Protecting the Future: Upholding Child Rights in India

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Abstract:

The protection of child rights is crucial for the well-being and development of every child, serving as a legal instrument to safeguard them from exploitation and pitiable plight. However, the implementation of these laws faces challenges due to insufficient human resource capacity and the quality of prevention and rehabilitation services. This paper provides an overview of the current state of child rights in India, emphasizing the need to address the challenges faced by children in conflict with the law and the importance of comprehensive policy and legal frameworks to protect them.

Keywords: India, Child, legal frameworks, resource, challenges

1. Introduction:

Children have the right to freedom, growth, and development, regardless of their background or circumstances. They are not mere puppets, but rather possess inherent rights that must be protected and upheld. These rights include access to nurturing environments, food, shelter, clothing, health needs, and education.

Child rights are entitlements that a person holds by virtue of being a child, and they are vulnerable to exploitation due to their small size and inexperience. To protect them, conditions must be made conducive to their growth and development. Child rights encompass every scheme a child requires, including family care, protection, play, shelter, food, health, and education.

However, many schemes, policies, legislations, and programs aim to care and provide protection to children. However, children are often malnourished, exploited, marginalized, neglected, abused, and trafficked, deprived of their basic right to family care, protection, play, shelter, food, health, and education. The child rights approach presupposes a change in perspective, viewing children as right holders rather than needy. It views children as separate entities and aims to secure the basic conditions for leading a minimally good life. The journey towards achieving child rights involves ensuring children are safe, not discriminated against, have their best interests protected, have the things they need to survive and develop, and have a say in decisions that affect their lives.

The concept of child rights has expanded over the years, with mounting evidence of hardship and abuse suffered by children. Factors such as abandoned families, back-bearing work, petty crime, begging, prostitution, unsafe working conditions, and deprived schooling among children aged 6-11 years highlight the urgent need to save and protect children using rights as a legal instrument against their exploitation and pitiable plight.

All children have the same rights, regardless of their background or circumstances. It is the responsibility of adults to make children aware of their rights and promote awareness about their importance in ensuring

their safety, well-being, and participation in decision-making processes.

The doctrine of human rights is based on the belief in moral universalism, which is accepted universally and is based on natural justice. Aristotle argued that natural laws are valid regardless of government approval, and John Locke believed these laws came from God and were essential for protecting human life and self-preservation. Human rights, including the right to life, liberty, and property, are at the core of protecting human life and helping in self-preservation.

Modern human rights theory, developed by Immanuel Kant, emphasizes equality and moral autonomy of human beings, which are derived from human reason rather than supernatural factors. These ideals became the basis for questioning oppressive regimes and replacing them with political authorities who understood these emancipatory ideas.

The UN Declaration of Human Rights was formalized in 1948 as a result of the worst human holocausts and violations during the world wars. The UNHR, consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, goes beyond natural rights and emphasizes the role of family and community in upholding rights. Violations of human rights are not just state issues but also international concerns.

Throughout history, landmarks such as the Magna Carta (1215) and the American Declaration of Independence have contributed to the evolution of human rights. However, not all people were considered equal, and the world wars saw significant violations of human rights, including slavery and inferior positions for women. The United Nations was formed after the wars to prepare the groundwork for human rights, and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights was drafted soon after. The UNHR, passed in 1948, is a broad declaration of the ideals the world aspires for.

2. Methodologies:

In the context of upholding child rights in India, utilizing secondary data and methodologies is crucial for gaining a comprehensive understanding of the current situation and for formulating effective policies. Secondary data, such as government reports, academic papers, and NGO publications, provide a wealth of information on various aspects of child rights, including education, healthcare, and protection from exploitation. By employing methodologies such as literature reviews, meta-analyses, and comparative studies, researchers and policymakers can analyze this wealth of secondary data to identify trends, gaps, and areas of concern. This approach allows for a holistic assessment of the status of child rights in India, enabling the development of targeted interventions and advocacy efforts to protect and uphold the rights of the nation's children.

3. Right to survival and development:

Paediatrics is crucial for the health and development of children up to the age of 18. Early detection of problems and early treatment can help contain illnesses and address developmental delays. Regular health checkups are essential for gauging development and promoting early interventions. The American Paediatrics Association reports that 97.6% of children under 18 have access to healthcare, but only 76% regularly see a provider for well-child checkups.

