

Title

Social work perspective of the achievements of the Fit Person (s) Program in Temeke, Dar es Salaam – Tanzania

Johnas Amon Buhori (PhD), The Open University of Tanzania: Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Department of Sociology and Social Work, Correspondence address: johnas.buhori@out.ac.tz or johnasbuhori@gmail.com

Abstract

Like other countries in the developing world, Tanzania has faced more children needing protection and care. However, the available old and traditional alternative care systems have inadequately reduced the demand for protection and care for needy children. This study was undertaken to assess the achievements of the fit person program. Twenty (20) social workers employed at Temeke District Council were selected to participate and inform the study. Four focus group discussions of five members each and five key informants' interviews were used to generate information while observing the African-centred approach. This study was guided by Ubuntu theory, as it considers Africans' values, aspirations, beliefs and experiences in the efforts to protect and care for the children. The findings revealed that the Fit Person Program has achieved its obligations to protect and care for children to a large extent; as a result, it was scaled up to all Dar es Salaam region districts. The study recommends comprehensive research to explore the challenges faced by fit persons, social workers and children under the fit person's program. ent factors affecting access to Pre-Trial Diversion services by juvenile offenders from high density suburbs in Zimbabwe.

Key words

Child Protection, Ubuntu theory, Fit Person Program, Alternative Care, Social Workers

Key dates

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Introduction

Numerous factors contribute to the vulnerability of children, which, in turn, demands protection and care. Some of these factors, as identified by this paper, include Human Immunodeficient Virus/ Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS), the outcome of poverty, household conflicts which lead to violence, abuse and, to a large extent, separation and divorce, and road accidents. However, it is worth noting that due to proper use of Antiretroviral Therapy, related death has reduced, though other factors, as stated, still expose children to vulnerable situations. The identified factors compel children needing protection and care to seek community support. The Fit Person Program, a locally brewed intervention to the increased vulnerability of children, finds its bases from the theory of Ubuntu, which advocates for the community's commitment to raising a child, "It takes a community to raise a child".

To ensure and strengthen the child protection system in Tanzania, the government formulated a child development policy in 2008. After realising its weakness in holding children's stakeholders and interested parties, the government promulgated the Law of the Child Act, Chapter 13 of the Laws of Tanzania Revised Edition of 2019. The law domesticated all the international and regional general comments, declarations, treaties, and guidelines. Further, due to the commitment of the government to protect and care for children, the following regulations were formulated: Juvenile Court Procedures Rules of 2016; Foster Care Placement Regulations of 2012; Children's Homes Regulations of 2012; Child Protection Regulations of 2014; Adoption of a Child Regulations of 2011; and Fit Person Regulation of 2019, which is the focus of this paper. Out of the listed laws, procedures, rules and regulations to ensure the rights and welfare of children are realised, only the Fit Person regulation embraces the context of Tanzania.

It is worth noting that the office of the Dar es Salaam Regional Commissioner, with the support of UNICEF, after seeing the increasing number of children in need of protection and care, incepted the Fit Person Program in Temeke District in 2012. The Fit Person Program is defined as "a person of full age who is of high moral character and integrity and of sound mind who is not a relative of the child and capable of looking after a child and has been approved by a social worker as being able to provide a caring home for a child (Fit Person Regulation, 2019). Since the core function of social workers is prevention, Rwegoshora (2016) noted that they are very instrumental in ensuring the safety and protection of children in need of care. From this view, the URT (2012) allowed and supported to lead the Fit Person Program in Temeke District – Dar es Salaam.

Additionally, the Fit Person program aims to reduce the congestion of children at institutions while utilising the family unit, allowing children in need of protection and care to realise their potential. It is an ad-hoc or emergency program where a child is temporarily placed. During this

course, the social welfare office must collect all the child's information about whereabouts. When the child is still fit, the social welfare has to initiate communication with the peer where the child is indicated to originate. After assessing all the possible venues for the child, arrangements are made with the family to receive back their child. Since the inception of the Fit Person Program, there have been remarkable achievements in child protection and care that deserve to be recognised and cherished. Due to the successful and remarkable evidence in the Temeke district, in 2020, the program was scaled up in all districts of the Dar es Salaam region. These districts include Kinondoni, Ubungo, Ilala, Kigamboni and Temeke, which is the focus of this study.

