

ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES FOR STREET CHILDREN

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze the social welfare services provided to street children, with a focus on basic needs such as education, health, social protection and economic empowerment. Data was collected through literature review. The results of the analysis show that existing social welfare services are still not comprehensive and not well coordinated among various stakeholders such as the government, NGOs, and health and education institutions. In addition, social stigma towards street children is a significant obstacle to the effectiveness of existing programs. To overcome this problem, it is recommended to strengthen multi-stakeholder collaboration networks, increase capacity and service infrastructure, as well as develop programs based on data from monitoring and evaluation results. With a comprehensive and sustainable approach, it is hoped that social welfare services can be more effective in improving the quality of life of street children and increasing their opportunities for a better future.

Keywords: Services, Social Welfare, Street Children

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of street children is a social problem that never ends in various big cities in the world, including Indonesia. Street children are children who spend most of their time on the streets working or begging and often do not have a permanent home (Allen & Hamnett, 2022). Life on the streets makes them very vulnerable to various risks such as violence, exploitation, malnutrition and health problems, both physical and mental. This condition not only threatens their fundamental rights as children, but also

hinders their development physically, emotionally and intellectually (Colvin & Howard, 2022).

Although various efforts have been made by the government and non-government organizations (NGOs) to overcome this problem, the effectiveness of social welfare service programs for street children is still a big question. Many implemented programs are unable to provide long-term and sustainable solutions (Lestari et al., 2022). This problem is often caused by a lack of coordination between institutions, limited resources, and a non-comprehensive approach that only focuses on certain aspects of the problem of street children. Therefore, it is important to carry out an in-depth analysis of the various existing social welfare services.

In addition, street children often receive less serious attention from public policy and academic research, so their needs and problems are not properly addressed. Existing services often do not match their specific needs, making rehabilitation and reintegration efforts less successful. By conducting comprehensive literature research, it is hoped that more effective and in-depth intervention models can be found, as well as appropriate policy recommendations to help street children escape the cycle of poverty and difficulties they face (Roehrkasse et al., 2023). This research attempts to fill this gap by evaluating and formulating strategies that can be implemented to improve the quality of life of street children.

Street children are one of the most vulnerable groups in society, considering that they often face various challenges such as poverty, violence, exploitation, and lack of access to basic services (Herselman et al., 2023). In Indonesia, the number of street children continues to increase due to various economic and social factors, including urbanization, unemployment and poverty. This situation encourages the government and various non-government organizations (NGOs) to develop and implement various social welfare service programs. However, the effectiveness of these programs is often questioned, considering that the living conditions of street children have not changed much (King et al., 2024).

The social welfare service program for street children aims to provide protection and assistance in various aspects, including education, health and basic needs such as food and shelter. The Indonesian government has implemented various policies to support street children, such as the Family Hope Program (PKH) and various initiatives at the local level (Huaqui, 2023). However, major challenges are still faced in terms of inter-agency

coordination, funding, and an effective and scientific evidence-based approach to implementation.

One of the main problems in dealing with street children is the inability of existing programs to reach and involve all street children, especially those who are most hidden or marginalized. Many programs are based in urban centers and operate intervention models that do not always suit the specific needs of street children in various local contexts. This indicates an urgent need to understand more deeply the individual characteristics and needs of this group, and develop more flexible and responsive approaches (Toikko et al., 2024).

Apart from that, active participation of street children in the planning and implementation process of the program is still very minimal. Although various studies show that involving target groups in social welfare programs can increase the effectiveness and sustainability of programs, many initiatives still operate with a top-down approach without involving these children directly. This condition shows that there is a misalignment between the program focus and the reality on the ground, which can hinder the achievement of program objectives (Abekah-Carter et al., 2024).

