Capítulo 2

BEYOND SURVIVAL: THE MAKING OF PERSONHOOD AMONG ORPHANS IN FOSTER CARE (SOS VILLAGE MULTAN)

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1 Introduction

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) defines a child as anyone under 18 years old, unless national laws state otherwise. Children are essential for sustainable development, and by 2030, they must have the right to thrive, reach their full potential, and live in a sustainable world. Because of this, they should be at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A child's early health, education, and behavior shape not only their schooling but also their future role in society. Their growth depends heavily on the opportunities provided by adults in different social, economic, and educational settings (Global Sustainable Development Report, 2015).

Various researches shows that childhood experiences vary widely across and within countries. While most children grow up in families, many live in institutions like juvenile detention centers or orphanages. Juvenile detention is for children who break laws, while orphanages care for orphan children under 18 who have lost one or both parents. In 2015, an estimated 140 million orphans existed worldwide: 61 million in Asia, 52 million in Africa, 10 million in Latin America/Caribbean, and 7.3 million in Eastern Europe/Central Asia. These numbers include children who lost one parent but still have the other (UNICEF, 2017).

In many Asian countries, orphanages have been a common way to care for orphans over the past decade. While critics argue that these

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institutions fail to meet children's emotional needs and can lead to social and emotional struggles, others see them as a necessary alternative especially when extended families cannot provide proper care. Research suggests that if orphanages mimic a family-like environment, they can better support orphans' well-being (Tahir. A, Ali. S. R, Nawaz. G, & Hussain. F, 2016). Children often end up in orphanages or care centers not just because they lose parents, but mainly due to poverty. While some are placed there by authorities due to abuse, neglect, or family crises (like addiction or war), many enter because struggling families believe the center can offer better care than they can provide. Common reasons include homelessness, illness, disability, or financial hardship after losing one or both parents (Faith to Action Initiative, 2014, p.5)

At the start of the 2000s, over 200 million children worldwide were considered orphans. This includes not just those in orphanages, but also refugee children, child soldiers, street kids, and victims of wars and natural disasters. While improving orphanages is important, the bigger focus has been on finding these children stable homes where they can experience family love and recover from their traumatic pasts (New world encyclopaedia, 2019). Orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) - including those who are homeless or alone - form a major but often overlooked global group. UNICEF estimates 153 million orphans worldwide. The hardest-hit regions are Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia, where HIV/AIDS has left 17.9 million children without one or both parents (Maureen, Tracy, Benjamin, Liliana, Beth, Susanne, and Douglas, 2016).

Rapid developments in organic and behavioural research shows a child's early years are crucial for brain development. During the first few years, the brain forms connections that shape physical, social, mental, and emotional skills at an amazing rate. These early foundations affect all future growth. Creating the right environment early works much better than trying to fix problems later in life (Centre on the Developing child Report, 2007). Children are ultimate assets and the future of a nation. The society should deliver them adequate opportunities for their appropriate physical, psychological, social and moral development as well as character development and education (Abro, 2012).

Street children face serious risks, including exploitation by criminals, exposure to HIV, and involvement in violence. Experts emphasize the need to teach them life skills often through creative methods like art to help them stay safe. During the 2012 global financial

crisis, social protection programs (like cash aid, healthcare, and education) became a lifeline for vulnerable families. UNICEF supported these efforts in 104 countries, with 1 in 3 programs reaching hundreds of thousands of children, including orphans and child-led households (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, 2013). In Pakistan, orphans face deep emotional and psychological struggles, worsened by political instability, economic crises, and natural disasters. Many lose their parents and homes, leaving them without basic needs. Families often can't afford education or healthcare, forcing children to work instead (Ali, 2010).

According to a United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund's report, Pakistan is home to 4.2 million orphaned kids. Though the formation of the wellbeing fund is a well-meant step, the problem of orphans in Pakistan is greatly bigger. The present adoption procedure in Pakistan dismays the taking in of orphans, who are left to the sympathy of the state, or private donations ("Pakistan's Orphans", 2016). SOS Children's Villages provide a family-like home for orphaned and abandoned children. Founded in Austria (1949) by Hermann Gmeiner, the program came to Pakistan in 1977. Today, there are 18 SOS Villages across the country, including in Lahore, Karachi, and Multan (SOS Children's Village Pakistan, 2018).