Literature review

A single factor does not cause the scourge of vulnerability among children; there are varying aspects that may cause the phenomena that ultimately affect the welfare of the child. These facts are detailed from the global, Sub-Saharan Africa and Tanzania, where this study is conducted.

Globally, children in need of care and protection

The Global Status Report on Road Safety reaffirms our understanding of road traffic injuries as a global health and development problem. More than 1.2 million people die on the world's roads every year, and as many as 50 million others are injured. Over 90% of the deaths occur in low-income and middle-income countries (WHO, 2022). Due to the death of parents and caregivers as a result of road accidents, children have to carry on with their lives, where basic needs such as access to education and health care, shelter and food are provided by other communities or family members accordingly.

Highlighting another leading factor contributing mainly to children's vulnerability, Kamer (2023) noted that in 2022, about 4% of the world's population lived in extreme poverty. Children who are living in the said context, to a large extent, are likely to go on the street to take small jobs, which in most cases are very detrimental and harmful to their health. Some of them, who partly stay on the street, have to make sure that on their way back home, they have food for other household members who have remained home. Despite their parents failing to provide basic needs for their children, it is noted that when they do not bring food, they are likely to be punished, which forces some children to flee their homes.

The demand for childcare and protection is increasing; Delap & Mann (2019) noted that globally, an estimated one in every ten children resides in households without any parent due to varying factors, which range, among others, to the death of both parents. These conflicts lead to divorce or separation and other natural calamities. Depending on the clan ties, a few lucky ones will likely end up in kinship care, while others may live independently. The records from 77 States, most from developing countries, are children aged 0 -14 who live without any parent. Living without an adult to provide care,

protection and guidance to children is likely to deny them access to their rights as children but also to basic needs. Most of these children would end up on the street when there are no specific measures to take care of them.

Despite the role of social workers to prevent human dysfunction, they help people in need and address their social problems, particularly children in need of care and protection (Mwanza, 2012). Social workers provide the necessary social and technical support through their role in social functioning while focusing on the locally brewed theories to address challenges confronting children. Social workers must trust and utilise local knowledge (Rankopo and Osei-Hwedie, 2011). Using the lens of Ubuntu theory, vulnerable children needing care and protection can find a suitable solution when local skills are used. Regardless of the factors that have exposed any child to vulnerability, Africans must utilise or apply a theory that considers the native aspirations, values, and beliefs. The identified factors can only be reduced; however, Ubuntu's theory can adequately address the phenomena of vulnerability among children (Metz, 2016). With its strength of perceiving every community member as significant or equal to others, the suffering of children in need of care and protection can be dealt with when revived and implemented.

Africa and children in need of care and protection

The African continent is described as the home of the world's youngest population, where an estimated 650 million children are confronted with diverse challenges, which in turn have ruined their future. Due to these constraints, such as poverty, instability, inaccessibility to primary education, health care, diseases, maltreatment, sexual abuse, neglect, and exploitation, continue to hold African children backwards. These observations are further supported by the findings, where there are increasing incidences of child neglect (35%), and out-of-school children were noted as a common challenge in Africa (48%); further, 42% are still not sure of the accessibility to food. Despite these challenges, most Africans are, to some extent (44%), recognising the efforts of the governments to deal with issues affecting vulnerable children (Chingwete & Houessou, 2023).

Africa has witnessed some development in child protection, where community members are increasingly using tradition and customary means to support each other. For instance, the old kinship, famous for supporting vulnerable children in a significant context of Africa, has been revived with a community system brewed in African aspiration. The Ubuntu perspective is vividly witnessed in this context (African Child Forum, 2018). Further, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (2021) noted that most African countries have made remarkable progress worth cherishing in terms of childcare, development and protection. The ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Children and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children are some of the efforts taken by Africans in the realisation of advancing the rights of children to their fundamental needs such as education, health,

sanitation, clothing and shelter. Despite the recorded developments, African children are still confronted with poverty, internal displacement, civil war, HIV/AIDS, family and household disputes and conflicts, violence and abuse, inaccessibility to basic needs, and poor systems to support and provide care and protection.

