A STUDY ON PARENTAL AND ORPHAN STATUS OF INSTITUTIONALISED CHILDREN

Introduction

Parental or orphan status is an important factor that affects the lives of millions of children in India. Children who are deprived of parental care are at a higher risk of facing various challenges, including poverty, malnutrition, lack of education, and exposure to abuse and exploitation. As a result, many of these children end up in childcare institutions (CCIs), such as Children's homes, where they receive care and protection.

Background

According to the 2018 report by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, the number of children with Single Parents is 1,20,118 which is about 31.81% and the number of orphans in the CCI is 41730 which is 11%.
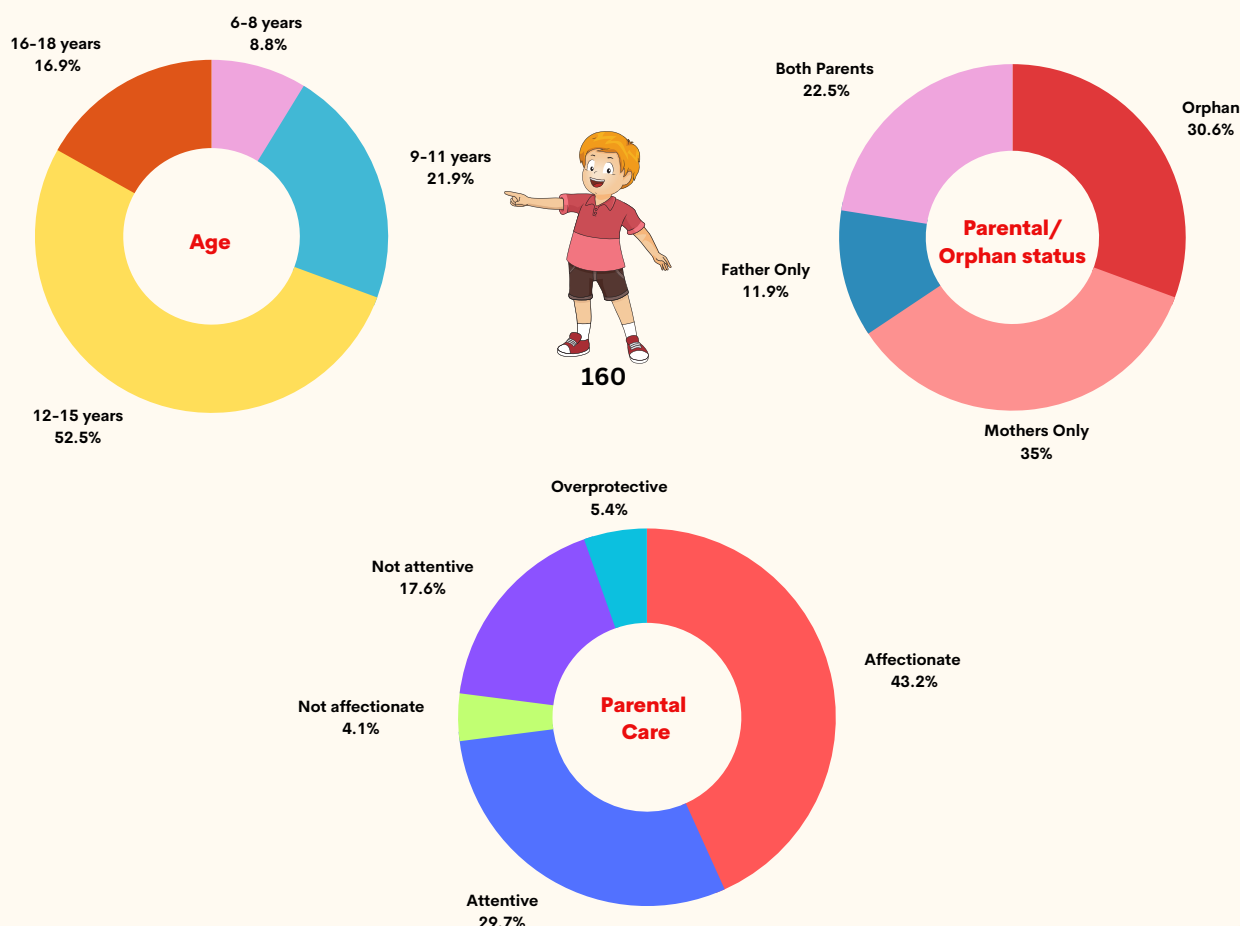
A total of 1,78,885 children are residing in childcare institutions as their parents or guardian have been found incapable of taking care of them.

