

The Role of Child-Care Organizations in Confronting Children's Issues: An International Perspective

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ABSTRACT: Because children constitute a major, essential component of any society, different types of organizations have systematically designed policies and developed programs to cater to their needs, making these efforts a strategic national objective. This paper uses interviews and a survey to collect relevant data from 108 representatives of various organizations. The study aims to identify the challenges facing these organizations and to measure the efficiency of their child-care services, management systems, voluntary work, and professional expertise. The study results reveal that the overall efficiency level of child-care services varies from 20 to 30% for certain age categories of children. This paper recommends the following: the creation of additional child-care organizations; the expansion of related activities; an increase in voluntary work in this area; and the diversification of resources devoted to this cause.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Due to the paramount importance of children to the overall development of a nation, constitutions and legislations in certain countries declare the well-being of children a national obligation and prohibit their maltreatment, abuse and/or negligence vis-à-vis their welfare. Providing children with a decent education and a caring environment requires the following: a) planning specialized programs related to motherhood and child-care, b) examining and benefiting from other nations' experiences in this domain, and c) expanding the range of dedicated child-care organizations in both the public and private sectors (Alkhateeb a, 2005).

Confronted with mounting pressure on matters pertaining to motherhood and child-care, many countries have failed to effectively manage related problems due to the complexities and difficulties posed by social, political and economic life. This failure has triggered crucial complications, necessitating the canalization and intensification of child-care activities to allow child-care organizations to achieve their goals. Toward that end, some nations have considered founding specialized unions to address existing and potential challenges. Driven by their commitment to human rights, other nations have considered creating dedicated unions and organizations to face different types of growing challenges. This phenomenon has resulted in the emergence of a "goal-oriented system" that allows each body to address a specific type of difficulty. New managerial systems have also been adopted during the process of creating such bodies, with funds and staff provided by international support (Alkhateeb a, 2005).

II. OBJECTIVES

This study was designed to reach the following objectives:

- 1- To identify the current status of the services provided by child-care organizations (regional and international ones) and the extent to which these organizations diverge in the types of services they deliver.
- 2- To identify the difficulties that national, regional and international organizations face in planning, implementing and reaching objectives related to child-care programs.
- 3- To recommend solutions that may contribute to the development of child-care organizations at the national, regional, and international levels.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Regardless of their origins and/or status, child-care organizations have offered activities and programs that have visibly contributed to the improvement of children's well-being in various domains, including the following: homeless children and child victims of war; children with special needs; children's social environment; healthcare; the early diagnosis and treatment of diseases; the root cause of health problems; behavioral, psychological and social difficulties; and physical handicaps. To provide effective health care for children, programs also include seminars, documentary screenings, efforts to increase knowledge about vaccination procedures, and the distribution of brochures to raise public awareness of core health issues. In addition, nutrition education has been a major focus of programs dedicated to addressing childhood and

motherhood hardships. There is a strong correlation between malnutrition and contagious diseases in addition to the negative impact that malnutrition has on children's learning experience; their mental, physical, and psychological growth; their height and weight; the death ratio and children's general immune system development (Alkhateeb, 1995).

Providing children with educational programs that effectively support their cognitive growth, maturity and capacity to manage life is among the core issues related to children's development. The many scholars in the field who have helped to generate theories and/or implement developmental strategies include Montessori, Freud, Russell, Neil, Buhler, Piaget, John Dewey, Bloom and others. Montessori argued that children have abundant energy, enthusiasm and imagination at the pre-school stage and that it is the duty of the school and home to provide children with the skills and experiences necessary for them to build their knowledge and personalities. According to Montessori, during the so-called sensitive period (approximately the first 5 years of life), it is very easy for children to acquire certain abilities, such as language, the ability to identify sensory stimuli, and the mental modeling of their environment. Once the sensitive period for a particular ability has passed, however, the development of the brain has progressed past the point at which information is simply absorbed, (Nanette, 1972). Bloom believes that there is a strong correlation between adolescent students' IQ results and their early childhood experiences (Edward, 1972). Therefore, many scholars in psychology, sociology and education firmly believe that the different aspects of childhood must be well understood for a nation to succeed and progress. Such understanding should include, but not be limited to, knowledge of children's recreational, cultural and biological needs (Alkhateeb, 1995).