Considering the position of the Ubuntu perspective, Boakye-Boaten (2010) pointed out the importance of taking care of children as they are the custodians of Africa and the world of tomorrow. He further cautioned Africans when he noted that the continuity and existence of any society is vented in their capabilities to care for and protect their children while rearing them in acceptable cultural and traditional practices. From this point, it can be deduced that the commitment of any society to protect its vulnerable members, such as children in need of care and protection, is determined by their ability to ensure their accessibility to necessities. In Africa, the duty to care for vulnerable members of the society was in the hands of the society; it is from this argument where it is commonly noted that Africa had no orphan or a child without parents. Due to this understanding, every child belonged to the community, and each community member had a role in nurturing and providing care and protection.

Sub-Saharan Africa and children in need of care and protection

Pointing to the contribution of poverty to the increased vulnerability of children, Macha (2023) noted that it has multiple dimensions in the context of Africa. Due to limited opportunities to break away from poverty, parents, especially males, are likely to get involved in risky behavior such as abuse of alcohol, which opens the door for domestic violence. It further leads to increased conflict and disputes at family and household levels. Further still, the incidences of abuse and violence are associated with the likelihood of the couple's divorce. The constant violence and abuse at the family level exposes children to either becoming witnesses or victims of the situation. Hence, the consequences of poverty on African children not only affect them emotionally and psychologically but their rights to protection and care are ultimately compromised. Children from these families are likely to flee their homes to other places; in a situation where kinship or residential homes are constructed, it remains their last hope to access basic needs.

The magnitude of children who need alternative care in the Sub-Saharan region, as observed by UNICEF (2016), revealed that there are approximately 45 million orphans. Out of this number, it is very divesting to note that 11.4 million are orphaned due to AIDS. This can be understood better; for instance, 1 per cent is witnessed in Afghanistan, to 36 per cent in Zimbabwe. With the highest figure being recorded from Zimbabwe, it is evident that the demand for alternative care has increased in Sub-Saharan African countries. Further, the Demographic Health Survey (DHS) data from 2012-15 indicated that 19 million East African children are placed under one form of alternative care alone.

The increasing number of children in need of care and protection provides evidence of the failure of Western models and theories to handle African challenges, particularly the concerns of children. Social workers, therefore, have to draw attention to specific African theories or models, such as Ubuntu, to address the problems that steadily confront children (Rankopo & Osei-Hwedie, 2011).

Tanzania and children in need of care and protection

Drawing attention to the context of Tanzania, according to the 2012 National Census, Tanzania has a population of 45 million, out of which 44 per cent of the total population accounts for children below the age of 15 (URT, 2012). Additionally, PEPFAR (2015) revealed that at least 3 million Tanzanian children are orphaned due to AIDS. Further, the URT (2012) pointed out that Dar es Salaam has a population of 4.5 million. However, due to various challenges such as poverty, urbanisation, violence and abuse at the family level, and poor school learning environment, about three and thousands of children live on the street (Kind Heart Africa, 2013). The identified challenges, therefore, impose direct consequences on children, accelerating the decision of children to end up on the street. The only hope for these children to continue their lives is to remain the fit person model where they can find the necessities for their survival.

Further, the provision of quality protection and care for children has been compromised by the impact of HIV/AIDS (Makuu, 2019). Other factors, such as divorce, have been noted to increase the number of children in need of protection and care. For instance, the National Panel Survey conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2014/15) reported an average of 1.1 percent in 2008/2009 to 2.1 percent in 2014/2015. The increase means that for every 100 eligible persons to marry, two have been divorced. Further, the Population and Housing Census noted that 715,447 persons were divorced, translating to three people per every one hundred (NBS, 2015). As the consequences of HIV/AIDS, household disputes and divorce, the quality of protection and care for children is compromised.