Children are more prone to certain illnesses than adults and are more likely to spread them. Access to preventive care is essential for every child. A health history helps providers note changes inconsistent with a child's health history, making accurate diagnoses and determining baseline health. Historical data can also alert providers to abnormalities in blood work or other diagnostic tests. Health tracking and monitoring are essential for a child's health and development.

Every child should have access to focused paediatrics to ensure they enjoy good health throughout their childhood, starting from the earliest stages. A lifetime of good health starts in the earliest stages.

Malnutrition is responsible for 2 out of 3 child deaths below the age of 5, highlighting the underserved children in India who lack basic resources. Millions of children in India lack proper healthcare support, leading to health issues, stunted growth, and even death. India has the largest number of stunted children globally, with 48.2 million. Malnutrition is crucial for children to grow up healthy, especially for those born underweight. In India, malnourishment leads to 69% of deaths among children below the age of 5. CRY NGO has been working tirelessly to improve the living conditions of underprivileged children, ensuring improvements in the health of pregnant mothers, newborns, and children of all ages. They partner with local governments and healthcare workers to gain access to healthcare facilities and enable homegrown kitchen gardens to address nutritional needs. CRY conducts surveys to assess community needs and ensure access to government entitlements like ration cards. In 2020-21, 86% of children in CRY project areas were protected from malnutrition, with a malnutrition prevention rate of 14%, 27% better than the prevailing average in similar areas.

Play is a crucial aspect of child development, as it not only promotes brain development but also fosters creativity and intellectual growth. Studies have shown that children learn through play experiences, which are essential for their growth. Early childhood education can greatly benefit from play, as it stimulates early brain development, improves intelligence, sparks creative thinking, improves communication, vocabulary, and language, promotes impulse control and emotion regulation, grows social competence and empathy, and promotes better physical and mental health.

Child play can stimulate early brain development by providing a better understanding of the world and setting the groundwork for later brain growth. Infants' brains are equipped with an overabundance of brain cell connections (synapses) at birth, which can be built upon through play, sensory play, and play toys. Lack of play can cause neuron connections related to play to be lost, and the cerebral cortex, the area associated with higher cognitive processing, can benefit more from environmental enrichment and children's play.

Early play also plays a significant role in a child's intellectual development. Regularly offering toys to infants to play with leads to higher IQ by age three. Psychologists have found that playing can enhance a child's cognitive, linguistic, and social development. Free play, especially imaginative play, has been linked to significant improvement in divergent thinking.

Play also improves communication, vocabulary, and language skills. Research has shown that children who engage in play with their caregivers are better at regulating their emotions to continue playing, which is essential for academic success and psychosocial aspects of child development. Playful children tend to be happier, better adjusted, more cooperative, and more popular with their peers than those who play less. They also develop more empathy, another essential element that advances social skills.

Play also promotes better physical and mental health. Emotional intelligence is vital for a child's resilience and mental health, and physical activities that involve play also promote gross motor skills, strength, endurance, and physical health.

Play helps children develop problem-solving skills by acting out life's problems in pretend-playing. This allows children to rehearse skills and future social roles, enhancing their abstract thinking abilities. Parents who play with their children form stronger bonds with them, providing positive life experiences that stimulate children's brain development.

Play is essential for a child's development, and play-based preschools may provide a better learning environment than other alternatives. Parents should consider factors such as class conduct, the "play to learn" approach, and the amount of free-play allowed in their preschool. Creating a Montessori home can also be a good alternative to traditional preschools, as happy, playful moments are some of the most precious gifts we can give our children.

4. Right and protection of orphan, abandoned, and runaway children:

India, the second-most populous country, has a significant number of orphaned children due to poverty, hunger, and corruption. In 2007, around 25 million orphaned children were in India, and the Covid-19 pandemic has increased the number. The Indian Constitution allows the state to create policies to provide children with adequate opportunities and resources, protecting them from exploitation and abandonment. However, orphanages typically provide basic necessities like food, shelter, clothing, and education until the age of 14. The state is empowered to create laws to ensure the well-maintained and adequate funding of orphanages to protect the rights of orphaned children.

