OBSTACLES IN CHILD REMOVAL FROM UNSAFE FAMILY ENVIRONMENTS: A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF FRONTLINE PROFESSIONALS OF CHILD PROTECTION & WELFARE BUREAU, PUNJAB-PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This article analyzes the challenges faces by frontline child protection workers when they encounter a family situation and need to determine whether the child should be removed from an unsafe environment or not. It is important to identify these obstacles in order to minimize the negative consequences that arise from the unnecessary removal of children from their family environments. Maltreatment with children often occurs in family environments in presence of various other problems and it becomes unavoidable for the professionals to remove children from such families. **Methods**: The present gender-neutral study, based in Lahore, aims to address the challenges faced by professionals through an in-depth analysis of the existing patterns of child protection in Punjab. The research design was qualitative combining semi-structured in-depth interviews and a focus group discussions (FGDs). The sample size (n=13) was comprised of experienced (> 05 years) frontline professionals of Child Protection and Welfare Bureau (CP&WB), Punjab. Based on thematic analysis of data, various challenges encountered by professionals have been identified. **Results**: The removal of children from unsafe family environments in Pakistan is hindered by societal beliefs and cultural practices that stigmatize and discriminate against reporting child abuse cases. Additionally, weak legal frameworks, limited resources and bureaucratic hurdles make it difficult for professionals to remove children from unsafe environments. Socioeconomic factors such as lack of education, poverty, and limited resources also contribute to the challenges faced in removing children, while lack of alternative care options and inter-agency coordination further complicates the process. The implementation of special laws related to children is challenging due to a lack of awareness and education on child protection issues. Lastly, the psychological and emotional impact must be considered during the removal in order to ensure the well-being of both the child and the family, as well as the employee oneself. **Conclusion**: It is concluded in study that the separation of children from parents should be the extremist act by professionals. Such cases should be dealt with extreme care, and thus training should be an integral part of professionals' jobs. Thus, study proposes recommendations for policymakers, lawmakers and child protection professionals to ensure a better future of children in need.

KEYWORDS: Alternative Care Placements, Bureaucratic Hurdles, Child Protection Professionals, Child Removal, Cultural Practices, Discrimination, Inter-Agency Coordination, Legal Framework, Maltreatment, Parental Rights, Societal Beliefs, Stigmatization, Unsafe Family Environments.

INTRODUCTION

In general, family provide most protective environment to children. Family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State (Rights, 1961).

Parents are responsible for socialization, development and education of a child. Parents or, as the case may be, legal guardians, have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child (Assembly, 1989). But sometimes same family become harm to the child due to various issues among family member(s). There are several type of concerns can arise within family environments that cause abuse and neglect which can impact on children long-term. Maltreatment often occurs in the presence of multiple problems within a family or social environment, including poverty, violence, substance abuse, and unemployment (Council, 1993). In such unavoidable circumstances it becomes essential to professional/ social workers to remove immediate from the unsafe family environment. Professionals face various obstacles during the process of removal and in placement in alternative care. They also face various issues during development of rehabilitation plan. Thus, this paper will focus on several types of issues faces by professionals of Child Protection & Welfare Bureau (CP&WB), Punjab during the removal process of children from unsafe families wherever it is necessary to take such action.

Unsafe family environments mean a situation where child is being or chances of being abuse and neglect or both exist. Family environments are largely seen as most protective environment for development of child but sometimes it becomes harm for the children due to unfair behavior of family member(s) towards their own children. This year similar to previous years, most of perpetrators of child sexual abuse are acquaintances who are known to the victim including immediate family members and relatives (*SAHIL Cruel Numbers 2022, https://sahil.org/cruel-numbers/*). People living in an unsafe or unstable household may experience abuse or exploitation at home. They may also lack protection against abuse and exploitation occurring outside of the home environment ("Unsafe and unstable homes https://www.preventingexploitationtoolkit.org.uk/home/what-is-exploitation/what-is-vulnerability/unsafe-and-unstable-home-environments "). Living in an unsafe or unstable home environment can lead to high and often prolonged psychological and physical stress. This can impact on people's physical and emotional health and wellbeing ("Unsafe and unstable homes https://www.preventingexploitationtoolkit.org.uk/home/what-is-exploitation/what-is-vulnerability/unsafe-and-unstable-home-environments "). In cases where a child's safety is at immediate risk, removal from the home may be necessary. Foster care, kinship care, and other alternative placements play crucial role in providing temporary or long-term safe environments for children who cannot remain with their parents. These placements ensure that children receive the care, support, and stability they need while their families work towards resolving the issues that led to the unsafe environment ("What is Considered an Unsafe Environment for a Child? https://www.bryanfagan.com/blog/2020/july/what-is-considered-an-unsafe-environment-for-a-c/,").

