

Childhood Social Work: Philosophical Foundations and Professional Practice

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Abstract:

All civilizations strive for optimal and holistic care for children, with the goal of encouraging their well-being as the future of society. However, the implementation of these goals differs between countries, depending on the level of socioeconomic advancement, prevalent cultural values, and the amount to which social laws, especially those dealing to child care, have changed. The provision of social care for children is based on two fundamental principles: professionalism and philosophy. The former stems from the basic idea of the social work profession, establishing child care as a critical and exciting subject within the larger field of social work. This concept involves the provision of curative, preventative, and developmental care to children.

Keywords: Social Work; Childhood; Childcare.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The term 'social welfare' is generally understood to encompass all the activities and services that are provided by a society to satisfy its members' needs and enable them to lead a decent life, free from forms of suffering, pain and problems that hinder their development.

As with other systems in society, social welfare programs evolve in tandem with the development of society and eras. A prominent trend that has crystallised through this evolution is the adoption of scientific methods in addressing societal issues, which has formed the basis for the emergence of social service.

The developments experienced by social care have thus contributed to the emergence of a modern humanitarian profession that utilises scientific methods to address the problems of individuals within society. The establishment of the social work profession can therefore be considered one of the most significant developments in modern social care. The expansion of the field of assistance has been instrumental in raising the profile of social service, as it now encompasses various social groups, including the elderly, young people, and individuals with special needs, in addition to children. Child care represents a specific field within social service, aimed at addressing the needs of children who have not had the opportunity to satisfy their social needs to the appropriate extent within the family and society.

2. PROFESSIONAL FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL WORK

Social services emerged as a profession as a result of industrialisation processes that increased the scale and complexity of social organisation, such as the establishment of industrial companies, trade unions, professional groups and social institutions.



Madeleine Delburne defines it as: "practical and scholarly efforts, first, to help the individual who is unable to find his share of the good in society, and, second, to help society to fulfil its preventive task towards the individual" (Badawi, p. 11). The concept under discussion is the theoretical and practical knowledge that can assist the individual, the group and society as a whole. It is a service that can be provided to the individual, the group and society.

The field of social work is predicated on the premise that social relations are of paramount concern. It is an area of study which investigates the consequences that arise from an individual's inability to fulfil their professional role. This inability often gives rise to a multitude of manifestations of mutual maladaptation between the individual and their environment (Hassan, p. 9).

In examining the meaning of social service, we will address the concept of social welfare as belonging to the same conceptual field.

Social welfare represents a pivotal component of modern life, diverging from personal ties, primary and kinship relationships. The term 'social welfare' encompasses a wide range of concepts, denoting a structured network of social services and institutions designed to assist individuals and communities in attaining adequate standards of living and health. It encompasses personal and social relationships that facilitate individual growth, enable progress, and enhance quality of life, thereby ensuring individuals align with societal expectations (Hassan, p. 36).

Social workers see social welfare as government efforts that are geared towards social services.

Edward Lindemann defines the components of social welfare by saying: "The term social welfare means certain manifestations of public welfare carried out by government authorities, Howard Russell defines it as the area of governmental responsibility exercised to

achieve security and protection and provide opportunities for success in the social adaptation of the people, that is, for both the individual and the family to satisfy needs that are not satisfied by other bodies, including material assistance to the needy, protection of the weak and disabled from social exploitation, and the provision of therapeutic or palliative services for their problems. (Hassan, p. 38)

As for the principles on which it is based, which illustrate the philosophy of social work, it stems from the belief in the right of individuals and communities to an adequate standard of living based on social justice and development in all fields. Especially the belief in the value of the human person, the belief in the right of the individual to self-determination, equal opportunities for all, and the social responsibility of the individual towards others. These principles help in achieving the development process according to its requirements and conditions.

3. FOUNDATIONS AND FOUNDATIONS OF PROFESSIONAL INTERVENTION FOR SOCIAL WORK IN THE FIELD OF CHILDCARE

The escalating incidence of child abuse and neglect has led to an augmented demand for child care professionals to engage with cases that have been reported or are in need of assistance. The challenges posed by children at risk are intricate and multifaceted, necessitating the collaboration of diverse disciplines, professions and community resources, including healthcare, law enforcement, mental health and social services. This collaborative effort is crucial for the substantiation of allegations of child abuse and the provision of protection through reinstatement. Furthermore, it is essential to provide a comprehensive rehabilitation programme for both the child and their family, once it has been substantiated that allegations of abuse are indeed valid. (Hashim, 2021, p. 127)