The Indian constitution guarantees the rights of orphans, including the right to life, health, citizenship, protection from exploitation, and education. Article 21 guarantees the life and liberty of every person, including orphans, who are extremely vulnerable. Health is also included in this right, ensuring good physical and mental health for orphans. Citizenship is granted to every orphan, ensuring their welfare in any country. Articles 23 and 24 protect orphans from trafficking, forced labor, and hazardous employment if they are below the age of fourteen. Education is guaranteed to all children aged six to fourteen, putting the responsibility on the state to ensure basic education for orphans. The Orphanages and Other Charitable Homes (Supervision and Control) Act, 1960, is the most important legislation in India, empowering state governments to monitor and supervise orphanages and child care institutions, creating a Board of Control. The Board of Control is a state-level body responsible for managing orphanages. It comprises three state legislature members, five managing committee members, the social welfare officer, and six members nominated by the state government. The board has the power to issue directions on the functioning and management of these institutions, impact them to ensure compliance, issue certificates for their legality, and revoke them if necessary. If the institutions are shut down, orphans are either relocated to other orphanages or sent to their legal guardians. The board also has the power to refer unjust actions to courts of law and the state government. The board's powers extend to ensuring compliance with rules and managing unsatisfactory management. The board's actions can result in the relocation of orphans to other orphanages or their legal guardians.

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, and the POCSO Act, 2012 are all relevant statutes in India that protect orphans from various forms of abuse. The Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 addresses children in conflict with law and those in need of care, prescribing institutional and non-institutional care through shelter homes, children's homes, foster care, adoption, sponsorships, and after-care organizations.

The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 criminalizes prostitution and trafficking, particularly the keeping of certain premises as brothels and living on the income earned through prostitution. This Act is relevant as it protects orphans from trafficking and prostitution.

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 ensures that every child from six to fourteen receives free education, assigning responsibilities to governments at different levels. The Board

of Control can inspect orphanages and revoke their certificates if they fail to meet this requirement.

The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, protects children below the age of fourteen from hazardous employment, based on Article 39(e). If an orphanage subjects' orphans to any form of labour, a strict penalty will be imposed.

The POCSO Act, 2012, protects children from all forms of sexual abuse, regardless of gender, and prescribes strict punishments for those who subject children to sexual harassment. The Orphan Child (Provision for Social Security) Bill, introduced in 2016, has not yet been passed but contains provisions aimed at securing the welfare of orphan children.

The Bill mandates the central government to conduct annual surveys on orphan children, establish a national policy for their welfare, establish a fund for this purpose, and establish foster care homes, with Section 3 requiring the government to conduct such surveys every ten years.

Foster care, a legal option under Section 42 of the Juvenile Justice Act, is considered more suitable for temporary sheltering orphans in India than orphanages due to its personalized and friendly environment. Adoption laws in India are cumbersome, but they are argued to protect children from exploitation. With the increasing number of orphaned children due to the pandemic, it is recommended to relax the adoption procedure with stringent regulatory checks. Despite decriminalizing homosexual acts, laws regarding marriage and adoption remain hetero-normative, making it impossible for same-sex couples to adopt. Revising discriminatory adoption policies is crucial. Orphanages and other child care institutions should be equipped with counsellors, psychologists, and psychiatrists to monitor children's mental health. Separate comprehensive legislation is needed to protect the rights of orphans and ensure they grow like other children.

Homelessness is a global issue affecting millions, including children. Homeless children face unique challenges and risks, including lack of stability, health risks, educational challenges, and social isolation. They often move frequently, making it difficult for them to form stable relationships and attend school consistently. These children are at a higher risk of physical and mental health problems due to exposure to environmental hazards, poor sanitation, and violence. They are also more likely to suffer from chronic health conditions and lack access to regular medical care.

Educational challenges are also common for homeless children, as they struggle to access resources like clothing, school supplies, and transportation, leading to high absenteeism and lower academic performance. Social isolation is another issue, as homeless children may experience shame and stigma due to their housing situation, leading to a lack of peer support and increased risk of abuse and neglect.

To address homelessness, it is crucial to provide families with access to affordable housing, healthcare, and educational support, involving government and community initiatives and private sector partnerships. Additionally, providing resources and support for parents and caregivers can help create a stable and safe home environment for children.

5. Right to protection from sexual abuse, violence drugs, trafficking:

Preventing child sexual abuse is crucial, and parents can take some steps to ensure their children's safety.

1. Learn about physical and sexual abuse, including the most likely perpetrators and reasons for adult abuse.

2. Listen and talk with your children, creating a safe environment where they feel comfortable sharing information about their fears. Teach them the basics, such as not allowing anyone to touch their body without permission.