In addition, divine law also emphasizes the value of taking the utmost care of children's education. Indeed, it calls on individuals to choose pious partners who will be able and willing to cater to their children's needs, finance their education and demonstrate mutual respect and love, thereby providing a model that is likely to impact children's well-being, character and other traits, including their social, ethical, physical, cognitive, sexual and religious values (Lioys, 1974).

The works of Ghanem(1976), Abdelhameed(1967), Alamry(1968), Mazahem(1976), Aldakak(1988), Shukry(1973), and Aldahyan(1991) highlight the considerable number of technical and administrative difficulties faced by child-care organization. Meanwhile, Sarhan(1967) has highlighted international organizations' skill at managing natural disasters and issues in which human factors are involved.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This paper relies on descriptive and comparative analysis, the systematic description of facts, the identification of the nature of related content, and the collection of data on national, regional and international childhood organizations to achieve the following: 1) to identify current and potential difficulties in this area, 2) to define their current status, 3) to report conclusions, 4) to recommend solutions, and 5) to support, promote and develop associated activities that will maximize welfare (Fadlalla, 2006).

Research Questions

- 1- Across national, regional and international organizations, how do employees perceive child-care services within their own organizational structures?
- 2- In the planning and/or implementation of childhood developmental projects, what are the challenges facing regional and international organizations as perceived by the employees of these organizations?
- 3- What recommendations that may resolve core problems in this area and help childhood organizations to expand their effectiveness?

Setting and Population Samples

Senior managers at national, regional, and international organizations were chosen from different parts of the world. The organizations were selected based on their degree of dedication to child-care services as evaluated by accredited references. Highly dedicated organizations were selected.

The study sample included administrative staff, managers, supervisors and secretary generals of organizations that are highly devoted to issues related to child development. A total of 108 national, regional and international organizations were selected.

Table 1. Study Sample: Organizations' classification by level, field and ownership

Type of organization	Ownership of child-care organization	Non-Specialized		Specialized		Total		Grand Total	
		Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
International	Governmental								
	Non-governmental	2.70	4	10.85	2	6	5.46	30	37.78
Regional	Governmental	8.23	9	13.89	15	24	22.22		
	Non-governmental	3.70	4	3.78	3	7	6.48		
National	Governmental	5.56	6	4.63	5	11	10.19	60	55.56
	Non-governmental	8.33	9	3.70	4	13	12.04		
Total	Governmental	17.59	19	25.93	28	47	43.52	108	100.00
	Non-governmental	15.74	17	8.23	9	26	24.07		
	Total		31.48	24	44.44	48	82	75.93	
Total		47.22	51	52.78	47	108	100.00	108	100.00

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The researcher used a survey that was designed to advance the goals of the field study. In addition, the researcher used interviews that included a list of open questions posed to 20 top-ranking individuals working for those organizations.

To determine the validity and reliability of the survey, the researcher presented the survey to several experts and researchers, who confirmed the survey's validity and reliability. The researcher distributed the survey on two different occasions, using the same population sample to calculate the coefficient correlation of the two surveys and assess the instrumentation's reliability. Table 2 shows Alpha coefficient (n=18) for each domain in the survey.

Table 2.

Domains	Alpha
1. Services	.57
2. Financing	.62
3. Difficulties	.70
4. Communication	.67
5. Needs	.57
6. Cultural and learning difficulties	.52
7. Social difficulties	.79
8. Health difficulties	.90
9. Development	.79
The entire survey	.86

Data Processing and Analysis

The methods of data analysis and processing used are compatible with the implemented research methodology and the study objectives. Using SPSS, frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, variation analysis and T-test results were determined.

Interpretation and Comparison of Results

In line with the study objectives, questions and theoretical framework, statistical values were calculated based on a) fixing the mean of the samples' responses/opinions towards each domain of the survey, and b) calculating T- and F-values. Table 3 presents the classification of the staff's responses by their organization's specialization within child-care services.

Table 3. Staff's responses regarding the sufficiency of child-care services.