This separation could be because of parental incarceration, long-term treatment or an intervention on the part of child protective services that removes the child from an unsafe or high-risk home environment and places him or her in an out-of-home placement such as foster care, relative placement, or a group or residential home (Lander et al., 2013).

The convention on the rights of the child (CRC) recognizes that children have the best chance of developing their full potential in a family environment. Removing children from their parents is child welfare's most drastic intervention (Sankaran et al., 2018). Whenever professionals remove children from their parents without carefully balancing the risks created by that intervention, they are culpable for the harm to children and their parents (Sankaran et al., 2018). It analyzes the gaps and emergent issues in practice, research, and policy related to child removal (Sankaran et al., 2018). Lastly, there are other states, for example, Illinois, Indiana and New Jersey that require a particularized showing that immediate removal is absolutely necessary because the delay in proceeding to court and obtaining an order would create the risk of significant harm to the child (Sankaran et al., 2018). The sanctity of the family is one of this nation's core fundamental principles (Sankaran et al., 2018). children might be unnecessarily removed from their parents, resulting in preventable harm at the hands of state actors (Sankaran et al., 2018).

Effects of removal of child from family can be both sided on child as well as parents. The identification of these challenges is important in order to reduce the

risk of inadequate decision-making and the negative consequences of this decision for the well-being of both the child and the family, as well as the employee herself (Gevorgianienė et al., 2021). Child protection workers experience strong emotions and face ethical dilemmas during the removal (Sumskiene et al., 2022). Child may go into trauma or face behavioral challenges and in severe cases may go to attempt suicide or self-harm. They may be effected by physical, mental growth and child development may effects. There can be another challenge that child may be get abused or victim of any offence in absence of their parents in care institutions. He may get runway tendency from then institutions and victim of child abuse during the escape. There attachment may affect with family and there is chance to raise trust issues on his/her relatives. He may get in stress, depression, loneliness, sleeplessness and fear also. On other way parents particularly mothers may go into psychological issues after the removal of child from them. Several studies showed the long-term psychological impacts on biological mothers causing distress, unease, mental health difficulties, ongoing anger and guilt, shame, and grief forced to relinquish their children unwillingly (Baum & Burns, 2007);(Memarnia et al., 2015);(Lewis-Brooke et al., 2017);(Neil, 2013).The impact of fear and not trusted on institutions may come in their mind. Fear of loneliness may exist in their behaviors. There can be various social, psychological and cultural impacts on parents and family. Family usually faces stigma due to removal of children from their custody.

Child Protection & Welfare Bureau (CP&WB) is an only government body in Punjab working for the children in need (*https://cpwb.punjab.gov.pk/overview*) . The bureau has aims to rescue, custody, care and rehabilitate the vulnerable children in Punjab-largest province in Pakistan (*https://cpwb.punjab.gov.pk/overview*). It has specific child focused law which is called Punjab Destitute & Neglected Children Act (PDNCA). A Child Protection Officer may take into custody a destitute and neglected child and produce him along with the complaint before a court within twenty-four hours of taking the child into such custody ("Child Protection & Welfare Bureau (Home Department) Government of Punjab. Punjab Destitute and Neglected Children Act. (2004, revised 2017).").

CPWB has mandate to protect children from any kind of abuse in any type of setting whether he/she is living with their immediate family or not (*https://cpwb.punjab.gov.pk/overview*). But sometimes police or court may intervene in the cases of child abuse and may order to remove the child from unsafe families and sent them in foster care. Provided further that where a destitute and neglected child is in the custody of his parent or guardian, the officer shall not take him into custody but shall in the first instance, make a report to the Court, unless the child is found begging or is a victim of an offence alleged to have been committed by his parent or guardian ("Child Protection & Welfare Bureau (Home Department) Government of Punjab. Punjab Destitute and Neglected Children Act. (2004, revised 2017)."). A Child Protection Officer is bound to present that child in child protection court for taking legal custody, after that court may pass such order may deems fit according to situation of child weather he is going to live in foster care or may send back with their family. Since its inception in 2005, the bureau has rescued more than 75,000 vulnerable children from unsafe environments and placed them in Child Protection Institutions (CPIs) ("Child Protection and Welfare Bureau (CPWB). (2022). Annual report. CPWB, Lahore,").

