

Meeting needs of children with incarcerated mothers



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CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

INTRODUCTION

This study was aimed to determine whether the basic needs are met or not by the children of incarcerated mothers in Welikada prison. This chapter facilitates a discussion on the testing and finding relevance to the previous chapter corresponding to the defined hypothesis. Further, facts and figures and results will be discussed and it will also analyse the cross references to the literature reviewed.

DISCUSSION BASED ON THE LITREATURE REVIEW

As per the World Bank definition “ Early childhood is the most rapid period of development in a human life. Although individual children develop at their own pace, all children progress through an identifiable sequence of physical, cognitive, and emotional growth and change. The Early Child Development (ECD) approach is based on the proven fact that young children respond best when caregivers use specific techniques designed to encourage and stimulate progress to the next level of development”.

Many theorists have developed different concepts on the child development process, but once analyse all those very carefully, it seems that the idea is almost same which they have tried to prove. These theorists have discussed the development of human life in different stages of ages, here it is considered only the early childhood development up to the age of 5 years.

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Based on the literature review, it was analysed the international policy and trends in the care of children born behind bars. Most of the countries adopt the similar procedure that when a pregnant woman is imprisoned, she will be transferred to an outside hospital to give the child birth. This will be done to ensure the appropriate medical care and to avoid the place of birth place being as prison in the birth certificate. 5. In some countries, just after the child birth, they are separated from mother and kept in foster care or handed over to their relatives. This will negatively be affected to the children's basic needs in their early childhood development such as breastfeeding, mother's care and mother-child interaction and bond. However, in most states, the breastfeeding is encouraged. Many arguments indicate that child should not be separated from his mother in early stage of a child. In some of the low income countries, the baby delivery is carried out in the prison. This will give number of health complications for both mother and child.

Although some of facilities are available in the prison environment for the child living, they are not directly addressed to the children's mental, emotional and physical development needs. In some prisons like in Cambodia and India, the mothers and children are not provided with adequate and also extra foods for children, clean water, washing and hygiene facilities, etc. Further, the children's access to play, education, social interaction with other children and also to the outside of the prison environment are not properly addressed. Due to these reasons, the children of incarcerated mothers face many difficulties in their early childhood while living in the prison environment. Therefore, these literatures indicate that

children born behind the bars are facing many development difficulties in their early childhood.

However, some prisons like in Canada and Austria provide well advance facilities for mothers and child living in the prison as compared to the other prisons in the world. Although the adequate facilities are provided, the only drawback is the interaction of the children to the outside society is poor. This will affect to the children's emotional, psychological and social development.

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DISCUSSION BASED ON THE DATA PRESENTATION AND FINDINGS

This sample survey was mainly focused to the mothers of children born behind the bars in Sri Lankan prisons. Due to the existing limitations for conduct this research, this survey was restricted only to Welikada prison. During the conduct of survey, it was found that only there were 16 children mothered to 15 incarcerated women. One woman had two children.

The existing policy for care of mothers and children was thoroughly analysed during this survey. The pregnant mothers are provided maternity care from outside government hospitals same as other women and also it helps the children to avoid their birth place as prison in their birth certificate. Although the nursery facilities are not functioned as outside, it helps the children to develop their educational, language and cognitive development needs. Further, when the child comes to the age 5 years, he will be separated from the mother and handover to his relatives of kept in foster care. It seems a

positive sign that child may get a opportunity to expose to the outside society.

SURVIVAL AND LIFE SUSTAINING NEEDS

The sample survey highlights some positive signs related to the survival and life sustaining needs for the children of incarcerated mothers in Welikada prison. Though the pure water, food, air, cloths and warmth are satisfactorily addressed, there is some shortage of cloths, variety of food items and extra foods. The provision of same types of food every day will lead the children to refuse the meals. However, these concerns are minor and probably better when consider the respondents' socio-economic situations in outside the prison. Further, the children are provided with breastfeeding and being with mothers throughout the imprisonment until the child's age of 5 years. These aspects are positively driven to the children's physical, emotional developments.