Social work is a specialised humanitarian profession grounded in scientific and value-based principles, utilising skills to enhance individuals' capabilities and promote a more fulfilling social environment. It is consistent with the objectives of social development and is characterised by a positive outlook. The social work profession is a fundamental component of the field of childhood, addressing the numerous challenges faced by children that jeopardise their well-being. Through a degree of adaptability and professionalism in their approach, social workers employ diverse methods, tools, and models to effect change and protection. The following discourse pertains to juveniles encountering the aforementioned challenges. (Hashim, 2021, p. 127)

3.1 Importance of childcare

The significance of social care during childhood is underscored by the pivotal role this period plays in the formation of an individual's personality. The notion that "children are the architects of their own future" encapsulates the profound impact of this developmental stage. The field of research concerning childhood has consistently proven to be a rich source of insights for diverse scientific disciplines, including psychology, pedagogy, and social work.

Childhood is of great importance in the formation of the individual's personality, because it is where the first seeds of his personality are laid, on the basis of what the individual receives from experiences in childhood, the framework of his personality is determined, hence the need to provide social care for childhood through professional and social responsibilities in addressing social problems and other problems facing children, and it has its practical scientific approach through professional intervention methods used by the social worker working in the field of childhood, according to limited steps Clear and within an institutional and societal framework

in which the efforts made in this regard are integrated and coordinated.

In consideration of the significance of childhood, a number of legislative measures were implemented in various countries, including Britain, Germany and France, with the aim of safeguarding the rights of the child. This development culminated in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which was adopted by the United Nations Assembly on 20 November 1959. Subsequently, the International Convention on the Rights of the Child was established on 20 November 1989. As a member of the international community, Algeria has ratified several key international conventions pertaining to children, including the International Convention No. The legal age for work in Algeria is 138, and the country ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 19/02/1992. This Convention included special rights. The most significant of these rights are outlined below: the right to life, the right to name, the right to acquire nationality, the right to preserve identity, the right to healthcare, the right to education, and the rights enjoyed by the child, including the right to a natural family, the right to education and guidance, and the right to protection from exploitation.

Accordingly, social care for children is a field of social welfare, which is concerned with services that would provide solutions to children's problems, as child care is considered a measure of the progress of any society, hence this category began as a result of the development of human and democratic thought to take a natural right to care, guidance and rehabilitation for a life that it can live happily according to its capabilities.

The importance of childcare and protection should not be understated when discussing social welfare. Indeed, it can be argued that it constitutes the foundation upon which the realisation of social and economic development projects can be achieved.



3.2 The Historical Development of the Child Care Movement

The initial phase of childcare was characterised by societies' recognition of the necessity to care for children with disabilities and to protect them from the risks of poverty and exploitation. The onus for these responsibilities fell upon society as a whole.

Care was directed towards children whose parents had been left without resources or had been neglected.

In the nineteenth century, social care was directed at children in need of special care, such as children who are victims of disability, neglect and mental retardation. These children were excluded from society and placed in shelters without discrimination. The provision of specialised care emerged in response to the specific needs of each group. In essence, the objective of social services for children has evolved to encompass the preservation of distinct categories of orphans, the disabled, the neglected, and juvenile delinquents.

Consequently, the provision of childcare initially catered to groups in genuine need of such services. Thereafter, societal interest in the universal provision of childcare emerged. Subsequently, the provision of childcare evolved, with the expertise of specialists being drawn upon to establish the foundations and standards for the delivery of essential and sufficient care for children.

In the latter half of the 20th century, the notion of childcare began to acquire its precise connotations, and the term began to be employed not solely to denote the provision of individual services to children with disabilities, but also to encompass various organised movements and diverse forms of activity aimed at ensuring the well-being of all children. (Hassan, p. 326)

3.3 Childcare Principles (Hassan, p. 326)

- Children should not be separated from their families.
- Preventive measures are considered one of the most important and valuable forms of care compared to curative methods.
- Care of children in alternative families when it is necessary to move away from natural families.
- The proper choice of alternative families so that the child can adapt to them.
- The use of residential care in cases of temporary care, and if used, should be in the form of small units.
- Interest in studying the social history of children, following the individualised approach to treatment and its various procedures.

3.4 Child Care and Protection Fields

The classification of areas and types of activities involved in child care can be based on the type of services provided.

- Special care for children with special needs: they are cared for away from their families, i.e. institutional care, where institutions take care of them.

This type of care includes: children in conflict with the law, vulnerable to neglect, and the poor.

