

## The Involvement and Competence of Local Communities towards the Existence of Childcare Institutions in Kuala Nerus Terengganu, Malaysia

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### Abstract

The establishment of a welfare center for orphans is one of the efforts not only to give love but also to meet all their needs. This is because the development of the child welfare system is dependent on the function of the welfare center for children in institutional care. Problems such as the environment, the continuity or relationship of the community with the institution and the availability of resources available around the institution are things that should be emphasized by all. Therefore, this study aims to identify the level of awareness of the local community in helping care institutions in Kuala Nerus, Terengganu. A study was conducted on 22 informants who live near the area. The results of the study found that Darul Akhyar Orphan/Poor Welfare Hostel has a high level of accessibility where the community is not only able to provide various resources to orphans and institutions, but they also provide human resources for the formation of a quality community. Therefore, to maintain the level of awareness of the local community towards children who are in institutional care is to increase the social network through the involvement of all parties, especially from the community, immediate family, mass media, government, private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

**Keywords:** Children, Community, Institution, Competence, Social network

### Introduction

Children are an important asset in building a nation. This is because, they are the heart and potential heirs of the country's leadership in the future. The ninth shift in Malaysia's education development plan 2013-2025, emphasizes the involvement of parents, communities and the private sector in empowering schools and education. Strategic planning and initiatives have been prepared by the government or even agencies and bodies to improve quality, especially in the aspects of education and welfare, especially for children

and teenagers who do not have parents and families to look after and provide education and security that appropriate to them.

Hong, Chi, Li, Zhao, Zhao, Stanton, and Li (2015) stated that the basic needs of children that need to be met are such as food, clothing, shelter, medical treatment, and education. Orphanages were built as a response to this problem, but this crisis continues (Chege & Ucembe, 2020). According to Azlini, Siti Hajar and Lukman (2020b), an orphanage is an institution that houses children whose parents have died. The purpose is to care for and protect children to obtain a safe, healthy, positive, educational place and have the same "roots" as the previous environment (with parents/guardians) (Azlini, Siti Hajar & Lukman, 2020b).

Children who receive less attention from their parents/guardians, close relatives or anyone who cares for them will experience problems that can result in negative effects on their growth. Social participation from the community whether passive or active participation is a necessity for children because they can form a good development and self-development (Siti Hajar, Noralina & Zaiton, 2017). According to Elattar, Alabd and Mohammed (2019) the development of the welfare system for children who are in institutions is decreasing compared to children who live with their families. They also tend to experience depression due to the loss of one or both of their parents (Farah Syazrah, Muhammad Fadhil & Norizan, 2017). Lack of bonding or disruption early in a child's life is at risk of negative development and growth in the future (Chavda & Nisarga, 2023).

Based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological system of human development (1979), children's well-being is at the center of the circle able to influence their lives. According to Hong et al. (2015) complex interactions, policy, community, culture, politics, and economy. There are three domains of children's interpersonal level does not happen one way, rather the community facilitates them especially in an interconnected and reciprocal life where they are the providers of safety nets for children. At the community level, support for these vulnerable children comes from local governments, NGOs, and the community (Hong et al., 2015).

#### *Main Components in the Management of Childcare Institutions*

There are several main components that should be emphasized by any individual, government, non-governmental organization, or any party that establishes or manages childcare institutions. Among them is financial management, the second is management in terms of accommodation security and the third is in terms of education management. Each component will be discussed through subtopics below.

#### **Financial Management**

There are three main sectors in the economic structure, namely the private sector, government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Usually, NGOs do not aim to make a profit, but they try to do something else to earn money. Childcare institutions are one of the NGOs that offer services for the benefit of poor orphans. The term NGO was officially introduced by the United Nations Economic and Social Council on February 27, 1950 (Rashmi, 2016). A Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) is an organization that is not part of the government or conventionally aimed at business profit. NGOs are usually established by

citizens, can be funded by governments, foundations, businesses, and individuals (Rashmi, 2016). To have funds, accountability is very important to a financier (sponsor).

However, care institutions that provided house poor orphans are not something new. This institution is a non-profit or charity organization dedicated to preserving the welfare of poor orphans. Care institutions for poor orphans in this country receive donations from different sources to carry out their social welfare activities. The results of a study conducted in 2018 by researchers found that most poor orphanages have a high dependency on resources or funds provided by the government, either from the state or from the federal government. This situation resulted in the institution experiencing an imbalance in income and expenditure.

Nevertheless, the establishment of care institutions for poor orphans is not based on profit (Onayemi & Hapunda, 2023). Even so, a study by Alhassan (2017) shows that government-owned childcare institutions have more staff than private childcare institutions. On the other hand, staffing in private childcare institutions is very low. Government-owned children's institutions have 24 employees with the number of orphans being 24 people which is a ratio of 1: 1. While private institutions, the ratio of staff to children is 4: 5 and 2: 3 respectively (Alhassan, 2017). This shows that the number of employees is more in government-owned institutions because they can pay salaries to their employees. The described situation clearly shows that finance plays a very important role in managing the operation of poor orphanages.

