

The Application of Empowerment Theory in Social Work Services for Orphaned Children in Residential Institutions: The Case of M City Children's Welfare Institution

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Abstract: Children's welfare institutions are the last barrier for orphaned children to survive. Orphans have physical disabilities, intellectual developmental deficiencies that lead to abandonment by their relatives or orphanhood due to natural or man-made disasters, and face strong needs for life care, growth, and social interaction. At present, the services for orphaned children are faced with the problems of shortage of professionals, inadequate hardware facilities, poor learning environment, and low level of social support. Under the professional service concept of "helping people to help themselves", social work services can effectively solve the substantive problems faced by orphans and disabled children. The empowerment theory is very suitable for clients with low self-identity and strong sense of powerlessness. It can guide social workers to integrate social resources, stimulate the potential of clients, alleviate the pressure and difficulties faced by clients, and improve the residential environment, which can play an important role in solving the life and growth problems of orphaned children. This paper explores the strengths and weaknesses of orphaned children in orphanages under the guidance of enrichment theory, and then develops individualized social work service programs to help them acquire more knowledge and provide developmental services by building a trusting partnership with orphaned children and adolescents, guiding them to raise their awareness of self-change, providing supplementary learning education, and helping them to develop their potential and develop their abilities. We help them develop their potential and abilities, enhance their sense of self-efficacy, and guide them to get out of the institutions and integrate into the community to enhance social acceptance and recognition, so as to promote the change and growth of orphaned children and achieve the expected results.

1. Introduction

Orphaned children, often referred to as children who lack the ability to stand on their own due to physical and physiological defects, family abandonment or loss of loved ones, often exhibit significant differences in intelligence, sensory, emotional, physical behavior or communication

skills from normal children [1]. These special vulnerable groups are often received and placed by local welfare institutions through the public security and civil affairs systems and receive group care in the institutions, where they live 24 hours a day and receive services such as clothing, food, housing, transportation, and medical care provided by the institutions to obtain a safe and comfortable environment that is conducive to healthy growth [2]. When orphaned children are mentioned in the society, the first impression that many people have is that the group is disabled, weak, inferior, closed, lack of love, lack of self-esteem, and not accepted, and these subjective feelings can also have a negative impact on orphaned children.

The establishment of children's welfare homes is the most direct manifestation of social welfare as the state's institutional guarantee for this group. In the early development of children's welfare institutions, the services for orphaned children were generally based on medical care and nurturing, but with the continuous progress of the times, the functions of children's welfare institutions have undergone radical changes, and the services for orphaned children have changed from simple living care to the current direction of education, rehabilitation and nursing care. However, from the current situation, there are still more problems in individual areas, and it is important to study this issue in the context of the new era [3].

The author used to work in institutionalized children's welfare homes for orphaned children, and through observation, contact and service, she found that most of the orphaned children had physical disabilities, cerebral palsy, Down's syndrome, and different degrees of mental retardation due to physical and physiological organic pathologies, and were mainly living care and rehabilitation training; a very small number of children were able to improve through rehabilitation and nurturing, or because of their relatively good intellectual and physical abilities, they A very small number of children are able to improve through rehabilitation and parenting, or get some opportunities to go out and attend school due to their relatively good intellectual and physical abilities [4]. But even so, the realities of physical congenital defects or impairments, identity and role orientation in institutionalized upbringing, feelings of powerlessness and inability to change themselves, and lack of family care are still very troubling aspects for them. They long for their physical integrity, for normal family-like care, for good interaction and communication with normal children, for social acceptance and recognition, and for getting out of the institutions and into the community and society. In addition, orphaned children receive long-term group care in institutions and always receive material and monetary gifts from the government, organizations and others, which to a certain extent reinforces their sense of helplessness and "being labeled", and their sense of self-efficacy is extremely low. As they grow older and their intelligence improves, when their needs are not met and their confusion is not resolved, problems and phenomena such as loneliness, rebellion, psychological imbalance, self-indulgence, dropping out of school, deviations in performance, and deviant behavior occur. When these problems occur, evaluations such as selfishness, laziness, lack of motivation, deviant behavior, and personality disorders are placed on the children like a golden spell, keeping them in an atmosphere of negative energy [5]. However, do orphaned children really want to be labeled, served, gifted, and weakly capable all the time? No. In the process of contacting and serving them, social workers will find that they also follow their parents and social workers very seriously to practice pronunciation and writing, learn civilized manners and living habits, and exercise doing housework and crafts. They hope that they can change, that they can get the opportunity to learn, educate and live, and that they can get the correct and objective evaluation from others in the society. This provides social workers with a good opportunity and entry point for service intervention [6].