Apart from the increased death related to HIV/AIDS (Mariana, 2019), the dimensions for accelerating divorce rates (Macha, 2023). The poor Tanzanians accounted for 3.6% of the world population, living on 1.90 U.S. dollars daily. With these records, Galal (2023) pointed out that Tanzania topped the country in Africa with the highest share of the global population in extreme poverty. Most children who find the home environment hostile flee, seeking alternative care. However, some of them end up on the streets in major cities. Cementing on the increase of street children, Kagoro (2023) revealed that more than 10,000 children live on the streets in Tanzania, while 20,000 remain in orphanages, and many thousands are left to endure unbearable and painful experiences in an abusive environment.

Further, UNICEF (2017) note that 8% of children under 18 are orphans. Moreover, at least 2 million children in Tanzania

are categorised as vulnerable children, and 40% are AIDS orphans. They depend on various forms of alternative care, such as foster care, kinship care, institutional care, and fit person care.

As the Fit Person Regulation of 2019 indicates, a fit person of a family interested in rendering child protection and care must be a person of good conduct and respectful in the community. After undergoing training, a national approved can be authorised to care for children as the social welfare office in the respective locality finds fit. The inception of this program has reduced the increased vulnerability of children in need of protection and care. Before the program, children could find themselves under police custody or on the street, already exposed to more dangerous experiences. Additionally, the Fit Person Program need not be emphasised as it gives room for a child needing protection and care to remain in the family environment, where they can still access education, health and peers. In real-time, the program has responded well to the shortcomings Mariana (2017) and Mariana (2019) identified in Tanzania's current institutional care situation.

Table 1: Records of Trained Fit Persons per District in the Dar es Salaam region

S/N	Municipal Council	Trained Fit Person
1	Ilala	25
2	Kigamboni	31
3	Kinondoni	37
4	Temeke	33
5	Ubungo	22

Source: URT (2023): Dar es Salaam Regional Social Welfare Report on Child Protection

Table 1 shows the number of trained fit persons per all Dar es Salaam region districts. For instance, 25 were trained in Ilala, 32 from Kigamboni, 37 from Kinondoni, 33 from Temeke, and 22 from Ubungo.

In recognition of children's rights as enshrined at international, regional and local levels, the government of Tanzania has not achieved the optimum level of child protection and care (Bucumi, 2021). The work of Mariana (2019) and Mariana (2017) advocates for deinstitutionalisation, with awareness of the home or family context as the only place where a child should be nurtured. The current paper holds the same opinion, considering a child's best interest, where children should grow up in the family where possible with biological or foster parents. Contrary to the arguments of Mariana (2019) and Mariana (2017), numerous studies have identified home or family as the leading sites or place where children are subjected to violence and abuse, being perpetuated by people entrusted to protect and care for them (Buhori, 2020). Since the Fit Person program is based on an emergency or temporary intervention for children in need of care and protection due to abuse and violation of children's rights, they cannot be forced to remain

in their primary families. They must be placed with another community member; this intervention draws its basis from Ubuntu theory (Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019), which noted that it takes a village to raise a child. In the context of child rights abuse, the best interest of the child can be achieved using the fit person program. For this reason, while employing Ubuntu theory, this paper explores the achievement of the Fit Person Program implemented by social workers in the Temeke district.

Ubuntu theory and child protection

From time immemorial, as Mugumbate and Chereni (2019) note, inhabitants of Sub-Saharan Africa have lived a communal life where the value for life was emphasised on the existence of all community members. It is the viewpoint of Ubuntu philosophy featured in "I am because we are" and "A person is a person through other persons". Further, the same philosophy recognised the collective efforts of raising and nurturing a child, as Metz (2016) noted that it takes a village to raise a child. The argument presented can be further argued that a child needs care and protection from the African viewpoint of collective living. Each community member had a significant and instrumental role in ensuring the safety of all children.

The fit person (s) or fit family (ies) program recognised that a child, regardless of the challenges encountered, still has a community where they belong. The program acknowledges each community's strengths in caring for children needing care and protection (Fit Person Regulation, 2019). The regulation embraces the Ubuntu philosophy, where a child is cared for by the community members within the natural set-up, unlike the current situation, as Mariana (2019) pointed out, where the Western model prioritises institutionalised children in need of care and protection.