The professionals of CPWB faces a number of difficulties while implementation of the law especially during removal process of children in unsafe family environments. This is real time problem faces by professionals of CP&WB, which needs to be addressed immediately to promote best practices in child protection systems in Punjab. So it was main concern of researcher to understand the issues faces by professionals in removal of children from unsafe families and the system in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable children. It will also promote best practices in existing system of child protection process particularly in Punjab. The study also aims to propose recommendations to policy makers, law makers and professionals to ensure the better future of children in need.

METHODS
Qualitative research methods were chosen to explore the obstacles in removing children from unsafe family environments. The research was administered in qualitative study because the research questions was qualitative in nature which required details

discussion. In present study, in-depth interviews are the primary source of data collection to gather rich and detailed information from relevant stakeholders. Targeted sample was selected on the basis of relevancy of questions. Data were collected mainly from Child Protection Officers/ Case Workers dealing with the cases of vulnerable children in family environment. A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was organized by author with Prosecutors, Law Officers, Psychologists and Supervisors working at Child Protection & Welfare Bureau, Lahore. Initially a tentative list of 20 participants was prepared to ensure data saturation after in-depth analysis of data. Audio recorded during the interviews with participants' consent to ensure accurate transcription. Consent of each participant were obtained at the start of interview. The interviews with the participants were obtained largely face-to-face but about 30% interviews with the participants were obtained though recorded voice call on network. The researcher was based on Lahore that's why the participant was approached physically in Lahore city and nearby districts, but some participants belong to far-flung areas Multan, Rahim Yar khan, Rawalpindi were approached via telephonically and recorded their calls for their views. 13 detailed interviews were conducted through purposive sampling among the participants to ensure in-depth analysis and saturation. A list of 20 participants were arranged for the interview at first but after 13 interviews the research purpose was obtained. For better understanding and clear views of participants bilingual interviews were taken in both English (International Language) and Urdu (National Language). Later, it was translated into English for writing in paper. Research questions were provided in both languages English and Urdu. All translations were made after with the consultation of experts of English to Urdu translation and vice versa. Professionals of Child Protection & Welfare Bureau

with more than 05 years of active experience in field were selected for interviews.

Participants were given research questions in advance. The interviews began with asking a general question regarding the obstacles professionals usually face during the removal of child from unsafe family environments. Then follow-up questions asked that what kind of legal, bureaucratic and systematic hurdles they face during removal; Do any socioeconomic factors pose threat to the removal of children from unsafe family environments; Do they posed any psychological and emotional challenges they faced during or after removal; How they cope with cultural and societal beliefs regarding unsafe family environments?

All participants were asked verbal consent to give their viewpoint on present study as well as for audio recording of their interviews. The interviews were conducted under professional code of conduct given open choices to participate in study. Professionals were also ensured about their anonymity and confidentiality to sensitive information particular personal information of children involved in abuse cases mentioned in the study.

RESULTS

Thirteen semi-structured interviews were conducted until saturation reached. The characteristics of participants is representing through **Table 1**. All of the participants were experienced in the field of child protection representing both male and female. The average experience of the participants was more than five years. All participants were interviewed with audio recording with their consent. The researcher also took field notes during interviews and it helps a lot while in describing results and discussions. All interviews were taken in bilingual i.e. English and Urdu. Researcher later translate and transcribe the data into English for presenting in paper. Following four major themes were emerged coupled with sub-themes after review of data collected from participants.