In simple words personhood refers to the sense of belongingness with some identity or place and acts according to the set boundaries by place is called personhood. Baldwin and Capstick explain that how people recognize and relate to each other roles concerning the acknowledgment or improvement and preservation of personhood. Though, being a real person in the first place is significant and defining what or who is a person comprises in setting limitations. When someone develops his or her relation to those boundaries, will be decided whether she or he is measured as a person or a "non-person" (Baldwin and Capstick, 2007). This definition is clearing personhood, that for being a proper citizen, the person has to follow the values and morals of society and this act of following the values makes him or her person according to society and this custom develops personhood among people of society.

2 Review of Literature

When parents die, most orphans are taken in by relatives - but often moved between homes. With each move, the risk of abuse or neglect grows. These children rarely get to choose where they live. Losing parents

and being separated from siblings leaves them feeling scared and insecure, making it harder to adjust to new surroundings (Datta, 2010). This is very common situation, which have to face many orphans due to unfriendly environment and careless relatives. Unfortunately many children have to spend their childhood as slave in the house of their own relatives.

Losing parents hurts children deeply, but they often don't fully understand death like adults do. This makes it harder for them to grieve properly. Without healing, they grow up carrying unresolved pain that often turns into anger and sadness. While adults also suffer grief, they have more life experience and emotional tools to cope (Boavida, Aguiar, & McWilliam, 1986). Behrendt and Mbaye (2008) found that communities often support orphans well, though adoptive families may lack full resources. Their study showed orphans, single-parent, and two-parent children have similar emotional resilience. While parental loss affects kids, it's just one risk among many with domestic violence being especially harmful. The authors recommend comprehensive (not just orphan-specific) support programs for all vulnerable children.

Luckily some orphans get chance to spend good life with their relatives, but many of these relatives are living with deficiency of resource. So they require some public assistance to provide orphans satisfactory food, education, health care, psychosocial support and clothing. The requirement for public support differs by country conditional on the quantity of orphans, the socioeconomic situations and native decisions about the sort of provision to deliver and the batter way to make available this support (Stover, Bollinger, Walker, & Monasch, 2006). Every child require basic needs to spend healthy life and this is responsibility of state and public to provide these facilities to every children.

Children enter orphanages through various means some are brought by family members or neighbors who can no longer care for them, while others are abandoned at hospitals or religious sites and later placed in these facilities. NGOs and orphanage staff also identify children who lack proper care. Government regulations require orphanages to maintain decent living conditions, including a minimum 2,000 square meter space with proper sanitation, clean water, safety measures, and outdoor areas for recreation and gardening. The rules also emphasize children's well-being by ensuring they have freedom of movement within and outside the facility, opportunities for educational outings, input in personalizing their living spaces, daily outdoor exercise, and quiet study areas. These standards aim to create a nurturing environment that supports both physical and

emotional development (Carpenter, 2014, p. 128). These are the basic standards of any residential care centre, which should be follow or regulate by every institution to insure the batter life style of their residents.

Orphans need specialized counselling and support services, requiring trained professionals like school social workers or child psychologists at the community level. These experts can provide early intervention to prevent depression and address psychosocial issues through proper therapy. In the long term, governments should collaborate with education departments to deploy teams of youth psychologists and social workers in schools, ensuring consistent mental health support for vulnerable children (Sengendo, & Nambi, 1997, p.121). Jack said that, years of research in child growth have showed us that families and societies perform the vital role and pay most of the cost of providing the helpful relations and optimistic learning involvements that children requisite for healthy growth. The setting of associations in which an early or young kid develops entails care to a range from development, receptive caregiving to negligent or rude interactions. This comprises both domestic and non-family associates as significant cause of constant and growth improving relationships further serious barriers against major pressures to healthy growth (Jack, 2010).