M City Children's Home is a service institution directly managed by the government, mainly responsible for providing medical care, rehabilitation, trusteeship, care, counseling, and education services for orphaned and disabled children, and undertaking alternative care placement for children

rescued from abduction and minor children whose parents are in detention or serving prison sentences, referred by public security and court departments [7]. The children's orphanage currently has 124 staff members and is responsible for the daily life care of nearly 800 orphans and disabled children in the institution. The orphanage is equipped with basic life service support facilities and medical rehabilitation equipment, junior, middle and senior medical, nursing, education and rehabilitation professionals. It has set up centralized foster care, simulated family foster care, family foster care and other foster care models according to children's growth needs, and implemented diversified rehabilitation and education training, with a 100% coverage rate of rehabilitation and education. After years of development, M Children's Home has passed the ISO9001 quality management system certification. This paper attempts to take the social work service program of M Children's Home as an example to explore a new way to carry out social work services under the perspective of enrichment theory.

2. Common Problems of Services for Orphaned Children in Residential Institutions

2.1. Shortage of Professional Staff

The care, rehabilitation and education of orphaned children is a very complex process, especially since the problems faced by different orphaned children are almost always different. Therefore, each task requires the patient and careful intervention of professional staff. This requires very specialized training and skills. For example, for the rehabilitation of orphaned children, different rehabilitation measures are taken for children of different ages [8]. Currently, professionals are unable to meet the various needs of nearly 800 orphaned children, especially the emotional needs of children, which require the intervention of professional social workers. In addition, the professionals are under a lot of pressure due to their high workload and therefore need more professional staff to give counseling and supervision [9].

2.2. Hardware Facilities are not Perfect

With the healthy development of China's economy and society, some hardware facilities in children's welfare institutions have been improved compared to the past. However, compared to the growing and diversified needs of the clients, the current hardware facilities are still unable to meet the needs of the clients [10]. Especially for children with severe disabilities, the rehabilitation equipment they need needs to be more specialized and requires higher hardware performance.

2.3. Poor Learning Environment

Most of the children inside the homes are children with physical or intellectual disabilities. Therefore, they often need to be arranged in a more specialized environment in terms of learning. However, the limited space and resources, as well as the lack of teachers and the interactions between children, result in children inside the institutions not enjoying a higher quality learning environment like those outside the institutions [11].

2.4. Social Support is not High

There is already a need in the community for caring individuals and businesses to support children's homes with a lot of material and monetary support, and good results have been achieved. However, social support and awareness of the spiritual aspect of this group still needs to be improved, and there are some high-end rehabilitation resources that still cannot be supported by the

community, which affects the growth and development of the children in the institution.

3. The Applicability of Enrichment Theory in Social Work Services for Orphaned Children in Residential Institutions

Empowerment, meaning to improve the social disadvantaged groups their own capabilities and change their disadvantaged status. Barbara Solomon introduced the concept of empowerment in 1976 and developed the theory of empowerment based on the following basic assumptions:

First, personal powerlessness is due to the exclusion and oppression of the environment.

Second, there are barriers in the social environment that prevent people from being able to perform, but the barriers can be changed.

Third, individual capabilities can be continuously increased through social interaction.

Fourth, the service recipients are capable, valuable, and have access to capacity enhancement.

Fifth, the relationship between social workers and clients is a partnership. He proposes that social workers should avoid taking an authoritative stance and instead establish an equal partnership with the recipients.

He believes that social workers can help clients improve themselves in four ways in helping people services:

First, assist them in identifying themselves as agents of change.

Second, to assist them in understanding that the knowledge and skills of social workers can be shared and applied.

Once again, we help them understand that the social worker is only a partner in helping the recipient to solve the problem, and that the recipient himself or herself is the subject of the problem.

Finally, assist them to clarify that powerlessness can be changed [12].

From the above analysis, it can be concluded that the empowerment theory and social workers' service interventions for orphaned children in residential institutions are very consistent and operable in terms of the concept of service intervention, the direction and entry point of service, and the content and form of service. In the process of professional helping services, social workers can focus on enhancing the sense of competence of institutionalized orphaned children from the perspective of the enrichment theory, prompting them to enhance and strengthen their self-competence through potential development, ability learning, and social interaction, promoting their participation in community life, and providing a platform for mutual understanding and acceptance between them and the community [13].