Table 1

Participants characteristics

Gender	Male	7
	Female	5
Province of Pakistan	Punjab	13
	Other Province	0
Cites of Punjab	Lahore	4
	Faisalabad	1
	Sahiwal	1
	Multan	2
	Rawalpindi	2
	Rahim Yar Khan	1
	Gujranwala	2
Years of Experience	Median (Extremes)	8 (6-12)
Age	Median (Extremes)	34 (30-42)
Fluent Language	Urdu exclusively	2
	Urdu and English	11
Mode of Recording Interviews	Physically	8
	Telephonically	5

Cultural and Societal Beliefs

Cultural pattern are key components in Pakistani society. It plays significant role on child removal from unsafe environments as well. Some cultural beliefs may give prioritize family unity and discourage intervention from outsiders, including Child Protection Officers. Even in the cases of abuse or neglect and both, there may be conflict of ideas while separating a child from family Cultural patterns and beliefs may be wrong many of times but people follows them religiously. Same with the case of child abuse when occurred in parental custody or family environments, people negate the evidences and follows the dreams of society. Majority of participants count the barriers of cultural and societal beliefs are significant while removal of the child from unsafe family environments. Participants linked it with background of families i.e. if family is well educated and living in posh areas they are significantly less chance of influence of cultural barriers than in low profile families belongs to under developed areas of cities. Participant 3 stated that;

> *"society is in process of change, it depends on background of families while influencing from societal and cultural wrong beliefs".*

Social Stigma and Discrimination

Families involve in the cases of child abuse or neglect may face stigma and discrimination among society members and peers. Participants stated it the hurdle that fear of stigma and discrimination adds in our difficulties while dealing in the cases of child protection. The family members are reluctant to give information and try to escape after reporting a case of child abuse within family with the fear of to be stigmatized. Especially females are more discriminated in the cases of child abuse against their husbands which are most likely to involve in the cases of child abuse within families. They are fearful to the consequences of the cases of child abuse and she faces stigma in society. Child protection officers most likely get hindrance in collecting evidence and gathering information about the cases of child abuse. That's why in most cases the presence of child abuses within families remain intact due to non-cooperation by family members against the abusers.

> *"In a case, in anonymous area of Lahore we reach at the door of family for taking legal action against the culprit and removing the child from unsafe environments, a housewife after she reporting of case of child sexual abuse (CSA) attempted by step-father of the*

child stepped back to lodge fir (first information report) against her husband and straight away refused by saying that what will her future after the registering FIR against her husband" (Participant 7).

Individuals or families that are involved in child protection cases may face social stigma and discrimination, making it difficult for social workers to gather evidence or garner support from the community. This can also discourage reporting of abuse or neglect within families due to the fear of being ostracized.

Extended Family and Social Networks
All respondents agreed that extended family and social networks can be other alternative options to family for care placements for the children in need. Those relationships play crucial role while ensuring the wellbeing of children within unsafe family environments. Those can be aunts, uncles, grandparents and other caregivers. But due to low socioeconomic status of such families their other relatives are low socioeconomic background as well. That's why most of the time it becomes very difficult for case workers to source alternative care placement with extended family and they have to rely on government institutions, where it can be problem for the children and families and fear of separation exists on both side. The government institutions are already overburdened and the challenges of abuse children in alternative care placements already exists.

> *"In most of cases we have to rely on government institutions for alternative care placement which are already overburdened and we have to institutionalize the children after separating from their family, because extended family don't want to take care of children due to low socioeconomic status"* (Participant 9).

Legal framework and implementation
Although Pakistan has comprehensive laws and policies on issues related to children and amendments were made time to time significantly. But the major issue is non-availability of comprehensive laws under a body. Different issues are dealing in silos by various departments and there are chances of duplication of laws related to children.

In Punjab only there are more than five departments are dealing with similar cases of children and similar with number of laws. None of department hold for accountable whenever any major issue related to children highlight on media. The implementation of these laws another issues while dealing with cases of child abuse or neglect. A number of participants propose the uniformity of laws and comprehensive child protection policy must be implemented in Punjab and same followed by other provinces as the subject of child protection becomes provincial after devolution of powers to provincial governments under 18th amendments in the constitution of Pakistan,

While discussing about the process of removal participants describe the lengthy and rigorous process which bind a professional to work under the umbrella of laws and has to follow unnecessary legal and formalities which can hinder effective interventions and decision-making. They also stated the process of child protection court and involvement of Police while separating a child from unsafe family environments. Participant 2 describes it as;

> *"sometimes we (professionals) have to take whole day or two while removing a child from unsafe family environments. We first satisfy the court for issuance of search warrants (which is obligation in Pakistan while entering in the premises of any family or person) after that we have to go to concerned police station for arrival & departure and for police assistance. The police sometime cooperative but most of the time they are overburdened and indulge on other law and order matters, after waiting couple of hours they finally approached the family where the child present and the same process followed back after removal of child and present him/her in the same court within 24 hours".*