3. Teach the five personal safety boundary rules, starting early and setting clear rules for your children. These rules include not looking at private parts of your body, asking you to look at it, touching it, asking you to touch it, and showing pictures of private parts on TV, magazines, computers, or cellphones.

4. Use proper names for private parts, emphasizing that safety rules apply to all adults, not just strangers. Have the child repeat the phrase "My Body Belongs to Me" and emphasize that it is okay to say NO if someone tries to touch their body or do things that make them feel uncomfortable.

5. Tell your children that if someone tries to break boundary rules, it's not their fault. Let them know that you are a safe person they can tell if they try.

6. Know the adults and teens in your children's lives, from teachers, coaches, and youth workers to potential babysitters. Be cautious of any adult who seems more interested in your children than you do.

7. Keep tabs on your children's activities and relationships, making it a family rule that they must notify you before they do something or go somewhere they don't know about. By following these tips, parents can help prevent child sexual abuse and ensure their children's safety.

The World Health Organization has developed a comprehensive prevention framework for addressing violence against children, which includes seven strategies: (1) implementation and enforcement of laws (criminalizing all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation of children, including online); (2) norms and values (changing adherence to restrictive gender and social norms through community mobilization programs); (3) safe environments (reducing violence by addressing 'hotspots' and improving the built environment); (4) parent and caregiver support; (5) income and economic strengthening; (6) response and support services; and (7) education and life skills.

The United Nations Model Strategies (Economic and Social Council Resolution 2014/18) identify different types of prevention strategies: (1) prohibition by law of all forms of violence against children (VAC), (2) development of effective and context-specific violence prevention programs; and (3) challenging the ways in which VAC is condoned or tolerated.

The prohibition of VAC (law reform and criminalization of serious forms of VAC) forms the bedrock of a comprehensive strategy. There must be a sound legal framework that prohibits VAC and empowers authorities to prevent and respond appropriately to incidents of violence. The law must include a clear and comprehensive prohibition, including criminalization, of all forms of violence against children.

Various forms of violence against children are explicitly called for, including engaging in sexual activities with a child using coercion, force or threats, abusing a position of trust, authority, influence over a child, committing sexual violence against a child, selling or trafficking in children for any purpose and in any form, offering, delivering or accepting a child for the purpose of sexual exploitation, transfer of organs of the child for profit, engagement of the child in forced labour, offering, obtaining, procuring or providing a child for child prostitution, producing, distributing, disseminating, importing, exporting, offering, selling or possessing child pornography, slavery or practices similar to slavery, debt bondage and serfdom, forced labour, and committing gender-related violence against a child and, in particular, gender-related killing of girls.

In some instances, the criminalization of the conduct is already required by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) or another convention or protocol to which a State may be a party.

Legislative reform is crucial in addressing harmful practices against children, including traditional justice systems and the use of informal justice systems. Research shows that numerous girls and boys are victims of these practices, including female genital mutilation, forced marriage, breast ironing, and witchcraft

rituals. These practices can be justified by traditional justice systems and must be prohibited by law to protect them from harm and fight impunity.

Norms can condone violent punishment as a necessary part of child-rearing or violence as an acceptable response to conflict. These norms can also affect help seeking for violence, leading to victim blaming and discouragement of disclosure or seeking help. To address this issue, creative approaches must be developed to challenge the social acceptance or tolerance of violence against children. Targeted activities are needed to challenge attitudes that condone or normalize violence against children.

Reviewing and revising all laws, including criminal procedure law, is necessary to remove provisions that justify, allow for, or condone violence against children (VAC). The report of the SRSG on VAC emphasizes the importance of safeguarding human rights standards and ensuring domestic legislation is in full conformity with human rights standards. Legislation should ensure the investigation of incidents and establish accountability of perpetrators of harmful practices against children.

Prevention of VAC must be identified as a crime prevention priority, building on understanding factors that contribute to violence against children and addressing the risks of violence exposure. Criminal justice agencies, working with child protection, social welfare, health and education agencies, and civil society organizations, have an important role in developing effective violence prevention programs. Strengthening the existing child protection and justice system is essential to create a protective environment for children. Collaboration protocols may be necessary to facilitate ongoing interagency cooperation.

