the children. 25 percent CCIs lack child- friendly exclusive bathrooms/bathing areas to provide privacy to the children.

Management pitfalls also have been noted with the child care homes. Six CCIs are not found with Management Committees (MCs). Those who have it do not organise regular meetings. Only 41 CCIs amounting to a meagre percentage of 16.3 convene regular meetings. Committees meet once in a month. Till 2020, 10 centres were running in the state without being registered under Juvenile Justice Act.

1.8 Conclusion

Thus, the foregoing descriptions clearly project that institutional child care homes were conceived to provide an alternative family care to the children who grow up without the care and support of their biological families. They have a long heritage and were started as philanthropic organisations with noble intentions of caring for the children who lose their families in war, disaster, poverty and diseases. They are of multiple types depending on the nature of service they provide to their inmates. Different perspectives govern the child care homes and institutional child care homes are on rise both at the global and at the national level. But, in India though in number they are rising in terms of the quality, they fall short of many provisions which make the future of the children bleak.

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