As Mushunje (2017) highlighted, social workers involved in the fit person program must embark on Ubuntu philosophy as it appreciates Africans' values, beliefs, traditions, customs, experiences and frame of reference, particularly Tanzanians. The features have proved successful in caring for children with various protection-related challenges. Moreover, Mugumbate and Chereni (2019) noted that the Ubuntu theory is worthy of being cherished as it addresses the experiences of all children needing care and protection.

Methods

The Ubuntu research perspective, expressed in recognition of the collective efforts of all community members (I am what I am because of you), respects the existence of each community member regardless of their age and status. Further, the Ubuntu perspective, representing the African-centred, is helpful to determine the position of each individual or group's experience of the topic under study. It allows the utilisation of indigenous lenses when observing

various aspects of the phenomenon under study during the analysis and presentation of the collected information (Alemayehu & Wario, (2022). From the Ubuntu viewpoint, the study was purposeful, selecting twenty (20) key informants who had rich knowledge and were well-vented with the information on the fit person (s) or fit family (ies) achievements.

Moreover, Khupe & Keane (2017) noted that the African Centred observes research ethics; from the Ubuntu point of view, ethics does not exist in a specifically designed form; it should be in the human mind to adhere to it. With this in mind, oral consent was sought from all participants, and each of them was assigned a code to maintain anonymity. Chilisa (2014) noted that triangulating was done for key informants and focus group discussions to ensure the research credibility of the data collected. Four (4) FGDs were conducted, each comprising five participants. With the same number, five were further selected for interviews. Observing the African perspective during data collection and analysis demands quality time to ensure that values and aspirations are respected. For this reason, the current study was conducted for six (6) months, from January to June 2023.

Additionally, Alemayehu & Wario (2022) noted that the generated findings could be thematically analysed using African-centred research to identify significant themes. With this understanding, the current study thematically identified the major themes as presented in the section of the presentation of findings. It is important to note that the Fit Person Program was inceptioned in Tanzania, specifically in the district of Temeke, in 2012. It can be deduced that out of five districts, as indicated in Table 1, Temeke was the first district to roll out the program in Dar es Salaam and Tanzania generally (URT, 2012). These reasons have made Temeke District selected to inform the achievement of the fit person program in the study area.

Findings

The presentation of findings and discussion is guided by five key achievements of the Fit Person program;

Temeke District was used as a piloting site

Although the program had drawn the attention of the Dar es Salaam regional leaders and had the interest of donors such as UNICEF, Save the Children, Railway Children and Baba Watoto, it was not easy to start in the whole region. Temeke District was nominated to be used as a piloting site, as was noted by one of the social workers,

There are many social workers in Temeke District; however, none were interested in joining the piloting program. Everyone was scared; no one wanted to be associated with the program's failure. Their focus was on the blame from the government and the donor. With the program's achievement in Tanzania, the social workers and all Tanzanians have celebrated its permanent mark in addressing and combating children needing care and protection.

During the FGDs, it was noted that UNICEF and other donors have had numerous projects in Temeke District, focusing on child protection. Many of these projects usually had guidelines to base on during implementation, which was not the case with the Fit Person program. However, the achievement could be linked with allowing all parties involved to learn from each other. Social workers had a primary role in providing support and addressing identified challenges. Despite the first feeling of nervousness and fear of the possibility of the program failing, the opportunity to learn allowed all parties to perceive all involved as equal members.

The government officers from the Regional and District Commissioners provided daily support of the program; they often visited the families and fit persons themselves, which allowed them to see the reality and ideal of the program. The program had no room to note for blame, but it showed the right way to deal with any identified fault.

Exposed social workers on the Fit Person Program content

The inception of the Fit Person Program demanded the preparation of a training package for social workers to guide fit persons or families accordingly. To ensure this happens, the child protection stakeholders had to develop relevant and culturally sensitive content to guide social workers. It was narrated further by a social worker,

UNICEF and Save the Children developed the initial content for the Fit Person program; however, its emphasis was on children's rights, with little content on the responsibilities of social workers when supervising and guiding fit persons or families.