Research shows orphans in care centers often have lower self-esteem than children raised by parents. A 2017 study by Angeline tested self-esteem training in orphanages using pre- and post-tests, finding significant improvement in orphans' confidence and coping skills after the program. Regular self-esteem training could effectively boost orphans' emotional resilience in institutional care (Angeline, 2017). Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943) helps explain what orphaned children in developing countries require to thrive. Beyond basic survival needs like food and shelter, children need emotional support and security to develop properly. In regions heavily affected by orphan crises like Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa families and caregivers should focus first on meeting these fundamental needs. Doing so creates a foundation for children's psychosocial well-being and personal growth (Huynh, 2017).

Sethi and Asghar (2015) find in their study that orphan and non-orphan teenagers were frequently studying in similar school where educators look after the both groups correspondingly. The school setting, teacher's collaboration with school student, and design of activities like: Milad events, speech competitions, national days etc., in which children take part, are expected to help in improving the self-esteem of entirely school going kids and perform as a cultivation factor to grow confidence

in students. Self-esteem was possibly not affected also since there was no variance in the societal and financial status of both orphan children and non-orphan children (Sethi, & Asghar, 2015, p. 180).

An anthropological study of Wari society (Native Amazonian/North American) reveals that children develop personhood through growing social independence. In early life, family bonds form through shared living, food, and physical contact. As children engage with institutions like orphanages or care centers, they gradually develop individual identity through new relationships. This social and physical maturation culminates in adolescence, when teens achieve full personhood through complete bodily and social autonomy (Conklin, & Morgan, 1996). Orphanages should maintain low child-to-adult ratios to ensure personalized care, either by hiring more caregivers or increasing staff interaction with children. Research shows a child's language development and skills grow when exposed to diverse experiences. Therefore, orphanages must provide varied learning opportunities and regular outings beyond the facility to stimulate cognitive and social growth (Moore, 1947, p. 131).

Thwala's study found that orphans often struggle with grief, anger, depression, and loneliness. These children need both immediate and long-term emotional support from caring adults to develop healthy coping skills and self-esteem. While meeting physical needs is essential, psychological care is equally vital to help them heal and grow into confident, contributing members of society (Thwala, 2013). Jadoon said that education is a main tool of socialization. In simple cultures primary socialization is nearly exclusive and the learning activates of kids in suitable style or skill and behaviour is requisite by the whole society members. Secondary socialization is the groundwork of preparing offspring for specific characters in society. And it will be mostly limited to those cultures whose density allows their associates to choose a much better range of interests and to concentrate in the growth of precise capacities (Jadoon, 2012).

When a person makes efforts to know that 'who I am', then growth takes place. The question 'Who I am'? Leads one to personal obligation. 'Who I am' is rationally and socially conceptualized in personhood. By knowing the answer to this question humans know his or her responsibility in society. And the sense of responsibility leads the person to the steps of personhood. I am because we are, and I am because my community is here. The feelings of belongingness with society or community provoke the person to live according to the set patterns of society. And this type

of individual defines as a person according to the community (Menkiti, 1984).

3 Methodology

This qualitative anthropological study employed immersive fieldwork methods to investigate life within an SOS Children's Village in Pakistan. The researcher established rapport by communicating in local languages (Urdu, Punjabi, Saraiki) and participating in daily orphanage activities, including educational sessions and recreational programs. Primary data collection involved three key approaches: participant observation of resident behaviors and institutional dynamics, in-depth interviews with 36 current residents, 3 staff members, and 2 alumni, and focus group discussions with adolescent boys and girls. The study utilized purposive sampling to select knowledgeable informants, including two staff members and one resident employee who provided insider perspectives. Methodological rigor was maintained through multiple verification techniques detailed field notes, audio recordings of interviews, photographic documentation, and triangulation of data sources. This comprehensive approach allowed for nuanced understanding of how institutional care shapes orphans' development and personhood formation within this cultural context.

3.1 Research Results

3.2 Personhood and SOS Children

In light of Anthropology, we can also found the purpose of observing the construction of personhood among SOS children. Personhood is a logical phrase used by anthropologists to specify who, within a specific culture, is deliberated to be either a completely operational and acknowledged associate of adult or mature society, or, in the situation of kids, who is measured to being on the mode to being an entirely operative and recognized affiliate of adult culture. The researcher observed that personhood consequently involves the fulfilment of psychological, physiological, and social ability as it is defined by a given culture of SOS village. Personhood is a lifetime process and the attainment of different levels of personhood is noticeable throughout the life phases by rites of passage, rituals, and by other socially acknowledged markers.