National and local governments must lead in developing effective crime prevention initiatives and maintaining an institutional framework for their implementation and review. It is crucial to identify the specific vulnerabilities and risks faced by children in different situations and adopt proactive measures to reduce those risks. Specific prevention measures are necessary to protect children belonging to especially vulnerable groups, such as children working or living on the streets, children with disabilities, children suffering from mental illness, minority groups, unaccompanied children, migrant children, refugees or asylum seekers, indigenous children, children living with HIV/AIDS, substance abuse problems, children engaged in survival behaviours, children of incarcerated parents, or children exposed to violence and harassment due to their sexual identity.

Children should have a voice in the development of prevention strategies, as their voices have become a powerful force in preventing child rights violations. Good practice examples include violence prevention in schools, combating child exploitation through hazardous labour, providing health services and education to street children, and in the juvenile justice system. Children should be consulted in the formulation of legislation and policy related to these and other problem areas.

6. Right to education, play, entertainment, to develop talent and skill:

Ensuring access to quality education for all children involves providing equitable access to education for all children, regardless of their socio-economic background, geographical location, or any other factors. It also includes promoting inclusive education for children with disabilities and those from marginalized communities.

Education is a fundamental human right that drives societal progress, empowering individuals, promoting economic development, and fostering social cohesion. However, access to quality education remains a significant challenge worldwide. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India aims to revolutionize the education system and reduce disparities in student learning outcomes. Education is crucial for personal and community development, equipping individuals with knowledge, skills, and values to lead productive

lives. It breaks the cycle of poverty and reduces societal inequalities. High-quality education leads to higher economic productivity, improved health outcomes, and increased social connection. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes Quality Education (SDG 4) as one of its goals, emphasizing inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities. However, achieving this ambitious objective requires addressing barriers that hinder access to quality education for millions of people worldwide.

Accessing quality education in India is hindered by several factors. Economic disparities, geographical challenges, gender inequality, and conflict and instability are major barriers. Low-income families struggle to afford essential resources like school fees, uniforms, and textbooks, leading to a widening learning gap. Geographical challenges in remote and rural areas make it difficult for children to access schools regularly due to long distances, lack of transportation, and inadequate facilities. Gender disparities persist in education, with cultural norms and traditional gender roles discouraging girls from attending school, perpetuating the cycle of poverty and denying them the chance to reach their full potential. Conflict and political instability further exacerbate these challenges, with disrupted schooling, destruction of educational facilities, and displacement of populations further exacerbating the need for continuous and meaningful education.

Technology can improve student learning outcomes by addressing the shortage of qualified teachers in India's education system, which affects the quality of education. Adequate teacher training and support are crucial for effective classroom instruction. Additionally, technology can help address discrimination and social exclusion faced by marginalized groups, such as ethnic minorities, refugees, and individuals with disabilities, which hinders access to quality education and perpetuates social inequalities.

To bridge the learning gap in accessing quality education, policy, community, and individual efforts are needed. Key strategies include ensuring equitable funding, improving educational infrastructure, promoting gender equality, strengthening teacher training, promoting inclusive education practices, and fostering social inclusion.

The government should allocate sufficient funds to the education sector, particularly for low-income families, to alleviate economic barriers and make education more accessible. Investing in well-equipped schools and proper transportation facilities can also improve students' access to education.

Promoting gender equality in education is essential, including creating a safe and supportive learning environment and providing opportunities for girls to pursue education. Strengthening teacher training and professional development programs can improve the quality of education and address diverse student needs.

Inclusive education practices can ensure equal access to quality education for students from marginalized communities and those with disabilities. Schools and communities must work together to create an inclusive environment for all students.

NEP 2020 introduces several reforms in the education system to reduce the student learning gap, including universalizing early childhood education, offering a multidisciplinary and flexible curriculum, emphasizing vocational education from an early age, and advocating for the adoption of modern teaching methods to enhance student engagement and understanding. These measures aim to provide free and quality early childhood care and education for children aged 3 to 6 years, reducing the learning gap at a later stage.

NEP 2020 promotes innovative teaching methods, including experiential learning, technology integration, and collaborative learning. Experiential learning involves hands-on activities and projects, making

learning more enjoyable and meaningful. Technology integration includes smart classrooms, online platforms, and digital resources, making learning more accessible. Collaborative learning involves group discussions, problem-solving, and collective learning, fostering teamwork, communication skills, and mutual respect. NEP 2020 also emphasizes the importance of student management and monitoring, urging schools to implement robust systems to regularly assess and track student progress. These methods aim to deepen understanding and make learning more enjoyable and meaningful.