The FGDs noted frequent changes in content, and it took a lot of time to train and review the developed content. Despite these challenges in the content, the program continued until 2020, when the Fit Person program had the final package, which was then used during the scale-up to train another social worker in all the districts of the Dar es Salaam region. It can be argued that preparing the right content, natural sensitivity, and adherence to Tanzanian aspirations, values, and beliefs would not be easy work, but drawing an agreement from the past, present, and future was the most challenging experience.

Willingness of fit persons to support children in need of protection and care

The Fit Person program opened the doors for community members to contribute towards supporting children in need of care. Some community members, wherever there is a child in need, are very committed and willing to help regardless of the time when the social worker rings them; they are willing to positively respond, as revealed by one of the social workers,

The Fit Person program has relieved social workers; you do not have to think about where to take the child since Fit Persons are willing and committed to protecting and caring for any child in need.

The FGD note that some community members would wish to see a child at their home; giving them the opportunity is like giving back to the community. They are very committed and willing to support wherever they are asked. Before the program was incepted, it was like community members wouldn't accept living with children who are not their own due to the perception of some members that the children in need of care and protection have bad manners. However, this has proved to be a wrong belief and perception, as more community members are willing to be recruited as fit people.

Increased number of children accessing services from the Fit Person program

The Fit Person program has witnessed an increase in children benefiting from it. This was pointed out by one of the focal social workers who has been working under the program for more than ten years; she revealed,

At the beginning of 2012, the program experienced numerous challenges, including the personal expectations of social workers and fit people. However, each part involved becomes aware of the expected roles and responsibilities after training. Wherever a social worker receives a child, she can easily find a fit person willing to take them.

The program has put smiles on children who could end up in more vulnerable situations. For instance, the program has saved ninety-four boys and one hundred and thirty-six girls as of the end of June 2023. All these children without fit persons or families could have ended up in residential care or in the wrong hands on the street of Dar es Salaam.

Scale up the Fit Person Program in the Dar es Salaam region

After seeing the achievement of the program in Temeke District, the regional government and the donors, such as UNICEF, Save the Children, Railway Children, and Baba Watoto, decided to scale up the program to all five districts of Dar es Salaam, namely, Kinondoni, Ubungu, Ilala, and Kigamboni. This was narrated by one of the social workers, who noted that,

Social workers from other districts, wherever they received a child needing protection and care, had no way to keep them apart from calling their colleagues in Temeke District for support. This kind of intervention delayed and brought dependence among Temeke District social workers.

The FGDs revealed that the scale-up of the fit person program was done in a timely manner as it was waited for; since the mistakes committed in Temeke Districts were known, the other districts capitalised on the strengths that were achieved.

During data collection, the scale-up witnessed twenty-three boys and twenty-nine girls still cared for by fit persons or families.

Discussion

The presentation of discussion was guided by five key achievements of the fit person program;

Temeke District was used as a piloting site

From the information generated by key informants and FGDs, it is evident that despite the sacredness and excitement among the social workers, the Fit Person program has contributed positively towards child protection and care efforts at the district level and throughout Tanzania. These findings shed light on the concern of Mariana (2019), who vehemently argued against institutional care by pointing out its significant weaknesses in developing dependence and behavioural challenges among children in these institutions. Hence, the Fit Person program allows a child needing protection and care to stay temporarily. At the same time, the social welfare office works to resolve the challenges which have exposed the child to a vulnerable situation.

From Ubuntu's perspective on child protection, the role of taking care of children who are challenged with protection is a duty and responsibility of a single individual; it demands the collective efforts of the entire community, where the view of Ubuntu in this challenge is that it takes a village to raise a child (Mugumbate & Chereni (2019). When every community member has this understanding, social workers become excited or scared of the program failing because, with collective efforts, no one entertains the possibility of failing.

Exposed social workers on the Fit Person Program Content

Despite the availability of funds from UNICEF and Save the Children, URT (2012) notes that the recruitment and training of social workers from the Temeke district started with six officers, who were not very committed in one way or another. However, as the program continued, they slowly began understanding its value in child protection and care. On the other hand, it reduced the calls from police officers to social welfare over a stranded child, especially at the bus terminals.