LIFE EMBELLESING NEEDS

The needs for the life embellishing development such as provision of toys, some fantasy and entertainment activities are not addressed satisfactorily, but they get enough opportunities to play with other children in the prison premises. However, these activities are restricted to a one particular area inside the prison wall. This restrictive environment hampered the children's opportunities to explore as well as experience a variety of stimuli. Hence, these areas do not enhance the developmental opportunities of a child through the play. This will negatively affect to the children's physical, social and emotional development.

LIFE PROTECTING NEEDS

Both the children and mothers are provided with the separate accommodation without merging with other prisoners, but it is not separated for each mother and child, everybody is living together in a single hall sharing two toilets amongst them. This affects to the child and mother's well-being and hygienic issues and result in environmental stressors. The toilets and the accommodation areas are not always kept in very clean. The use of two toilets daily by 16 children and 15 mothers is a big issue which children face in the prison premises.

Sleeping facilities for mother and child at Welikada prison is not beneficial for the development young children. It is depersonalising and depriving. It makes further worst by the situation that mothers and their children are confined to this area for longer period. The impacts of those are reflected in the mothers' emotional state and then to the children.

It seems that though the children and mothers are separated from other prisoners, the women prisoners have access to children's living area. This will create number of negative effects on children such as expose to their bad behaviour and languages. It will obviously become a threat to the security of the children and especially for their physical development. Further, there may be some psychological effect on children as creating a unusual fear on men due to the children are always interact only with the women prisoners. On the other hand, these children are at a risk of child abuse and sexual harassment by the other prisoners.

The health care facilities provided for the mothers and their children are not fully satisfied. The pregnant mothers have to go outside government hospitals for clinics and baby delivery, but it is also not a regularly happening. Once the baby delivery is done, the provision of care of Midwives for mother and baby will not be available in the prison premises. Further, if someone becomes ill during the night, there is no any medical section to deal with that and they need to call for prison authority for the arrangement to take the patient to outside government hospital.

Further, the immunization vaccines are given to the children of different age categories, but the findings realized that they are not getting it at correct time. In accordance with the findings of children's low weight, shortness and deficiency of vitamins are badly affected to the child development. These indicators show that children face many difficulties during their early childhood development.

LIFE DEVELOPING NEEDS

The children get enough leisure time and their mothers are also not engaging any activity other than their children. The available nursery helps children to enhance their educational measurer. The children's access to freedom and thought and information is very low. They have been provided with one television in the hall, but it will not suffice to fulfil the requirement of the children. Above facts clearly indicate that these children have lesser possibility to expose to the outside society. Hence, this will lead to the risk of negative social and academic outcomes and unusual fear to outside people once they discharge from the prison. Further, they have opportunities to

participate the religious activities inside the prison, but no cultural activities take place. All above factors discussed are directly affected to the social, emotional and cognitive development of a child.

LIFE ENRICHING NEEDS

In this aspect, children are benefitted up to certain extent through the prison nursery education. Though they have been tried to develop in this field, children are always exposed to prisoners and their environment. Hence, it is very difficult to get rid of them from that particular society system.

Ultimately, this may be resulted to the risk of school failure and fall into conduct some criminals once they come out from the prisons.

MOTHER-CHILD INTERACTION AND BOND

Mother-child interaction and bond may not be happened automatically, but it may develop gradually over the time which they live together. In the Sri Lankan prison policy, mothers are allowed to keep their children up to the age of 5 years during their incarceration. It was proved during the sampling survey that the attachment existing between mothers and children is either anxious or ambivalent. Based on the literature review and findings from all the surveys, it is concluded that the best interest for the child is not to incarcerate with his mother.

RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS

It is obvious that a child who stays with his incarcerated mother will not have opportunities to form an attachment with the rest of his family (especially with father), relatives and others in the society. In this regard it can be

concluded that the child who stays with his incarcerated mother is prevented and restricted in his social development. However, it can be concluded as the prison environment is not favourable to the physical, emotional, social and psychological development of a child.