Bureaucratic Hurdles
Most of the participants were agreed that complex bureaucratic procedures and a lot of paper work in the cases of child abuse may hinder the prompt action and children remains intact with the unsafe environments. Sometimes the process also effects the frontline workers and lose their energies in un necessary procedures. Sometime it is difficult for

professionals to convince the supervisors and high-up for taking immediate action. It causes unnecessary delays and involve personal biasness because supervisors are not trained enough about the sensitivity of issue in cases of child protection.

> *"Supervisors are not trained enough about the sensitivity of child protection issues, while they have major in Management and Administration but not in Social Work or Sociology".*

Limited Inter-Agency Coordination

Among the participants it was stated that effective intervention in child abuse cases within families it is required inter agency coordination among stakeholders. It adds up and speed up the process of reunion of the child within family and reintegrate into the society. This context creates a compelling need for research exploring the barriers and enablers to family reunification (Taylor et al., 2016). Most of participant said that CPWB is in liaison of with various government as well non-governmental organizations (NGOs) regarding the protection of children in Punjab. But some of participant suggested that there is strong communication and coordination is required for effectively working for the children in need and they claimed that weak interagency coordination reflect on the cases of child abuse as well as during the removal process of children from unsafe family environments.

> *"We have to deal with the cases of child abuse at once, if any facility is not available in bureau we first intake the child and admit in child protection institutions managed by bureau but later we start finding other options according to specific needs of the children" (Participant 11).*

Socioeconomic Factors

It is more challenging job for professionals while dealing with families having low socioeconomic status having lack of access to basic facilities, and wide socioeconomic disparities among families. It was described by significant number of participants that socioeconomic factors are big hindrance to remove a child from unsafe family environments. While suggesting the participants stated that addressing the underlying socioeconomic factors is crucial for sustainable change. Effective intervention in the cases of child abuse depends the

socioeconomic status of families. The main cause of child abuses within families also due to above mentioned challenges.

Lack of Awareness and Education

The idea of separating a child from family is largely depends on education and awareness on family, neighborhood and professionals also. The education about child protection issues and related laws are largely not known in Pakistan. Literacy rate touch its lowest in neighboring countries. There is basic need to improve overall education of people as well as to raise awareness about issues related to children in the society. There are need to aware the society about the parties of family planning in the society especially in the families where child abuse or neglect exists. The people believes the more the children the more the earning.

> *"Parents of vulnerable children believes on the concept that the more the numbers of children, the more is earning machines and even from ten children total 1 or 2 dead there is no need to worry about as they have enough children to use in child beggary" (Participant 1).*

Lack of trainings on the part of professionals also sometimes impede the immediate action and halt the process of protect the child from abuse. Professional expertise is required in the field of child protection and to promote best practices in child protection. The field of child protection is more sensitive than any other social issues because it involves the lives of vulnerable children. The basic idea behind the research is that to promote the best practices of removal of child from unsafe family environments while taking viewpoints of various experienced professionals and reduce the chances of harm to child during the process of removal. Participants agreed upon the idea of more research in field of child protection and also proposed that trainings while induction as well as during practice must be part of the job of child protection officers.

> *"Professionals working in the filed with a huge experience sometimes doesn't about the laws and unable to identify the level of risk during rescue operation (participant 6)".*

Limited Resources and Support System

After removal process it is more challenging for professionals to reintegrate the child within family in limited resources. As per sated by participants Child removal is an expensive approach to deal with the cases of child abuse or neglect, that's why it is discouraging globally as well. For the country like Pakistan we are facing shortage of various support systems within society. Private sector also shrinks it lowest levels which may contribute in the child protection process. Various social nets of society support economically as well as emotionally for the cause of providing safe environments for the children. Lack of these resources and support system the process of providing safety and ensuring wellbeing of child is at risk after the removal from unsafe family environments. Child protection officers often faces challenges due to limited resources available for children and families. Participant 12 described it as;

> *"Social services are not suitable in Pakistan; we have very shortage of fund allocated for child protection when it's ratio compared to GDP of Pakistan and neighboring countries".*

Alternative Care Placements

Participants highlighted a major challenge of placing children in alternative care after removal from unsafe family environments. Availability in government care placements are limited due to focus of government on child protection issues. The government provide limited resources to bureau for the care placements of children. Currently, CPWB faces acute shortage of residential institutions in Punjab although it is developing more institutions but its unable to tackle the biggest province of Pakistan having population of 110 M out of which 60 M are children (*Census Punjab 2023*). A United Nation survey revealed that Pakistan is home to some 4.6 M orphan children ("Homing the country's orphans,").

