

**SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF ORPHANS IN ORPHANAGES: A CASE
STUDY OF AL-ISLAH CENTER IN DISTRICT MARDAN**

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Abstract

The study intends to reflect the ideal and actual situation of Al-Islah Centre considering Government policy for orphanages. Recreational, educational and food characteristics of the policy were considered for the research. The study used qualitative method and interview schedule was used as a tool of data collection. The results show that performance of the orphanage in providing a normal life to orphans is impressive however, there are certain gaps between the policy and its real implementation especially in recreational aspect. The educational interventions also have flaws, as per policy. All the problems were rooted in the financial barriers. So, the Government has the obligation to eradicate those barriers through funding the orphanage.

Keywords: *Orphan; Orphanage; Food; Recreation; Education*

1.1. INTRODUCTION

An orphan is defined as a child up to 15 or 18 years of age, who has lost his father, mother or both parents (Smart, 2003). Due to orphan-hood, these children remain deprived of the basic requirements and facilities of their lives. To fulfill its commitment

of safeguarding and developing the well-being of the orphans, the people place deprived children in large residential institutions like orphanages (Rather and Margoob, 2006). Orphanages can be seen as workable option for the care of the orphans as kinship care cannot handle and provide that much care and attention to the orphans (Morantz and Heymann, 2010). When a second party institution starts the parenting role of a child's upbringing, it's the beginning of the secondary socialization of the child (Giddens, 2003). As Rosbo stated, when a child is enrolled in an orphanage, it is the start of his secondary socialization (Rosbo, n.d). If the orphanage is close to conventional family setting then it will affect the health of the orphans positively (Ahmad, Qahar, & Siddiq, 2005). A great deal of research provides convincing verification that the institutional care provided in orphanages in Western countries had a detrimental effect on cognition, behavioral, affecting and social development of young children (Rather and Margoob, 2006). Millions of children around the world currently live in residential institutions. Probably, well over 2 million children are living in orphanages. In most developing countries, no one knows how many children reside in such care and in many of these countries; no one even knows how many residential institutions are presently working (Williamson & Greenberg, 2010).

Throughout the world, countries have devised policies and programs for protection and well-being of the orphans and deprived people in light of their cultural outlook, vision and resources. In line with the international community, both Federal and Provincial governments of Pakistan devised policies and programs for caring and rearing of children with focused on their health, education, shelter, psychosocial protection, security, nutrition etc. in the orphanages. It is believed that through these policies and strategies orphanages can provide a humane social environment, one that offers a close and stable relationship between members (Rather & Margoob, 2006).

Pakistan has made few policies and programs for up-bringing of the orphans in different periods that include The Employment of Children Act (ECA), 1991, Convention on the

Rights of the Child 1990, Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal Act, 1991, The Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act, 1992, The Prevention and Control of Human Trafficking Ordinance (promulgated in October 2002), Child protection policy FATA, 2012, Punjab Children Act, 1952 and the Sindh Children Act, 1955 Draft National Child Protection Policy and Draft Protection of Child Act etc.

There are orphanages working under the government and private sector in Mardan; a city of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Sarhadi Yateem Khana Shamsi Road Mardan, Pakistan Sweet Home Baghdada, Mardan and Al Islah Centre Shiekh Maltoon, Mardan. Keeping in view the available literature and policy for Pakistan Sweet Homes and orphanages under Bait ul Maal Act, the current study is intended to consider the ideal and real position of care and rare of orphans using qualitative approach. Here in our research myths correspond to the policies devised by the government or private sector in orphanages and realities correspond to the real practice of those policies. Through this study, we will be analyzing the government policies in comparison to the on ground real position of Al Islah Center an orphanage run through private donations. Next section contains relevant literature on the issue at hand.

1.2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Relevant literature is compiled and discussed under the headings recreation, education and food. While searching the literature it is found that very limited and non-focused scholarly writings were available particularly on the study area.

1. 2.1. Recreation

Recreation provides a sense of place for the people to access nature, interpretive education, escape and recreation (Recreation Facility Plan, 2010). Through recreational activities, youth learn how to bargain with the peers, resolve conflicts and work together. Parks and other recreational facilities and activities help the young to develop

relationships with non-parental adults. These adults may serve as important guides for them. Vigorous play and physically active recreation can contribute to brain development, as well as intellectual success. Organized activities help to build competencies in the youth and helps in their development. This participation has an important role in the academic success, mental health, identity development and positive social relationships and behaviors of the youth. It paves their way to their educational success (Mahoney, Larson, Eccles, and Lord, 2005). Historically there is a link between crime and recreation to justify bond issues for recreational facilities as the chief of police of Los Angeles argues in 1926, play grounds have become the most important to the police department than any other department.

1.2.2. Education

According to the research conducted by Miller (2008), education is development. The advantages of education are well known in the developing countries. Education increases workforce productivity, increases incomes, increases political participation and reduces social inequality. Miller further states, school provides children with a safe, ordered environment and emotional support of other adults in the society. The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2007) also argue that severe barrier to the enrollment of the children is not only the school fee but also textbooks, school supplies and uniforms.

1.2.3. Food

The orphans are at extreme danger from malnutrition and sickness and they are less likely to get the required medical care (The Framework for the protection, care and support of orphans and vulnerable children, 2004). According to the report by Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (n.d) states, Lack of access to nutritionally proper food and food insecurity, leads to the socially unacceptable ways of accessing food, its storage and use. To assist the community to recognize sources of

food, to assemble capital assets and equipment to help in strengthening food security of such households, it must be ensured that the houses have access to nutrient-dense food on regular basis by heartening them to start income generating initials. Nutrition based education must be provided to the orphanages.