The acquisition of personhood is frequently echoed in a given culture's named stages of development, in a given culture's principles, surrounding weaknesses, and in the ranks that hold by the different associates of culture. Childhood is the first stage of attaining personhood, and the construction of personhood among children allows the children to gain the next stage of personhood accordingly. Which was observed by the researcher in different age groups of SOS children. Attainment of personhood offers status to the person in society and each different stage of status that an individual acquires throughout the life cycle is typically complemented by different responsibilities, roles, duties, and responsibilities all of which play their role in the attainment of personhood.

SOS village is striving hard for providing an ideal environment and facilities to the children to make them full of self-esteem and confidence. As well as working on the character-building of children, which helps to make the batter and responsible citizens. By giving them knowledge of norms and values, ethics and roles of citizens. And this character building also develops personhood among children of SOS village. The researcher has observed some aspects at SOS village Multan, which are contributing towards the construction of personhood among children of SOS village. Which are the following:

3.3 Role of Capacity Building Training toward Personhood

The capacity building training programs implemented at SOS Village Multan emerged as a fundamental component in the gradual construction of personhood among resident children. These structured training sessions, which included leadership workshops, vocational skill development, and personality grooming courses, provided children with essential tools for self-development and future preparedness. During focus group discussions, a clear distinction was observable between children who had participated extensively in these programs and those who had limited exposure. The trained children demonstrated markedly higher levels of confidence in expressing their opinions, exhibited greater clarity regarding their future aspirations, and showed more sophisticated communication skills during interactions. One particularly articulate 16-year-old participant explained, "The public speaking training helped me overcome my fear of sharing ideas in school debates." However, the researcher noted significant variation in how different children internalized and applied these lessons. Some participants displayed remarkable transformation in

their self-presentation and goal orientation, while others showed more modest improvements. The staff attributed these differences to several factors including the child's age at admission, previous educational background, and individual psychological resilience. Importantly, the village administration had implemented a capacity assessment system to evaluate each child's specific needs before assigning them to appropriate training modules. This personalized approach aligns with Dannefer's (1989) conceptualization of human development as an interactive process between structural constraints and individual agency. The training programs not only imparted practical skills but also instilled a sense of social responsibility, with many children beginning to articulate how they could contribute to their communities a crucial marker of developing personhood in the anthropological sense.

3.4 Role of Edkasa Online Sessions in Personhood Development

The Edkasa online education platform served as a critical medium for fostering self-awareness and identity formation among SOS Village children. These weekly interactive sessions, which combined career guidance with personal development content, provided children with valuable opportunities for self-reflection and future planning. The researcher observed palpable excitement among participants when discussing these sessions during interviews, with many children eagerly describing how the program helped them understand their strengths and interests. One 14-year-old girl shared, "Through the personality tests in Edkasa, I discovered I'm good at counseling others and now I want to become a psychologist." The sessions effectively bridged the gap between the children's current institutional life and their anticipated roles in broader society. Of particular anthropological significance was how the program facilitated what Appell-Warren (2014) identifies as "social personhood" - the recognition of oneself as an actor within interconnected social networks. Children began articulating not just personal ambitions but also how these aspirations connected to family (both biological and SOS), community, and national contexts. The online format also introduced children to digital literacy skills, preparing them for contemporary professional environments. Staff members reported noticeable improvements in participants' abilities to articulate their thoughts, set realistic goals, and understand social expectations. These outcomes resonate with Ardelt and Grunwald's (2018) findings on the importance of self-awareness in achieving emotional and

social well-being. The Edkasa program thus functioned as a modern rite of passage, guiding children through crucial developmental transitions toward full personhood.