International organizations									
Item number	Attitude	Specializing in childhood affairs				Not specializing in childhood affairs			
		Governmental		Nongovernmental		Governmental		Nongovernmental	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
16	Agree	2	100	14	93.2	2	50	7	77.8
	Disagree	-	-	1	6.7	2	50	2	22.2
17	Agree	1	50	2	12.2	1	25	1	11.1
	Disagree	1	50	12	86.7	3	75	8	88.9
18	Agree	1	50	11	73.3	3	75	6	66.7
	Disagree	1	50	4	26.7	1	25	3	33.3
19	Agree	-	-	2	20	2	50	-	-
	Disagree	2	100	12	80	2	50	9	100
Mean		1	50	8	53.3	2	50	3	33.3
		1	50	7	46.7	2	50	6	66.7

Table 4 reveals that the organizations are equally divided in their opinions regarding the sufficiency of resources dedicated to child-care services. Depending on the type of organization, the share of staff indicating their satisfaction with the level of resources may be greater than the share indicating their dissatisfaction. However, there are more votes indicating dissatisfaction than votes indicating satisfaction in the last quarter. Overall, international governmental organizations (whether specialized and/or non-specialized) are equally divided with regard to their satisfaction with the level of child-care services. However, the staff of non-governmental organizations differ in their views depending on their specialization. Whereas 66.7% of the non-specialized organizations do not agree that their child-care services are adequate, 53.3% of the specialized ones believe that their services are adequate. These results are compatible with Alkhateeb's 1995 findings.

This table highlights the visible divergence at the regional level between specialized and non-specialized non-governmental organizations. A total of 66.7% of the specialized organizations approved of the current level of child-care resources and associated services. However, 75% of non-specialized organizations indicated their disapproval of the current level of resources and services.

On a national level, specialized organizations (whether governmental or non-governmental) are equally divided in terms of their responses regarding the sufficiency of current child-care services. Within the category of non-specialized organizations, there is a difference between governmental and non-governmental

organizations: whereas 55.6% of the governmental organizations were dissatisfied with the level of child-care services, 52.6% of the non-governmental ones agreed that the level of child-care services was sufficient. In other words, half of the local organizations consider child-care services to be core activities within their programs, but the other half view them as merely one component of their activities, although this attitude does not necessarily indicate a lack of interest in such activities.

Calculating the T-value of the differences among international governmental organizations revealed no statistically significant differences. This finding reveals a similarity between the views of international and governmental organizations regarding the sufficiency of child-care services. On the regional level, a T-test revealed no statistically significant differences between governmental and non-governmental organizations, indicating that these organizations have similar opinions regarding the sufficiency of child-care services.

These similarities may be interpreted as indicating things organizations' strong belief in the importance of integrating child-care services into their programs. Nevertheless, certain difficulties may impede the prompt and simultaneous implementation of such programs alongside these organizations' core projects. These establishments thus constantly seek to improve their child-care services.

Addressing the challenges facing these organizations, Table 4 presents the responses of representatives working for national, regional and international organizations regarding the sufficiency of child-care services.

Table 4. Responses of representatives working for national, regional, and international organizations regarding the sufficiency of child-care services

	Specializing in childhood affairs				Not specializing in child-care affairs			
	Governmental		Non-Governmental		Governmental		Non-Governmental	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Representatives of international organizations	1.3	65.0	7	46.7	3	75.0	4	44.4
Average	.7	25.0	8	53.3	1	25.0	5	55.6
Representatives of regional organizations	1	33.3	2	40.0	2	50.0	3	50.0
Average	2	66.7	3	60.0	2	50.0	3	50.0
Representatives of local organizations	1	25.0	15	53.6	4	44.4	11	57.9
Average	3	75.0	13	46.4	5	55.6	8	42.1

Table 4 reveals that one third of all organizations have the same perception of the challenges that affect their efforts to improve children's well-being. However, six branches of these establishments disagree with the majority. In fact, the responses of international organizations vary depending on their type: governmental vs. non-governmental. A total of 65% of governmental organizations specializing in child care and 75% of those that do not specialize reported facing difficulties. However, of the non-governmental organizations in the sample, 53.3% of specialized organizations and 55.6% of non-specialized ones disagreed with the statement that there are challenges that hinder their work supporting children's well-being. These results are compatible with the conclusions presented by Alkhatteba (2005).