Recognizing the value of play and entertainment in fostering creativity, problem-solving skills, and social development. Encouraging children to engage in activities that allow them to explore and develop their talents and skills in a fun and engaging manner.

Overall, these emphasizes the importance of creating an environment where every child has the opportunity to receive a quality education and explore their potential through play, entertainment, and skill development. It also underscores the need for policies and initiatives that support these rights and opportunities for all children.

7. Right to live, to have a home, to have food, health and family:

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines homelessness as an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and resides in supervised public or privately operated shelters. However, the Department of Education's definition is broader, including children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason. This distinction between the two is considered "doubled up," which is not yet reflected in published counts of the homeless.

Estimates of how many people are homeless differ for government departments and advocacy agencies. Most agree that families with children represent the fastest growing segment of the homeless population. In 2010, 35% of all homeless persons were persons in families. The most alarming change in the homeless population has been the dramatic rise in the number of homeless families with children in recent decades. Actual homeless counts vary greatly, with estimates ranging from 900,000 to 1.4 million children experiencing homelessness with their families. The National Center for Homeless Education estimates that 794,600 school-aged children were homeless in 2009. The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth reported a 41% increase over the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 school years, with 956,914 homeless children enrolled that year.

Homeless families with children share characteristics such as being single adults with one or more children, with the average homeless family headed by a woman under 30 who is a member of a minority group. Homeless children tend to be young, with 41% under the age of six. The experience of homelessness varies, with the majority experiencing short-term homelessness (between three weeks and three months) and tending to remain housed afterward. Only 5% of families are "episodically" homeless, having repeated short stays in family shelters.

It is important to keep these variations in mind when evaluating, designing, or advocating for services to address the growing issue of homelessness among families in the United States.

A scoping review of literature on family health promotion interventions found that current challenges include programme design that is not always guided by theory and change mechanisms, and multifaceted programmes that make it difficult to examine what works for whom due to different family roles and lifestyle behaviours. The review identified 200 studies, with ecological systems theory, social cognitive theory, family systems theory, and the theory of planned behaviour being the most widely used

frameworks. Family mechanisms were most frequently studied, involving aspects of family support, supervision, and modelling. Most studies investigated parental influence on the child, while few assessed the elderly family member as a recipient or actor. Studies on African, Asian, and Middle Eastern populations were also in the minority, highlighting the need for further research. Improving understanding of context and behavioural mechanisms for family health promotion will aid in developing public health policy and chronic disease prevention programs, complementing efforts targeted at individuals.

The global rise in non-communicable chronic disease (NCD) prevalence and mortality is a significant concern, especially when combined with ageing populations and shrinking workforces. To prevent NCDs, targeted promotion of healthier lifestyles is essential, as the capacity and sustainability of future healthcare systems may be at risk.

Structural, social, and cultural conditions that support health need to be present for effective health promotion. The family is well placed to influence such conditions, being one of the significant contributors to an individual's health status. Changing values, norms, and behaviour patterns in a social unit like the family may create longer-lasting and larger-scale behavioural change. Family-level processes involve patterns of behaviour within the family with underlying mechanisms, such as family beliefs and support for healthy lifestyles.

Family health promotion has been examined in various fields, giving rise to a heterogeneity of literature that involves terminology, theoretical frameworks, roles of family members involved, and health behaviour examined. From the family system's perspective, theoretical adaptations for family health behaviour influence have been wide-ranging and contextualized for segments with different health priorities.

Children have largely been depicted as passive recipients of health influence, with a small number of recent studies recognizing the child as an agent of change within the family. This may point to the association of health behaviour influence with specific roles within the family structure.

The types of health behaviours that may be influenced by family members are also varied, with a common theme being parental influence on food consumption and physical activity in children. Other themes include the influence by family on specific health behaviours, such as alcohol consumption, sleep, and oral hygiene behaviour, using various mechanisms such as parent-child communication, limit setting, and modelling.

However, there is a lack of comparison and synthesis of theories, mechanisms, and roles of health behaviour influence that would aid the understanding of family health promotion and ultimately, the design and development of family health promotion efforts across health behaviours and different cultures.