### **Accommodation Security**

In terms of safety and risk management, children in institutional care are at risk of adverse events, especially from the aspect of fire. Therefore, safety is a matter that needs to be emphasized by childcare institutions either from the perspective of employers or caregivers/educators in shaping the development and upbringing of poor orphans. Entrepreneurs or managers who run a childcare institution should emphasize the aspect of protection and safety of poor orphans in the institution (Hanafi, 2015). The occurrence of fire, for example, is a risk that requires residents and managers to be always vigilant.

Based on the Care Center Act 1994, part IV, fire prevention explains four things. The first point is about the duty of the fire officer to inspect any premises, and no one can prevent the fire department officer from exercising that authority. The second point is about advice and recommendations by fire officials on preventive measures to prevent fires on the premises. In addition, the third point is that the operator of the premises must prepare a practical scheme for the evacuation of the premises in the event of a fire. While the fourth point is about fire extinguishers that are always in good condition.

Among the security measurement tools are automatic alarm systems, electric fences and day and night security guards. Emergency procedures are also important in ensuring the safety of occupants by determining exit signs in the event of an emergency, providing a gathering place, first aid kit, fire drills and a hotline number in the event of an emergency.

### **Education Management**

Education refers to activities that support the intellectual development of children from preschool age until high school. Since the Commission on the Rights of the Child was

established, education is recognized as a basic human right that every child needs, including poor orphans to fulfill their dreams and hopes (UNAIDS & UNICEF 2004; USAID & Catholic Relief Services, 2008). Therefore, every child, whether an orphan or not, has the right to get basic education because education is one of the human rights (Rahmat, Randawar, Jayabalan, Abdul Razak & Azmi, 2021). This is also emphasized by Quennerstedt (2022) where education is important because every child has the human right to learn to read, write and count and is given a quality education.

Parents or guardians who deny children the opportunity to go to school can be fined (Malaysian Chinese Association, 2019). Among the importance of education for children is that education can give children the skills they need for a more stable life. Even in traditional fields of work such as agriculture and animal husbandry, it requires individuals who are literate, manage skills, mathematics, science and technology and other topics learned in school. In addition, education can also help children protect property, inheritance, and other rights, protect themselves, their parents, and their families.

Childcare institutions are responsible for providing educational opportunities for children starting from kindergarten until continuing their studies to the highest level (Ridza, Ahmad & Vadeveloo, 2024). Education provides opportunities for the development and growth of children to prepare themselves and help them live independently like other children. Quality education is very important to poor orphans because they receive limited resources in their lives. However, the study found that children who live in poor orphanages do not get additional education.

Therefore, as a follow-up to the previous study, a study on the empowerment of the welfare service network should be carried out as a drastic measure to help poor orphans who are in the care of institutions to live their lives holistically, educational opinions like other children and protected with the system complete security.

### **Methodology**

This study aims to identify the level of awareness of the local community in helping the Darul Akhyar Orphan/Poor Welfare Hostel in Kuala Nerus, Terengganu. This study is qualitative and uses an interview protocol. An interview guide was used to obtain information from the community. This guide is based on the comments and views of stakeholders in this study. The researcher used semi-structured interviews conducted with 22 informants. Face-to-face interviews were conducted according to established research ethics. This interview took place at the informant's house where only the researcher and the informant were present. Each interview lasted 30-45 minutes and was audio-recorded using a tape recorder. All recorded interviews were with the informant's consent and transcribed verbatim. This interview is entirely voluntary. All participants were informed about the objectives of the research, and they had the right to withdraw as participants whenever they wanted. Data were analyzed using Nvivo software. Inductive thematic analysis was used to analyze each piece of information and the informant's response in determining their trustworthiness towards the institution/orphanage selected. The researcher familiarizes himself with understanding the original transcript, coding, and determining themes based on the research objectives.

### Findings

#### *Public Knowledge and Awareness of the Existence of Darul Akhyar Welfare Hostel for Orphans/Poor Children*

The results of the study conducted through 22 informants who agreed to be involved in the study found that most of the community knew about the existence of an orphanage near their residential area. According to the informant involved:

*"... Yes, I know there is an orphanage across the street, the Darul Akhyar Orphanage. Since it's near the road because we often pass by the area near the institution but never stop by (smiling)... We're not that we don't want to know, but we're busy taking care of our grandchildren...."*

*(Informant 5)*

*"...Yes-yes...I know...I always go there..."*

*(Informant 8, 10, 13, 14, 19, 22)*

*"...My days are spinning here... I know the existence of the orphanage... when it's a fasting month, I always send the appropriate sweets there..."*