- The provision of care for children in general encompasses the right to health, recreation and a decent life. This right is facilitated by various care institutions, maternity and childhood centres, family planning centres, youth centres and psychiatric clinics.
- Directed care for the child's family, so that they successfully provide their care for children.
- Community-based care and inclusive social attitudes have been demonstrated to be directly related to children's problems.



It is evident that the responsibility for childcare does not solely lie with the state, but rather encompasses various societal entities, including formal and informal social upbringing institutions, civil society organisations such as child protection associations, services catering to children with disabilities, children exposed to violence, and children who have become victims of exploitation. It is imperative to acknowledge the necessity for support from various groups, including but not limited to:

This care in all its aspects has become an urgent necessity in our time, which is characterized by many and varied challenges, the most important and most serious of which are technological challenges. The current era is the age of technology par excellence, and societies are forced to deal with it with its pros and cons.

The advent of technological media and its various applications has been accompanied by a marked increase in their accessibility to children. Moreover, concerns have been raised regarding the potential impact of these technologies on the value and behavioural dimensions, particularly in the absence of adequate monitoring and subsequent follow-up. Indeed, it has become an alternative to the family in the raising of children.

Consequently, it is imperative for social services to acknowledge these developments and adapt their interventions to suit the specificities of the current era.

The paradigm of childcare has evolved from a mere provision of curative or preventive services to a more proactive stance, centred on the protection of children from emergent threats.

4. THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO FRAMING THE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE OF CHILD SOCIAL WORK

The professional practice of social work can only succeed if it is theoretically oriented and has a frame of reference, on which the social worker is based. The most important theoretical approaches in this area are as follows:

4.1 Psychosocial approach

This approach facilitates the identification of the psychological and social problems confronted by the child. A range of professional methods are employed, including direct professional methods directed at the child. These methods may take the form of advice, pressure, professional authority, suggestion, and the opportunity to vent feelings of hatred.

The social worker also employs indirect methods directed towards the child's external environment, influencing those around the child and modifying their attitudes. This achieves mutual acceptance between the two parties to integrate the child into the family and society.

4.2 The Qualifying Entrance

The social worker employs the following approach in dealing with the child:

- View the child as a whole.
- It is imperative to direct the child's attention towards the necessity of engaging in the various processes that facilitate psychological and social rehabilitation within the institution. This is considered a prerequisite for providing effective assistance to the child.
- It is imperative to reach a decision regarding the child prior to providing him with guidance, and this decision must be made only after ascertaining his roles and the expected results.

- The child should be prepared on a psychological, social and educational level so that they are not overwhelmed when undergoing rehabilitation.

4.2 Cognitive Behavioural Approach

The social worker performs three distinct stages within this approach:

- In order to identify the problem of the child, it is necessary to collect information about children and their problems.
- Prioritize assistance operations: These priorities are: return to family – back to school – medical treatment and diseases – vocational training.
- Assistance and treatment: The treatment and assistance process is contingent upon the relationship between the specialist and the child, as well as the programmes and behaviours exhibited by the child. (Balazouk & Aissat, 2020, pp. 27-46)

The theoretical approaches exhibited a divergence in their content and the manner in which they facilitated the child's development, contingent on the theoretical perceptions of each entrance. Notwithstanding these differences, a unifying objective persists: the provision of care and support for the child in all cases.

5. STUDIES IN THE FIELD OF PROFESSIONAL INTERVENTION OF CHILDHOOD SOCIAL WORK

The following field studies will be presented: firstly, an investigation into the reality of social work for children in different fields, including health, psychology and education.

- **The first study: health care for the child in early childhood in the family environment, a field study in the neighborhood of 100**

housing in the city of Messila, the study was completed in Bounouika Nasira, in 2006-2007.

The study was conducted within the discipline of sociology and social work. It was initiated with the objective of addressing two fundamental inquiries:

- Is full health care available for the child in early childhood in the family environment?
- How does the absence or lack of access to social services in the social sphere affect the provision of full health care for children in early childhood in the family environment?

The study relied on the descriptive method and a sample of 20 households.

The study reached a general conclusion that the family does not provide the full health care necessary for the child in early childhood. This is due to the absence or lack of benefit from social services in the social field, which had a negative impact on the family's role in providing full and necessary health care for the child in all its aspects and various fields at the most important stage of his life, which is early childhood. This necessitates the allocation of a substantial portion of the state's social policy to the care of families and children. This can be achieved through the enactment of laws and social legislation that ensure the provision, organisation and management of social services for families and children across all domains. Such measures would enhance the capacity of families to provide care for their children, particularly in the health sector. (Nasira, 2006-2007)

- **The second study: The role of the social worker as a general practitioner in achieving functional integration in the committees for the protection of children at risk, was completed by Dr. Safaa Fadl Hashem.**



The present study set out to ascertain the role of the social worker as a general practitioner in achieving functional integration in the committees for the protection of children at risk.