For this reason, more in-depth and data-based research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of social welfare service programs for street children. This research is not only important for identifying gaps and weaknesses in existing programs, but also for developing more appropriate and sustainable intervention models. Thus, it is hoped that the results of this research can provide concrete recommendations for improving policies and programs in the future, as well as improving the overall quality of life of street children.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study in this research is qualitative with literature. The literature study research method is a research approach that involves the analysis and synthesis of information from various literature sources that are relevant to a particular research topic. Documents taken from literature research are journals, books and references related to the discussion you want to research (Earley, M.A. 2014; Snyder, H. 2019).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Types of Social Welfare Services for Street Children

Education services are an important component of social welfare for street children. This program includes providing access to formal schools and non-formal education such as courses or skills training. Workshops and additional classes are often organized by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and governments to help street children develop literacy, numeracy and life skills that can help them escape the cycle of poverty. Some programs also provide scholarships and school equipment donations to support their education (Flynn, 2024).

Health services are also a priority in efforts to ensure the welfare of street children. Many of them live in unhealthy environmental conditions and are at high risk of developing various diseases. Therefore, health services include routine health checks, immunizations, free treatment, and health education (Kim & Kim, 2022). In addition, these programs also often provide access to mental health services, considering that many street children experience trauma or psychological problems.

Fulfilling basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter is also the main focus in social welfare service programs. Shelters or halfway houses are often established to provide temporary and safe accommodation for street children. Here, they get nutritious food, clothing, and other basic needs (Lee & Gleespen, 2024). In addition, these programs often involve counseling and guidance services to help street children plan their future, whether through further education or job training. The implementation of these programs often receives support from the government and various charities to ensure the availability of sufficient resources to help street children transition to a more stable and safe life.

Apart from fulfilling basic needs, education and health, advocacy and legal protection are important aspects of social welfare services for street children. Many street children are vulnerable to exploitation, human trafficking and violence. Several non-governmental organizations and government agencies work together to provide legal assistance and advocacy for them. This includes free legal assistance, education regarding children's rights, as well as awareness campaigns in the community to reduce stigma and discrimination against street children (Cheng, 2022).

Skills training and career development are also important elements in social welfare services for street children. These programs aim to equip street children with practical work skills so they can increase their chances of getting

a decent job. This training can cover a variety of skills, ranging from technical skills such as mechanics, construction workers, sewing, to skills for starting a small business. In addition, career guidance and support in finding work are also often provided to help them enter the real world of work and achieve financial independence (Tampubolon & AB, 2022).

Reintegration into the family and society is a final but very important aspect of social welfare services for street children. This program focuses on returning these children to a safe and supportive family or community environment. Intensive support is provided, including family mediation, counseling and ongoing monitoring to ensure that reintegration goes smoothly and children get the support they need to grow and develop well. Collaboration with various parties such as schools, community leaders and religious institutions is also important to ensure that these children are well received back into their social environment (Sulaiman et al., 2024).

Effectiveness of Various Programs and Interventions that have Been Implemented

Education programs for street children, such as inclusive schools and non-formal classes, have shown varying results. In several areas, this program has succeeded in increasing the participation and academic achievement of street children. For example, those who previously did not have access to formal education can now take national exams and continue their education to a higher level (Strode & Grant, 2022). However, the success of these programs often depends on the quality of teachers, accessibility of educational facilities, and collaboration between government, non-government organizations and local communities. Challenges still faced include lack of funding, lack of family support, and social stigma that makes children reluctant to return to school.

Skills training and career development programs have shown a positive impact in increasing the financial independence of street children. Many trainees are successful in finding jobs or starting small businesses as a result of the skills they learn. This program also increases the self-confidence and self-esteem of these children, who previously felt underestimated and neglected (Yosep et al., 2024). However, the long-term effectiveness of these programs often depends on the continuity of training and monitoring. Some training may be less relevant to the local job market, while further support such as access to business capital and business networks still needs to be improved to ensure their success in the long term.

Reintegration and legal advocacy programs have also shown encouraging results, although with some challenges. Many street children successfully return to a safe family environment or are reintegrated into society, getting the emotional and psychological support they need. Legal assistance and advocacy have helped protect their rights, reduce the risk of exploitation, and increase public awareness of the issues facing street children (Sobieraj et al., 2023). However, the reintegration process is often complex and requires a holistic approach. Problems such as family resilience, resistance from other family members, as well as social problems such as poverty and gender inequality, need to be addressed so that this program can run more effectively.