*(Informant 11)*

However, there are also informants who do not know about the existence and location of Darul Akhyar Orphan Welfare Hostel/Poor Poor near his residential area. This is because he had just moved in the Batu Rakit area a week ago from the date of the researcher's fieldwork. This can be proven when the informant who was interviewed said:

*"...Sorry, I just moved to this area...about a week ago because I got a job exchange near Austin Square...before this I was living near Kemaman. I didn't know there was an orphanage in this area hehe... Sorry yer...."*

*(Informant 3)*

*"...oh, I didn't notice... maybe it's because I had to enter the hallway a bit, right? ..."*

*(informant 12)*

*"...I'm not sure... I'll see later... I don't usually go to places like that. Remind me not to enter..."*

*(Informant 17)*

*"...remind me you can't go in there... just look around... remind me what place... I see the boys come out in the evening..."*

*(Informant 21)*

#### *The Willingness of Local Community to Help Darul Akhyar Welfare Hostel for Orphans/Poor Children*

Through the survey and the results of the study carried out, most informants agree and are willing to contribute regardless of money, time, or energy. However, there are some of them who do not know how to help or in other words through which medium they can channel help either in terms of energy or material to the institution concerned.

*"...Yes, that's why you made this orphanage a reason for you to share your sustenance with them... you didn't donate thousands of moneys, but you donated food, cakes... you went to share sustenance with the children sitting in there smiling..."*

*(Informant 1)*

*"...I'm also wish to go in there... meet the kids in there... you can play or argue as you like... after all, you don't have children..."*

*(Informant 9)*

*"...if anyone wants to do something together, you can invite them together... no problem... after all, it's a children's place, right? Same with our children..."*

*(Informant 15)*

*"...if anyone wants to teach me to study or read, that's fine... my child is grown up, I feel lonely... let me know if you want anything..."*

*(Informant 16)*

#### *Social Relationship that Exists between Darul Akhyar Orphan/Poor Welfare Hostel and the Community*

The results of the field research, especially the interviews conducted found that there is a social relationship between the community and Darul Akhyar Orphan/Poor Welfare Hostel. The local community is ready for total involvement to help and contribute to the development of Darul Akhyar Orphan/Poor Welfare Hostel.

*"...for me, my opinion is that by having a Darul Akhyar orphanage in our area, it makes us aware and feel more concerned about orphans...like me, I work near this restaurant, my boss and we all always share our sustenance like for cake food... cook it then send it to the orphanage..."*

*(Informant 2)*

*"...sometimes, if I see the children walking in and out of the orphanage, if they come to play by the beach and buy water from me, I don't even take money..."*

*(Informant 4)*

*"...if I see those boys, I always chat and ask how they are, have they eaten, are they going to school and so on... they are ok..."*

*(Informant 13)*

*"...if it's a fasting month, I'm really their main one... I'm always thinking about what to send to all the children... if it's close to Raya, let's go... it's like my own children..."*

*(Informant 20)*

#### **Discussion**

The study found that most of informants have a high awareness and concern for social responsibility and agree to help orphanage institutions in their area. With the value of concern and feeling to help these orphans indirectly, this relationship can bridge the gap between the local community and the institution.

Not only that, but community involvement can also be counted in various forms. This situation begins with awareness of the facilities, resources, and opportunities available in the wider community. Siti Hajar (2015) states that the involvement or participation of individuals in community activities can form a strong social bond between individuals and other members of their community. This situation can be improved through networking and partnerships with statutory and voluntary organizations. In Malaysia, the government, the private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and religious-based organizations also take the initiative in providing homes for poor orphans to provide protection and provide basic facilities such as educational facilities, skills such as those acquired by children - children outside the institution (Azlini, Siti Hajar & Lukman, 2020a). For example, community involvement with the school has helped children in developing their skills not only involving academics but also emotional and social care (Rather & Verma, 2020).

According to Maqbool and Zameer (2018), community involvement requires the involvement of all parties, especially adults and children, with the wider community through the formation of networks and connections supported by policies, procedures, and actions. This includes expanding the network with the surrounding community, increasing marketability of access, which not only focuses on basic resources but also provides human resources for children in institutions.

### **Conclusion**

Vulnerable children today are exposed to various diseases, exploitation, abuse, neglect, and death. To support these children to continue living more perfectly, consideration and awareness from all need to be enhanced through various social networks regardless of community, immediate family, mass media, government, private sector and NGOs. Today's community should also remove their stigma in providing help or services especially to orphanages. The community should also have a sense of belonging and collaborate to improve aspects of their lives (education, health, housing, service provision) as well as provide opportunities for them to gain experience and learning such as self-empowerment, economic development, positive parenting, social work training, and exposure about laws and policies to foster their identity. This is because the involvement of the community and all parties is very important in meeting the development of children's lives which contributes to the well-being of orphans.

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