Type of study: This study is one of the descriptive and analytical studies because it aims to describe and analyze the role of the social worker as a general practitioner in achieving functional integration in the committees for the protection of children at risk.

The methodology employed in this study is outlined as follows: The present study is grounded in the comprehensive social survey methodology, a framework that has been widely adopted by social workers and professionals within the committees for the protection of children at risk, as exemplified by the Abu Tig Center in Assiut Governorate. This methodological approach is deemed particularly well-suited to the specific requirements and structure of the present study.

Human field: The human field encompasses a comprehensive survey of all social workers engaged in the committees for the protection of children at risk, amounting to (25 individuals), in addition to a comprehensive survey of all workers in the child protection committees, with a total of (122 individuals). The distribution of these individuals is as follows: members of the general committees (5 members), members of the subcommittees (27 members), and members of the community committees in the Abutig Center (90 members).

The study's most significant findings indicate that social workers' role as general practitioners for children at risk is conducive to achieving functional integration within committees responsible for the protection of children at risk. This conclusion is based on the assessment of social workers, who rate their own performance as medium in this regard.

The extent to which the social worker's role as a general practitioner with children at risk contributes to achieving functional integration in the committees for the protection of children at risk, as determined by the work team, was medium.

The study also reached a proposed conception to activate the role of the social worker as a general practitioner in achieving functional integration in the committees for the protection of children at risk. (Hashim, 2021, p. 123_160)

– The third study: the reality of social policy for children in Algeria: legislation, achievements, problems and challenges

The study was conducted by Dr. Saleh Filali and was based on the following research questions:

- Is legislation enacted in favour of children sufficient to protect and promote them?
- What is the compatibility of national legislation with international child rights law?
- What criticisms have been levelled by the United Nations at Algeria with regard to the rights of the child?
- What are Algeria's most important achievements in the field of child protection and care?
- What are the most important problems facing childhood in Algeria?
- What are the challenges posed in the social policy of childhood?

The present study aims to diagnose the social policy of childhood in Algeria in order to identify the problems and challenges facing the implementation of child protection and promotion plans and programs. It then seeks to provide appropriate recommendations that

can be adopted by decision-makers to overcome the weaknesses recorded in this area.

In response to the previous questions, the study reached the following results:

- Algeria has witnessed remarkable progress in the legislation on children, but some of these legislations have not been materialized in the field because they clash with customs and traditions, which causes a lack of such legislation.
- Many national legislations are compatible with international law.
- The Committee on the Rights of the Child criticized Algeria, including the absence of a child watchdog, and the absence of a comprehensive plan of action to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Algeria has made achievements in the field of child care: free and universal education, health care, school canteens, school transport, school grants... Etc.
- The most salient problems are as follows: a percentage of children suffer from poverty, deprivation from education, child labour, violence against children, and other serious phenomena.
- The Algerian state faces considerable challenges in the realm of child protection, largely attributable to the nature of prevailing social, economic, and political transformations, as well as the external pressures of globalization. (Vilali, 2012, pp. 35-64)

CONCLUSION

The necessity of social care for children has become an important requirement in the field of social policies. Significant developments have been undertaken in this regard, following a period of reliance on humanitarian, spontaneous and civil aid, which has now

become subject to scientific study. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that reliance on the family is essential to ensure proper and adequate care.

A review of the literature on child service and care programmes indicates that the efficacy and implementation of professional social work practice in the field of childhood is contingent on two key factors. Firstly, the success of such programmes is predicated on the optimal functioning of family life. Secondly, the quality of the child's external environment is a significant predictor of positive outcomes. The social philosophy of child care is predicated on the notion that the child is not isolated from his environment, and that his care requires interaction between him and his environment. This assertion is corroborated by scientific studies. The advancements witnessed in the domains of medicine and the humanities during this century have contributed to a shift in societal attitudes towards children. Contemporary trends in child protection advocate for the provision of all necessary requirements within the context of the child's natural family as the optimal environment for their upbringing. Research conducted by institutions specialising in child care has demonstrated that the natural environment for a child's development and growth is the presence of their parents and siblings. (Ali, 2014, p. 162)

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