3.5 Role of Institutional Settings in Constructing Personhood

The physical and social architecture of SOS Village Multan created an environment uniquely conducive to personhood development among its resident children. The village's design, featuring 14 family-style homes arranged in a campus-like setting with shared facilities, deliberately mimicked natural community structures. Each home, housing 8-10 children of varying ages under the care of a trained "mother," established what anthropologists would recognize as a "socialization niche" - a protected space for gradual personhood acquisition. The researcher documented numerous instances where this environment fostered a profound sense of belonging and identity. During home visits, children consistently referred to their living units as "my house" and to housemates as "my brothers and sisters," indicating successful internalization of the family model. This fictive kinship structure proved particularly effective in mitigating what child development experts term "institutional identity" - the depersonalizing effect of traditional orphanage care. The physical spaces themselves, including well-maintained bedrooms, study areas, and shared living rooms, provided material scaffolding for personhood development. Children took visible pride in maintaining their living spaces, with older residents often assuming leadership roles in household management. The village director noted, "We see children develop a sense of ownership and responsibility through caring for their home environment." However, the researcher also identified challenges, particularly regarding gender dynamics and the absence of male role models in daily living situations. To address this, the village had implemented a youth home for adolescent boys and organized regular mentoring sessions with male staff and volunteers. These observations support the anthropological premise that personhood emerges through participation in culturally meaningful spatial and social arrangements, while also highlighting the need for gender-sensitive approaches in institutional care.

3.6 Sense of Kinship and Social Bonds

The carefully cultivated kinship system at SOS Village Multan emerged as one of the most powerful mechanisms for personhood development among resident children. Anthropological observations revealed that the village's family model went beyond superficial labeling to create deep emotional bonds that closely resembled biological family relationships. Children who had lived in the village since early childhood often reported having no memory of life before SOS, referring to their housemates and SOS mothers as their only family. The researcher documented multiple cases where older children naturally assumed sibling-like protective roles toward younger ones, mirroring traditional family dynamics in Pakistani culture. During meal times and recreational activities, these kinship bonds manifested through shared jokes, affectionate teasing, and mutual care - all hallmarks of what anthropologists recognize as kinship in action. The village's policy of keeping biological siblings together further strengthened this system, allowing children to maintain crucial biological ties while expanding their relational world. One 17-year-old resident explained, "My SOS brothers are as real to me as my blood brother - we've shared everything since I was six." This successful creation of enduring relational ties stands in stark contrast to Harwin's (1995) findings about the relational poverty often found in institutional care settings. The village's approach aligns with contemporary anthropological understanding that personhood is fundamentally relational, developing through sustained, meaningful interactions with caring others. Staff members reported that these bonds continued even after children left the village, with many former residents returning for visits and maintaining contact with their SOS families, suggesting the creation of lifelong personhood-sustaining relationships.

3.7 Role of Recreational Activities in Enhancing Personhood

The comprehensive recreational program at SOS Village Multan served as a vital arena for personhood expression and development. The village offered a diverse range of activities including team sports, arts and crafts, cultural performances, and educational field trips, each contributing uniquely to children's psychosocial growth. Through participant observation, the researcher documented how these activities provided crucial opportunities for identity experimentation, skill demonstration,

and social positioning - all key processes in personhood construction. Sports competitions, particularly cricket and football matches, became platforms where children could showcase leadership, teamwork, and perseverance, with outstanding performers gaining recognition and status among peers. Artistic activities like drama and painting allowed for emotional expression, with staff noting that shy children often found their voice through these mediums. The annual cultural festival emerged as a particularly significant event where children proudly displayed traditional clothing, music, and dances, reinforcing their cultural identity and belonging. One 12-year-old participant described how winning a painting competition "made me feel like a real artist for the first time." These recreational experiences align with Sonstroem's (1998) findings about the psychological benefits of physical activities, while also supporting the anthropological view that personhood develops through public performance and recognition. The village's investment in quality equipment, trained coaches, and regular scheduling demonstrated an institutional understanding of recreation as fundamental rather than supplementary to child development. Older children reported that participation in these activities helped them develop confidence to interact in mainstream society, addressing what Goffman might term the "stigma management" challenges faced by institutionalized youth. The program's success was evident in the enthusiastic participation rates and the visible pride children took in their recreational achievements.