With regard to specialized organizations operating at the regional level, we should note that substantially more of these organizations disagree with the statement that they are hampered by these types of difficulties. A total of 66.7% and 60% of governmental and non-governmental institutions, respectively, report not encountering these difficulties. However, non-specialized organizations (whether governmental or not) are equally divided in their views regarding the presence of difficulties.

Calculating the T-values of the differences among international organizations (governmental and non-governmental) revealed significant differences at the 5% level: (T-value = 2.40). This finding indicates disagreement and divergence between governmental and non-governmental international organizations in views regarding the challenges (or lack thereof) in this area. For organizations operating at the regional level (governmental and non-governmental), no statistically significant values were found. However, there were

differences between national organizations (governmental and non-governmental) at the 1% level (T-value = 2.63). This finding indicates that unlike national organizations, regional ones differ in their views of the challenges associated with providing child-care services. The findings regarding differences based on the ownership of the organizations confirm the results mentioned above.

V. INTERVIEW RESULTS

The interviews conducted with 20 representatives of child-care organizations (international, regional and national) reveal the following:

1. An insufficient focus on and insufficient efforts related to early childhood services: only 20 to 30% of organizations reported sufficiency, unlike in the other categories.
2. No clear legal responsibilities regarding child-care services.
3. Various factors that negatively impact the efficiency of benevolent and voluntary child-care work.
4. A lack of efficiency in the performance of child-care organizations, including the following types of inefficiency:
 - a. A low managerial and technical capacity among most individuals working for child-care organizations
 - b. Difficult work environments at child-care organizations
 - c. Low salaries for employees working for child-care organizations
 - d. Insufficient financial support and resources
 - e. Insufficient efforts to invest money in support of related programs
 - f. The absence of a working model that is compatible with employees' perceptions of the issues related to child-care.
 - g. A lack of training programs for employees in these organizations
 - h. A lack of experts and high-caliber workforce in these organizations
 - i. Difficulties related to managing and supervising related work
 - j. Difficulties related to the volunteers themselves, such as personal conflicts
 - k. Difficulties related to the nature of the work and its compatibility with employees (e.g., volunteers who are totally dedicated to the child-care cause vs. paid employees, field staff vs. office workers, separate committees for volunteers, qualified staff, management boards)

Despite the deficiencies of both international and national child-care organizations, it is worth noting that local and national organizations grow at a faster pace than international organizations do.

VI. SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Below is a summary of the most important results:

- 1- Half of the organizations are divided with regard to whether they approve or disapprove of the current level of child-care services offered. In addition, 25% of the organization groups approve of the content of the services provided, but 25% do not.
- 2- One third of the organizations agree that there are challenges that hinder child-care work. Six branches of the study population reject these challenges. Opinions regarding this issue are equally divided in two of the branches.
- 3- Depending on the cultural and social conditions in which they occur, child-care volunteer efforts—whether by international, regional or national organizations—complement each other despite the diverse nature of such tasks,
- 4- There are similarities in the volunteer efforts at international and national child-care organizations. These similarities include similar deficiencies in their systems, similar support and resources, similar working approaches, similar evaluation methods, and similar impacts of all of these factors on the overall organizations.
- 5- There are no statistically significant differences between governmental and non-governmental international child-care organizations.
- 6- There are no statistically significant differences between governmental and non-governmental organizations in terms of the child-care services that they provide and the challenges associated with providing them.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher recommends the following:

- 1- Create worldwide associations and unions that are dedicated to the well-being of children and that are capable of identifying the legal channels that enable child-care organizations to smoothly and effectively run their projects.
- 2- Coordinate, canalize and facilitate communication channels so that organizations can benefit from existing skills and available resources.

- 3- If possible, establish regional assemblies that advocate for the well-being of children and support these groups by all possible means to maximize welfare for each country. In addition, coordinate efforts to overcome all types of barriers that impede the creation of such unions.
- 4- Stimulate and encourage national and international administrations to financially support child-care organizations and help them to become financially independent.
- 5- Sponsor voluntary work and create the organizational structures that are necessary to create associations dedicated to child-related causes. In addition, facilitate processes that support these efforts.
- 6- Due to differences in figures, conduct real environmental scanning studies at the national and international levels using advanced and effective methods. Unless they are absolutely necessary, projection approaches should be avoided.

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