It is a practice in African countries where the most preferred theories, models and perspectives of addressing various challenges are those from the Western world; the African-brewed model, such as Ubuntu, is not considered as effective in addressing not only issues of child protection but also numerous challenges facing the continent (Rankopo and Osei-Hwedie, 2011). These theories and models cannot adequately address Africans' views, values and aspirations. According to Metz (2016), Ubuntu is very effective in understanding the problems of Africans and posing a solution that is considerate to the specific context. Having funds in place was not enough to determine the success and

achievement of the fit person program; the social workers in the study area of Temeke had to embark on Ubuntu theory to sustain the program.

Willingness of fit persons to support children in need of protection and care

Appreciating Ubuntu philosophy, where any child belongs to the community, each individual has an equal role to contribute to all members' welfare (Rankopo and Osei-Hwedie, 2011). In agreement with Ubuntu's perspective, URT (2023) noted that the witnessed achievement of the fit person program is due to the commitment and willingness of a fit person to provide care and protection to children. The fit person still embraces Ubuntu's perspective of being interdependent on one another.

Further, in the context of the current study, a fit person or fit family have shown their willingness and commitment to take care of children in need of protection; by doing this, they have acknowledged the philosophy of Ubuntu as Mugumbate & Chereni (2019) note, because we are, and a person is a person through other persons. It can be argued that when supported by community members, children who are challenged today can better support others who are in need when adequately supported today. Currently, thirty-four fit persons can receive a child needing protection and care whenever the social worker asks.

Increased number of children accessing services from the Fit Person program

Using the Ubuntu perspective, Mtetwa & Muchache (2017) noted that a child becomes a human through others. From this argument, it is the role of the community and its members to protect, provide and socialise their children. Further, children cannot be socialised well; there are challenges with care and protection when living on the street or in families with conflicts and violence. Community members have a role in creating and maintaining a harmonious and peaceful environment for children to grow well.

Moreover, Mugumbate & Chereni (2019) opined that Ubuntu philosophy allows Africans to learn from each other various means of living and supporting each other. From this view of Ubuntu, the increased number of children accessing the Fit Person program can be equated with an improved understanding of Fit Person's primary responsibility to nurture children. Hence, the Ubuntu perspective is instrumental in informing fit persons and children in need of care that they all depend on each other and must ensure the needed support is provided or made available accordingly.

Scale up the Fit Person Program in the Dar es Salaam region

They argue in favour of family context, where all children are supposed to be nurtured, and institutions are the last choice for temporary reasons (Makuu, 2017). However, I have not considered the position of Ubuntu that a child can be raised with any community member, provided the child's values,

aspirations and beliefs are respected. As (Rankopo and Osei-Hwedie (2011) noted, it is miserable that Social Workers in Africa prefers utilising the Western model and theory despite their limitation in the African context.

Ubuntu's philosophy recognises that a child belongs to the community, where good practices that can positively contribute to the realisation of children's rights can be applied to ensure their rights and protection are achieved. It is from this standpoint the URT (2023) pointed out that the scale-up of the fit person program has made it easy for children in need of care and protection to be saved fast in an environment which looks like their own families, where they can find children like themselves and can still enjoy their childhood with peers and other available social services.

Recommendations

This study recommends the following;

- The government or any stakeholder should conduct a comprehensive study on the challenges faced by social workers, fit persons and the children who have benefited from this program. By undertaking the research, the identified challenges would be dealt with before the program turns into another failure story.
- The government of Tanzania has to take time to explore the underlying reasons for the increase of girls than boys in search of child protection and care. Many of these girls travel from upcountry to Dar es Salaam, seeking protection and care, the new thread that needs maximum government attention.
- The government should consider reviewing the fit person package's content, where the Ubuntu theory is prioritised. The Tanzanian-brewed knowledge on childcare and protection is given priority accordingly.

Conclusion

The fit person program is another form of alternative care where a child who needs protection and care is housed or supported temporarily while establishing communication with their family. The program has reduced the number of children held in police custody; moreover, it has necessitated that children stay with families where they can still access all social services, such as school health, and can be socialised in the Tanzanian cultural practices. With the achievement made in the Dar es Salaam region, it is the right time to scale up in all regions while guided by Ubuntu theory to reduce children in need of protection and care and increase the number of street children.

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