1.3. METHODOLOGY

Locale of the study was Al Islah Center which is run through fund raising from NGOs in District Mardan. The center has the capacity of accommodating 300 orphans while presently 110 orphans (60 males and 50 females) are residing under separate shelters. Respondents were selected through convenient sampling technique and a total of 4 orphans and 4 care takers including Director and Deputy Director of the orphanage were interviewed. Almost same age group ranges from 13 to 14 years were interviewed. The study was Qualitative in nature due to which interview schedule was designed as a tool for data collection. In addition, observation was also used as a tool of investigation. The information was obtained through in-depth interview in a face to face conversation. After the data collection, data was analyzed and explanation of the data is made through interpretive explanation.

1.4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The collected data are analyzed and discussed along with reference to the available literature as follows;

1.4.1. Recreational Facility

In the context of games, the orphans of Al Islah Center use to play outdoor games inside the building of the orphanage. Most of the orphans are satisfied from the ground facility but the ground needs to be made wider to meet the needs of the orphans. In contrast to policy, indoor games are prohibited in the orphanage. The indoor games like Ludo,

carom board etc. are considered as games used for gambling, and as the orphanage is highly an Islamic institute that is why indoor games are prohibited in the orphanage. Further the field data expose that the material for games is provided by the orphanages. According to the policy, there must be a mini library in the orphanage. In concurrence, the data from Al Islah Center reveals that there is a mini library in the orphanage but the children use to go to library just on Sunday as they are only free to go there by that day, otherwise their routine was so tough that they had no extra time to go to library and read books there. But the library there needs to be updated.

According to the policy, the orphanage must ensure the trips of orphans to parks and scene places. On the other hand, interviews from Al Islah Center shows that, in the past they used to go for picnic every year but this facility is now abandoned for the last five years. The orphans reported that there is no social gathering of the orphans in the orphanage but there are different functions in which they can meet outside people and they had a chance to show their talents through delivering speeches, performing in dramas etc. in terms of relations with outside community and social gatherings The Deputy Director of the center argued that:

“...The outside community cannot be trusted; there is every type of people outside. We do not want to pollute our orphanage by allowing the orphans to interact with outside people”

The field data shows that the orphans of Al Islah Center are exposed to different talent discovering programs which is a very good thing. As it is evident from the literature, that organized activities help to build competencies in the youth and helps in their development. This participation has an important role in the academic success, mental health, identity development and positive social relationships and behaviors of the youth. It paves their way to their educational success (Mahoney, Larson, Eccles, and Lord, 2005). The interviews from Al Islah Center reveal that there is TV facility in the

orphanage. The orphans use to watch TV on weekend. The orphans said they watch only Cartoons on TV as the Center is highly Islamic in its environment. The data also shows that there is no any concept of recreational club in the orphanage.

1.4.2. Educational Facility

An orphanage provides the basic facilities to the orphans in whom education must be on the priority as education is the best and most effective weapon to cope with the challenges; a person is faces in his future life. All the orphans of Al Islah Center go to their own school i.e., The National School and College Shiekh Maltoon Mardan which is also an English medium school and they were also planning to shift the building of the school inside the orphanage. In Al Islah Center there is no skill development opportunity for the male orphans only the female orphans are beneficiaries of skill development initiatives that are sewing and weaving for the girls above class 5th. The computer lab is also just allowed to the senior students.

According to the management of Al Islah Center, the career counseling of the orphans is done on individual basis especially when an orphan completes his metric. After the completion of matric, the future of the orphans is discussed and right path for their future is paved. The distinctive and impressive feature of Al Islah Center is, they are ready for and guarantee the education of the orphans to higher levels with satisfactory support. In relevance to the discussion an extract from the interview of a respondent from Al Islah Center is:

“...as an agreement is signed with the guardian of the orphan for his education till metric, he cannot leave the orphanage before completing his metric but we are not confined to that agreement. We support an orphan to get education as higher as he wishes. We support him till PhD. I think u will be clear now that up to what extent we are dedicated to their education. I can't say anything more.” (Care taker)

In the context of Religious Education, Al Islah Centre is highly influenced from religious ideology. The basic machinery of the orphanage is based on Islam. Great importance is given to the religious education and practices in Al Islah Center. The field data and observation also reveals that there are tuition classes of the orphans in the afternoon. The observations reveal that the number of tutors is in proportion to the orphans. Similarly, data from the Al Islah Center also shown, that extra classes are taken with the orphans in the afternoon.

1.4.3. Food

In Al Islah Center there is a menu which is followed but the menu is functional till the fund supports it. If there are any financial problems in allocating money for the menu then the menu is not operational and food is provided to the orphans according to the fund at hand. On the other hand, the food provision in the orphanage is satisfactory. The food is fresh and is served in a clean environment.

1.5. CONCLUSION

It is concluded that the facilities of Al Islah Center are satisfactory and worth praising. However, there are various gaps in implementing recreational policy in the orphanage in the areas of indoor games, recreational club and social gatherings. The ground and library facility need to be upgraded. The food provision is satisfactory. In terms of education, religious education is given top priority. Educational facilities are impressive however there are some gaps persisting in the areas of skill development and computer knowledge for the orphans below age 5 years. The authority of the orphanage should work to eradicate all these gaps so that the orphans can enjoy a full life in all respects. Government needs to fund the non-government orphanages to eradicate the financial barriers so that the socially excluded class of the society can live a normal and quality life.

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