Health programs implemented for street children, such as routine health checks, vitamin administration, and psychosocial therapy, have had a significant impact on their well-being. Many children who previously experienced malnutrition, skin diseases and other health problems are now getting the care they need. This program also helps in early detection of health problems that can affect children's growth and development (Mbiriakura & Kasowe, 2022). However, the effectiveness of these programs is sometimes hampered by limited resources, difficulties in reaching children who are still on the street, and a lack of program sustainability. Improved coordination between health services, hospitals and community organizations is needed to ensure this program can provide sustainable benefits (Chornous, 2022).

Social protection programs, such as the provision of temporary shelter and alternative care services, have provided street children with a safe haven for a while. These shelters provide a stable and supportive environment where children can eat well, sleep well, and receive psychological help if needed (Rao et al., 2023). However, many social protection programs need to focus more on long-term planning and developing independent living skills. Some shelters may fall short of eligibility standards or may not provide adequate rehabilitation and educational programs to help children adapt to life off the street.

Poverty alleviation programs aimed at reducing the number of street children by reducing family poverty have shown mixed results. Some families who receive financial assistance, entrepreneurship training, or access to social services escape the cycle of poverty and are able to provide a better life for their children (Donnelly, 2024). However, the success of this program is highly dependent on the sustainability and consistency of the assistance provided.

This program also requires a multi-sectoral approach involving education, health and employment opportunities in order to comprehensively address the root causes of poverty. Several obstacles such as bureaucracy, low community participation, and unequal distribution of resources often hinder the success of poverty alleviation programs (Luce, 2022).

Challenges and Obstacles in Implementing Social Welfare Services

One of the main challenges in implementing social welfare services is limited resources, both human, financial and material. Often, the relevant departments or agencies responsible for providing social welfare services do not have enough trained workforce to handle the large number of beneficiaries (Kurniawan et al., 2024). In addition, the budget allocated for social welfare programs is often insufficient to meet all existing needs, especially in emergency or disaster situations. This shortage results in services provided being less than optimal, late, or even not available at all for some groups who need them most.

Coordination between agencies is a significant obstacle in the provision of social welfare services. Social welfare services often involve multiple government agencies, non-governmental organizations and local communities. Lack of effective coordination and communication between these various parties can lead to program overlap, inefficiency and confusion at the beneficiary level. Sometimes, unsynchronized policies and complicated bureaucracy also slow down program implementation and cause failure to achieve the goals of the services provided (Abiel & Masruri, 2023). Therefore, more efforts are needed to ensure synergy and harmonization between various stakeholders in the implementation of social welfare services.

Another challenge that is no less important is the public's distrust and stigma towards social welfare services. Many individuals who are entitled to assistance feel reluctant or embarrassed to access these services for fear of being excluded or considered incapable (Nurdin & Rahmat, 2022). Apart from that, there is also a stigma that beneficiaries of social welfare services are lazy or dependent on assistance, which makes the program socialization process more difficult. Building trust and changing public perceptions requires consistent efforts through education, outreach, and proving the real benefits of social welfare programs. It is important to mainstream an approach that respects the dignity and rights of every individual so that the program can be accepted and utilized optimally by society (Gupta et al., 2024).

The next obstacle is limited infrastructure and technology which often hinders the implementation of social welfare services. In many areas, especially remote or underdeveloped ones, basic infrastructure such as roads, electricity and internet access may still be very limited. In fact, this infrastructure is very important to support the timely distribution of aid and services. Technology such as efficient information systems and databases is also often not available, so the process of collecting data and monitoring beneficiaries is slow and prone to errors. With better investment in infrastructure and technology, the process of distributing aid can be carried out more quickly and accurately (Peters & Grandin, 2023).