8. Child labour:

India has a comprehensive policy and legal framework addressing child protection, but the implementation of these laws is challenging due to inadequate human resource capacity and quality prevention and rehabilitation services. Violence against children occurs in various settings, including home, school, childcare institutions, work, and the community. The country has four main laws: Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, and The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act.

Efforts have been made to establish fast-track courts and deal with cybercrime against children and women. In 2019, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Bill was amended, stipulating stricter punishment for sexual crimes against children. Violence against children is widespread and has lifelong

consequences on children's lives. The nation is becoming increasingly aware of violence against children, especially sexual abuse.

India has made significant progress in eliminating child marriage through numerous policies, laws, and programs. However, one in four Indian girls aged 20-24 were found to have been married before 18 years of age, which remains a potential deterrent to India's achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5 by 2030.

Child labour remains a complex issue in India, with children most often working in agriculture and households, with girls often being invisible. Despite proactive legislative measures and policies, the decline in child labour has been less progressive than expected, with children often working in agriculture and households.

UNICEF in India is working to strengthen child protection systems, end child marriage, protect children on the move, promote family-based alternative care, adolescent participation and engagement, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), and prevent child labor, violence against children, and gender-based violence. The organization also focuses on implementing key child protection legislation and promoting practices that protect children from violence, abuse, and exploitation.

Prevention is central to UNICEF programming, as it is the most effective way to deal with child sexual abuse and exploitation. Ensuring India's children are sufficiently protected requires more than existing investment, which also focuses on post-incident responses. UNICEF India works with the government to provide well-established family-based alternative care options for children without parental care.

UNICEF takes a broad view of support services that provide healing to victims/survivors and their families, including counselling, restorative justice programs, support for school continuation, employment, and social protection. Priority is given to promoting social protection programs that incentivize the reduction of child labour and child marriage.

UNICEF is strengthening and advocating for effective delivery of preventive and responsive child protection services in selected states, working in coordination with the Government of India, 17 state governments, and civil society organizations. They are working to ensure that children are protected from work and exploitation, ensuring they remain in economically stable family homes and have the opportunity to go to school and be educated.

9. Juvenile justice laws in India:

Juvenile justice laws in India are aimed at ensuring fair and just treatment for children within the legal system, recognizing their vulnerability and need for special protection.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, in 2019, there were 45,847 juveniles apprehended under various sections of the Indian Penal Code and Special and Local Laws. This highlights the importance of having robust laws and systems in place to cater to the needs of juvenile offenders.

The focus is on promoting rehabilitation and reintegration for juvenile offenders, recognizing that they are still in the process of development and can be positively influenced to lead productive lives.

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, is a significant legislation in India that aims to address the needs of juvenile offenders and ensure their rights and protection within the legal framework.

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, introduced significant reforms in the juvenile justice system, including the establishment of Juvenile Justice Boards and Child Welfare Committees to ensure the proper care, protection, and rehabilitation of juvenile offenders. This act also

emphasizes the principle of restorative justice, focusing on the best interests of the child and promoting their reintegration into society.

Additionally, the Act mandates the establishment of observation homes and special homes for juveniles in conflict with the law, providing them with a supportive environment for their rehabilitation. These facilities aim to provide education, vocational training, counselling, and other necessary interventions to help them reintegrate into society as responsible and productive individuals.

Furthermore, the Act prohibits the sentencing of juvenile offenders to the death penalty or life imprisonment without the possibility of release. Instead, it emphasizes reformative measures such as counselling, community service, and skill development to address the underlying causes of juvenile delinquency and prevent reoffending.

The implementation of these juvenile justice laws and the focus on reformation and reintegration are crucial steps in ensuring that children in conflict with the law are given a chance to rebuild their lives and contribute positively to society. By providing a supportive and rehabilitative environment, the aim is to break the cycle of crime and create opportunities for juvenile offenders to become law-abiding citizens.

10. Conclusion:

In conclusion, it is evident that the protection of child rights and addressing the issues they face is vital for the well-being and development of every child. Ensuring access to education, healthcare, and a safe environment, as well as protecting them from exploitation, abuse, and neglect, are essential components of upholding their rights. It is imperative for governments, organizations, and communities to work together to create a world where every child is accorded the rights and protection they deserve, enabling them to thrive and reach their full potential.

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