4. The Intervention Path of Empowerment Theory in Social Work Services for Orphaned Children in Residential Institutions

4.1. Social Workers Establish a Trusting Partnership with Orphaned Children and Guide them to Raise their Awareness of Self-Change

Based on their personal abilities, psychological and emotional effects, some orphaned children may become more dependent on social workers, lack a sense of self-change, or experience inappropriate empathy, which affects the professional service relationship between the two parties [14]. Social workers need to establish cooperation, trust, and partnership with them, and assist them to realize that social workers are only partners in solving their growth problems through continuous counseling follow-up, thematic lectures, and positive orientation, and guide them to realize that they are the subject of problem solving and that they are capable and valuable, so as to enhance their awareness of self-change and strengthen their motivation and self-confidence for change.

4.2. Provide Supplementary Learning Education to Help them Gain Knowledge Growth

Social workers provide a series of homework remedial and cognitive learning education services for children in need through liaison with volunteer resources, such as setting up a "book Through case studies, legal lectures and therapeutic groups, we can correct children's bad behaviors, especially theft, and provide guidance on sexual education during adolescence, as well as provide safety education on home safety and prevention of fraud, loss and theft. Helping orphaned children to better improve their abilities.

4.3. Provide Developmental Services to Help them Develop their Potential, Develop their Abilities, and Enhance their Sense of Self-Efficacy

However, by developing their potential, learning their abilities, and guiding them to interact with others in society, we are able to improve and enhance their sense of ability. For example, in response to the needs and abilities of orphans and children with disabilities, social workers have developed their diverse hobbies and talents through interest classes in language, art, singing, dancing and sports to better develop their MQ intelligence; personal hygiene training, household cleaning training, family responsibility training, cooking skills training, shopping and financial management training, and transportation skills training. Not only do they develop good personal hygiene habits, but they also gradually strengthen their sense of family responsibility, improve their ability to take care of themselves, improve their communication and interaction with others, and enhance their self-confidence.

4.4. Guide them out of the Institution and into the Community to Promote Social Acceptance and Identity

The process of transforming a person from a biological person into a social person is the process of socialization of an individual. Through continuous contact with society, an individual gains knowledge of society and makes others understand him or her better, thus improving oneself. For orphaned children who are physically and intellectually capable but rarely go out of the institution, with the support of the resident unit, on the one hand, social workers carry out the "Discovering the Beauty of the Community" and "Community Integration" programs, and carry out a series of experience activities outside the institution. In addition to the previous park activities, we have added science and technology museums, supermarkets, stores and other locations to broaden their knowledge and increase the children's understanding of society and the opportunity to interact with others, so that they can better integrate into society. On the other hand, social workers also try to cultivate volunteer awareness among orphaned children, develop volunteer teams for cleaning, talent, photography, community service, etc., cultivate volunteer leaders, build their awareness of serving others and feeding the community, guide them to gradually transform from service recipients to service providers, from passive service acceptance to active service provision, participate more in community life, enhance They can participate more in the community life, enhance the recognition and acceptance of the society, gain self-confidence, and know how to give and be grateful [15]. For institutionalized orphaned children, what they lack is not a platform to survive and live, but an opportunity to improve themselves and grow. Social workers precisely combine the theory of empowerment and humanistic thinking in the practice of professional helping services to improve their abilities and create more space for growth and development in life skills learning, self-care and self-care ability cultivation, hobby cultivation, community experience and community integration. The program is designed to create more space for children to grow and develop.

5. Conclusion

Through participatory observation and research, the author found that the application of empowerment theory in social work services for orphaned children had achieved very good results, which mainly reflected that the powerlessness of orphaned children in the orphanage was significantly reduced, their self-efficacy was improved to a certain extent, especially the mutual help relationship between orphaned children, and the relationship between orphaned children and social workers in the orphanage was significantly improved, and they trusted the social workers more. The relationship between orphans and social workers in the orphanage has also improved significantly, and the children have more trust in the social workers. The improved hardware facilities and learning environment in the orphanage have helped the orphans become more engaged in learning and rehabilitation. Now the orphaned children have been empowered to communicate with strangers and even learn to buy groceries and take the bus independently. Of course, there are still many challenges in the process of applying the empowerment theory, mainly because social workers still need to strengthen their knowledge and mastery of the theory, and they tend to be too hasty in helping clients to understand themselves, and some decisions are even made by social workers for clients. In addition, clients are prone to repetition, and sometimes they can easily revert to their previous state of insensitivity if the social worker does not consolidate the change in time. In this process, social workers often unconsciously play the role of the authority, which is not conducive to the change of the clients and does not do a good job of empowering and empowering the clients. In conclusion, the empowerment theory has achieved the set goals in social work services for orphaned children, but there are also problems that need to be solved urgently. In the future, social workers are needed to further enhance the knowledge and ability of the theory, and through regular exercise, they will continue to study and deepen the connotation of the concept, so as to provide more valuable references for future scholars who study the theory.

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