> *"Currently 1200 children are resident in bureaus child protection institutions in nine districts of Punjab which are working almost in their full capacity, although some more institutions are going to be functional but they are also very*

> *limited to tackle such large population".*

Alternative to institutionalization of children are extended families and social networks linked to the family in the child abuse cases. But most of such families having low socioeconomic background they have limited options and social workers have to rely on government institutional care for abused and neglected children. Participants while suggesting that there is need of sufficient support and training to caregivers working in the government institutions can help mitigate these challenges and enhance the chances of successful alternative care placements.

Follow-Up and Ongoing Support

 Follow-up of the ongoing support to children and families is essential part of child protection. It is preventing from the abuse in future or repetition of occurrence same child abuses cases in the families within. Effective follow-ups report by professionals ensure the effective process of removal and safely reunification of the child with their families. Professional suggested that they keep follow ups in special cases.

> *"The follow-up of ongoing support and given support to child and families kept in special cases by the orders of child protection court, but in large number of cases there is lack of follow-ups of each cases it is humanly not possible for keeping periodic follow-ups of every cases to cases burdens and change of locality by families of ongoing support".*

Emotional and Psychological Challenges

It is a challenging experience for both child and professionals involved in the process of removal of child from unsafe family environments. Fear of loss of family and separation may take child into more stress from the stress of issues itself. They feel more secure in the families even in the presence of unsafe environments. There is also feeling of new place, children may stigmatize of institutionalization among peer groups and in community. These all factors child faces usually during the process of removal and going into alternative care placements. attachments and how it will be environment, it all contribute to emotionally and psychologically effects to the vulnerable children. It was suggested by the

participants that there is need of comprehensive psychological assessments and sessions of continuous psychological counseling helps the children while nurturing new relationships and to accelerate the process of reintegration or reunion. Last but not least impact on children well-being is another hurdle to remove the child from unsafe place within the family. Children may risk to go into trauma after the whole process of removal. During the process it is more chances that child may face psychological as well as behavioral issues. So it is duty of frontline workers to ensure the element of safety and well-being of the children while removing them from unsafe families.

> *"Children are more vulnerable after separation from parents, they take time to get align with the environment of CPI, after time it heals gradually and through efforts of psychological counseling it overcome the disparity between child behaviors and institutional environment".*

Professionals are also effected emotionally throughout the process but they overcome the problem through trainings interpersonal skills and different strategies.

> *"When it was my new experience I largely effected by the separation of parents and children, but after I get more experience in dealing such cases it has less effect now it is our routine job".*

Child's Safety and Family's Rights

Parental rights may be violating during the removal of child from unsecure environment within the family. Parents/guardian rights equally important as children rights. In most of cases frontline workers has to play their role within a very marginal line. They have to secure the children's rights while keeping in view the parental rights particularity in society like Pakistan where family plays very important role in the life of children instead of state as in western countries. Parents have also right to attend court proceeding and defend their stance.

> *"Petition of Habeas Corpus under Section 491 of CrPC is one of the most important and generally considered to be used to get the recovery of a person illegally detained in private or public custody." (FGD).*

While suggesting participants stated that there is thorough investigation is required by professionals of child protection in such case. There also chances the involvement of court while separating child from family unless a severe case of child protection occurred and they also have get chance to support their stance prior to removal of the child from family.

Discussions

In the study conducted there were four major themes emerged from data collected from participants **Table 2**. Removal of child requires careful intervention by the professionals. All participants heighted some significant obstacles while removal of a child from unsafe family environments.