Public awareness and understanding of social welfare services is a crucial factor that is often given little attention. Many people do not know the various programs and services available and how to access them. The lack of effective socialization and education from related parties causes existing programs to not achieve targets optimally. Disseminating information accurately and evenly through various media, such as direct campaigns in the field, use of social media, and collaboration with educational institutions, can increase public awareness and participation in social welfare programs (Hassan et al., 2023).

Rigid and less flexible regulations and policies also pose challenges in implementing social welfare services. Many regulations are made with good intentions but their implementation is not in accordance with the dynamic and varying field conditions in each region. Long and strict bureaucratic procedures often slow down the process of providing aid. More adaptive regulations and policies that are responsive to changes and community needs are needed. Policies that are more flexible and situational in nature can provide space for service implementers in the field to make necessary adjustments for the effectiveness of social welfare programs (Yule et al., 2023).

Recommendations for Improving Social Services for Street Children

To improve social services for street children, there needs to be an increase in supporting infrastructure. The government and related institutions must focus on developing social service centers that are easily accessible to street children. These centers must be equipped with educational, health and counseling facilities. Apart from that, collaboration with the private sector through corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs could be a solution to increase funding and improve infrastructure. With adequate infrastructure,

street children can access the services they need more easily and quickly (Bromfield et al., 2023).

Field officers who interact directly with street children must have adequate capacity and competence. Therefore, regular training and capacity building for social workers is very important. Training can include counseling techniques, trauma management, and how to communicate effectively with street children. Apart from that, officers must be given knowledge about the latest regulations and policies as well as innovative methods in assisting street children. With trained officers, the social services provided will be more effective and can meet the specific needs of street children (Xin et al., 2022).

Community awareness and participation in supporting street children also needs to be increased. The government and non-governmental organizations must aggressively carry out educational and outreach campaigns to change the negative stigma towards street children and introduce available assistance programs. This can be done through social media, seminars, and collaboration with educational institutions. With increased support from society, social welfare programs can be implemented more effectively, and street children will feel more accepted and supported in society (Wang & Chen, 2023).

To improve comprehensive social services, collaboration with education and health institutions is essential. Schools and non-formal educational institutions can run scholarship programs or free education for street children (Mu, 2024). Apart from that, there needs to be routine health programs such as free medical examinations and psychological services for children who have trauma. This collaboration not only increases street children's access to basic services, but also helps them achieve a better future.

Apart from direct assistance, economic empowerment programs for street children and their families will have a more significant long-term impact. Skills training and small business incubation programs for street children who have entered working age or their parents can be an effective solution. With sufficient skills, they can find a decent job or even start their own business. Programs like this also reduce the risk of street children returning to the streets, because they and their families have a more stable source of income (Hornyák et al., 2023).

So that the programs being implemented can continue to be improved and adapted to real needs, regular monitoring and evaluation needs to be carried out. Responsible institutions must continue to monitor the development of the street children they have helped and measure the

effectiveness of the various programs implemented. The data and findings from this evaluation must then be used to make program adjustments or design new, more effective initiatives. With transparent and routine monitoring and evaluation, the sustainability and success of programs to improve social services for street children can be guaranteed (Yao & Li, 2023).

CONCLUSION

Street children have basic needs which include education, health, protection and social assistance. The services provided must be comprehensive, covering all these aspects to ensure the child's overall welfare. The involvement of various parties such as government, NGOs, educational institutions and health is very crucial. Solid collaboration between these various actors can provide more effective services and reach more street children in need. Focusing on the economic empowerment of street children and their families is an important long-term strategy. Skills training and business incubation programs can give them the opportunity to earn a stable income, reducing the risk of returning to the streets. Monitoring and evaluation of social welfare programs for street children must be carried out periodically. This is important to ensure that the program is effective and in line with evolving needs. Adjustments based on evaluation results will ensure the program remains relevant and successful. One of the big challenges in social welfare services for street children is social stigma. Education and outreach campaigns are needed to change public perceptions to be more accepting and supportive of the programs being implemented.

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