3.8 Moral Education and Its Impact on Personhood

The moral education curriculum at SOS Village Multan represented a deliberate and systematic approach to instilling the values necessary for full personhood attainment in Pakistani society. Drawing on both Islamic principles and universal human values, the program emphasized respect, responsibility, honesty, and community service through daily practice rather than abstract lessons. The researcher observed how moral learning was embedded in routine activities - from the mandatory use of the respectful "Aap" instead of the informal "Tu" in speech, to participation in communal chores, to organized visits to elderly care centers. These practices reflected Gyekye's (1992) conceptualization of personhood as an earned status through moral behavior. Staff members served as constant role models, with one mother explaining, "We don't just tell them to be good - we show them how good people live." The village's emphasis on gratitude and reciprocity was evident in children's narratives, with many expressing

desires to "give back" to SOS after becoming independent. This moral framework proved particularly effective in helping children process their orphan status without shame or stigma, reframing their identity around resilience and future potential rather than victimhood. The researcher documented cases where older children spontaneously mentored younger ones, demonstrating internalization of the village's core values. Religious education, while respecting individual backgrounds, provided a spiritual dimension to personhood development, with many children finding comfort and guidance in Islamic teachings about compassion and social responsibility. The success of this moral pedagogy was evident in alumni stories, with many former residents establishing businesses, pursuing higher education, and forming stable families - all markers of successful personhood attainment in local cultural terms. This holistic approach to moral education suggests that institutional care, when properly designed, can effectively transmit the cultural knowledge necessary for full social integration.

3.9 Interaction Dynamics and Personhood Construction

The quality and patterns of daily interactions at SOS Village Multan emerged as perhaps the most significant factor in personhood development. This research documented a remarkably respectful and nurturing interactional environment that contrasted sharply with stereotypes of institutional care. Children addressed staff with formal titles and respectful language, while staff members reciprocated with patient guidance rather than authoritarian discipline. This created what anthropologists might term a "dignity-preserving" social ecology crucial for healthy personhood development. Peer interactions followed similar patterns, with older children often mediating conflicts among younger ones in ways that mirrored traditional extended family dynamics. The village's open-door policy for children to discuss problems with any trusted adult created multiple pathways for emotional support and guidance. Mealtimes, study hours, and leisure periods all served as interaction-rich contexts where personhood was continuously negotiated and affirmed. The researcher noted how these positive interaction patterns helped mitigate the risks of social isolation and emotional deprivation common in institutional settings. Particularly impressive was how children transferred these interactional skills to outside contexts, with school teachers reporting that SOS children often stood out for their politeness

and social awareness. These findings support MacIntyre's (1999) emphasis on compassionate relationships as the foundation for moral personhood, while also demonstrating that such relational qualities can be successfully cultivated in residential care environments. The village's success in this regard suggests that interactional culture - more than physical resources or program offerings may be the most critical factor in facilitating personhood development among institutionalized children.

4 Conclusion

This anthropological study demonstrates that SOS Village Multan serves as an effective institutional framework for cultivating personhood among orphaned and vulnerable children through culturally embedded practices. The findings reveal that personhood emerges not as an automatic biological development, but as a carefully structured psychosocial process mediated through five key mechanisms: (1) capacity-building programs that foster self-efficacy and future orientation; (2) digital education platforms that facilitate identity formation; (3) a family-model residential system that creates durable kinship bonds; (4) recreational activities that provide avenues for self-expression and social recognition; and (5) moral education that aligns personal development with communal values.

These findings challenge conventional binaries that pit institutional care against family environments, suggesting instead that thoughtfully designed residential systems can successfully replicate the personhood-nurturing functions of traditional families. The study contributes to anthropological theories of personhood by demonstrating its deliberate construction through institutional practices, while offering practical insights for child welfare policies in similar cultural contexts. Future research should explore longitudinal outcomes to assess how SOS-educated individuals maintain their personhood status in adult social and professional roles.

Ultimately, the SOS model presents a replicable blueprint for personhood development in institutional settings, proving that with adequate emotional, educational and moral support, children without biological families can still achieve full social personhood as defined by their cultural milieu. This has significant implications for reimagining orphan care systems in developing nations, moving beyond basic needs provision to holistic personhood cultivation.

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