Themes		Sub-Themes
Theme I	Cultural and Societal Beliefs	Social Stigma and Discrimination Extended Family and Social Networks
Theme II	Legal framework and implementation	Bureaucratic Hurdles Limited Inter-Agency Coordination
Theme III	Socioeconomic Factors	Lack of Awareness and Education Limited Resources and Support System Finding Alternative Care Placements Follow-Up and Ongoing Support
Theme IV	Emotional and Psychological Challenges	Child's Safety and Family's Rights

Socioeconomic factors contribute a lot hindrance in the process of removal. Factors such as lack of education, poverty, locality and macroeconomic indicators contribute a lot in occurrence of child abuse in a family. Involvement with the child protection system is common among families who are socially and economically disadvantaged (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2020, Bilson et al., 2015). Such families have very weak social ties and networks to support the children before removal from families.

Cultural and societal beliefs are one of the biggest cause to happen child abuse in family environments. Children remains intact with the lethal environment due to wrong societal beliefs and practices. Social stigma and discrimination faces by the other family members while complaining a person within family environments. Social networks support the family environments even if the abuse occur within the families. Notables and other extended family members try to hide the abuse and they don't consider it abuse within family environment. The removal of children also disrupted complex kinship patterns (cited Genat & Cripps, 2011)

Weak legal framework and systems protect cause hindrance and unnecessary delays in case of child abuse in family environments. Lack of implementation of these laws also has also occurs in the cases of removal. such laws protect the family members and custody of minor considered with parents on priority. Bureaucratic hurdles sometimes can delay the process of removal and cause child in danger. Lack of interagency coordination due to bureaucratic inertia is among the problems faces by social workers. Lack of interest in our children's future by the government also contribute to such occurrence within families.

Psychological and emotional effects on both children and professional hinder the process of removal children form unsafe families. Children may get in trauma due to fear of separation from parents. an alienation with environments of alternative care is also cause stress on children. Children may face problems during familiar with environment sand building new relationships with mates and caregivers. Chances are there to violate the family rights while separating children from parents. It can effect on parental mental health. Due to fear of separation parent scan come under mental stress especially mothers. Social workers have to keep in mind theses psychological and emotional factors while separating children from parents in abuse and neglected cases. The traumatizing impact of child removal experiences on both parents and children, and the profound sense of parental/familial grief and loss that it engenders, have been well reported in the literature (Ainsworth & Hansen, 2012, 2015; Harries & Thompson, 2008; Lewis-Brooke et al., 2017; Memarnia et al., 2015; Panozzo et al., 2007; Ross et al., 2017; Sieger & Haswell, 2020).

Conclusion

While separating children from parents due to harm it must keep in mind that family is the most important pillar of the society. While the state has responsibility to protect the children from unsafe environments or in any settings. Thus unnecessary removal must be avoided and family integration must be on priority. The removal should be the extremist act by state workers and it had to ensure that no other options are viable in each cases. Cases should be dealt with extreme care on individual basis and on need basis rather than a set of pattern or standards in every similar cases of child abuse or neglect. The sample represent that they face legal, bureaucratic, emotional and psychological barriers during child removal from unsafe families. Participants also highlighted that process of removal also effected by some socioeconomic, cultural and societal factors. Participants suggested the need of education and awareness about child protection issues in all parts of society. They stressed the need of training to child professionals, case workers, psychologists and care-givers regarding the sensitivity of their job and to enhance their skills in their job.

Limitations

Present study has some limitations. The study comprises on the professionals of Punjab only but rather represent the whole country. The facts discussed in the study specifically about Punjab and cannot signify the country's data. The participants also had some limitations regarding expression of ideas due to government employees. To ensure accuracy, the researcher interpreted the data with caution due to the stigmatization and discrimination typically associated with cases of child abuse within families, particularly in societies like Pakistan.

Sample size (n=13) was also small but continuous analysis during data collection ensured that data saturation was reached. Lack of existing literature was also a limitation in the present study. The cases of child abuse discussed by participants and used in the research kept anonymous to ensure the anonymity of cases.

ABBREVIATIONS
CPIs: Child Protection Institutions; CPWB: Child Protection & Welfare Bureau; CPC: Child Protection Court; CPO: Child Protections Officer; CSA: Child Sexual Abuse; CRC: Convention on the Rights of the Child; CRPC: Code of Criminal Procedure; FDG: Focus Group Discussion; FIR: First Investigation Report, GDP: Gross Domestic Product; NGOs: Non-Governmental Organizatuions. PDNCA: Punjab Destitute & Neglected Children Act; SAAHIL: A local NGO working for Child Protection;

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