This highlights the urgent need to address the issue of parental care in India and to ensure that children receive the support they need to thrive.

Data

The data has been taken from Chid MISS, Homelink Network from 2020-2023. The sample size is 160 children from 5 different CCIs in the province of Mumbai (INB) and Panjim (INP) for Mumbai Hub.

Age

- 6-8 years 8.8%
- 9-11 years 21.9%
- 12-15 years 52.5%
- 16-18 years 16.9%

160

Parental/Orphan status

- Both Parents 22.5%
- Orphan 30.6%
- Mothers Only 35%
- Father Only 11.9%

Parental Care

- Overprotective 5.4%
- Not attentive 17.6%
- Not affectionate 4.1%
- Attentive 29.7%
- Affectionate 43.2%

- The age group at which children are put in the CCIs is highest between 12 years to 14 years.
- The type of parental care received by children also plays a role in their well-being and may affect their likelihood of being admitted to CCIs. Children who receive neglectful or overprotective care may be at higher risk.
- The data suggests that the highest number of children are from single-mother households. Single mothers are often forced to work to earn a livelihood, which may make it difficult for them to take care of their children. This could be due to the lack of social support, gender-based discrimination, or economic constraints.
- Most child category is the special category that indicates incapacitated parents.
- Children who are orphaned or abandoned are often placed in CCIs run by the government or non-governmental organizations. According to the data provided, out of the 160 children in the sample, 49 are orphans, which indicates that parental status plays a significant role in the placement of children in CCIs.

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Factors affecting the parental status and admitting of children to the CCIs

The high number of children in Child Care Institutions in India can be attributed to several factors. Some of the reasons include:

1. Lack of social safety nets: India has a high poverty rate, and many families struggle to provide for their children's basic needs, such as food, shelter, and education. The lack of social safety nets can force families to resort to placing their children in Child Care Institutions when they are unable to care for them adequately.

2. Stigma and discrimination: In India, children from marginalized communities, such as Dalits, tribal communities, and those with disabilities, face discrimination and stigma. This can lead to their exclusion from mainstream society and make it difficult for them to access education, healthcare, and other essential services.

3. Inadequate support for families: Many families may face challenges such as illness, disability, or financial instability that make it difficult for them to provide for their children with basic needs. However, there is often inadequate support available to help these families to overcome these challenges and keep their children with them.

4. Family issues: Domestic violence, substance abuse, mental health issues, and other family problems can also contribute to children being admitted to CCI. In some cases, parents may feel that they are unable to provide a safe and stable environment for their children.

5. Legal issues: Children may be removed from their parents' care due to legal issues, such as neglect, abuse, or abandonment. In such cases, CCIs may be seen as a temporary solution until the legal issues are resolved.

Government Initiatives

- The government of India has taken steps to improve alternative care for children such as foster care through strengthening the capacity of organizations providing alternative care, improving the monitoring and evaluation of care arrangements, and providing greater support to families to prevent the need for alternative care in the first place.
- The Government initiatives such as the "Bal Swaraj" scheme, aims to strengthen the child protection system and promote family-based care for children.
- The orphan certificate in Maharashtra is a legal document that certifies a child as an orphan. It is issued by the state government to children who have lost their parents or whose parents have abandoned them and helps them access various government benefits, such as education, health care, and financial assistance. It also helps in preventing child trafficking and child labour and provides legal protection to the child. To ensure its effective implementation and awareness, the government needs to create awareness among the people and streamline the process of issuing the certificate.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the data suggest that there is a complex relationship between the child category and parental status in the context of children in childcare institutions in India. The high number of children in child care institutions could be attributed to various factors such as parental incapacity, poverty, and gender-based discrimination. It is important to address the root causes of these issues through comprehensive and multi-sectoral approaches and to ensure that children receive the support they need to thrive in safe and stable environments. This may include family-based care options, community-based interventions, and other measures to prevent.

| Borivali | Wadala | Goa | Nashik | Vadodara |

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