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An Examination of how the Concept of Goffman's 'Total Institution' Applies to the Irish System of Direct Provision

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Abstract

This dissertation aims to examine the way in which Goffman's (1961) concept applies to the Irish system of Direct Provision. This will be done through outlining both the concept of the total institution and the Direct Provision system. Elements will be drawn from the concept in order to apply them to the system of Direct Provision. Examples from the system will be used in order to illustrate these elements. Once an examination is made on the way in which the concept applies to the system, there will then be an exploration of the research questions. This will find: if there are barriers to reform in Direct Provision when seen as a total institution; how does being a total institution make asylum seekers the 'other' in Irish society; and how being considered a total institution benefits the Irish state. This was analysed through desk-based research.

The dissertation found that the concept of Goffman's (1961) total institution can be applied to the Irish system of Direct Provision. After looking at the elements, it can be seen that the examples of the issues in Direct Provision illustrate the elements that are key to an institution being considered a 'total' one. Additionally, the dissertation found that the barrier to reform within the system is due to the government's lack of urgency on the topic. Moreover, when being considered the 'new' total institution, in the context of Ireland's history with total institutions, asylum seekers have been labelled the 'other' in the current Irish society. Lastly, the dissertation found that when the Direct Provision is considered a total institution the Irish state is able to benefit as they have gained social control over the asylum seekers within the system. Overall, the dissertation shows the way in which there is a lack of respect given to asylum seekers in the Irish Direct Provision system.

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Introduction

The aim of this dissertation is to examine the Irish system of Direct Provision, and apply Erving Goffman's (1961) concept of the total institution to this regime. In order to do this, the dissertation will outline: the concept of the total institution; the Direct Provision system; how it applies the total institution and Direct Provision apply to one another; and the relationship that this has with the state. The research question that are looking to be answered to aid this dissertation are:

1. What are the barriers to reforming Direct Provision when it is considered a total institution?
2. How does comparing the Direct Provision system to the concept of the total institution make asylum seekers the 'other' in Irish society?
3. How does the Irish state benefit from Direct Provision being considered a total institution?

By answering these questions, the dissertation will provide a more in-depth analysis of not just the way in which Direct Provision compares to a total institution, but the consequences behind it.

Firstly, there will be an analysis of Goffman's (1961) concept of the total institution. This will outline the whole concept, which will show the elements that need to be present for a system to be classified as a total institution. This is instrumental to the analysis of the dissertation and will be used throughout. The main three elements as highlighted by Schliehe (2016) are: 'closure'; 'bureaucratic organization'; and 'rationalization'. These three elements will be used throughout the dissertation. Once this is established, a brief overview of some applications of the concept will be shown. The two that will be explored are a business organisation, Lidl, through a study conducted by Geppert and Pastuh (2017), and Farrington's (1992) exploration of how the American prison is not a total institution, as originally Goffman used the prison system as an example of a total institution in his initial work. Therefore, these two applications will show the way in which the concept of the 'total institution' can be related to an organisation, or in the case of the prison, not be. Finally, there will be a discussion of the limitations behind the concept. These are essential when looking at applying a concept to a

regime. The limitations in this instance include the way in which Goffman collected his data and the perception of the concept having to be a ‘total’ institution. The second limitation has been fought by other scholars to it actually being a limitation in the field, which will be discussed in the chapter.

Secondly, there will be a chapter discussing the methodology that was used in this dissertation. This will go outline the methodological approach and the data analysis that was used. Additionally, it will explore the limitations that can be seen when using this methodology. This will go over the methodological approach of desk-based research and what it is, which includes an explanation of the use of secondary data within the approach. In the data analysis section, there is a look at meta-analysis as a mode of analysing this data. While it is mainly used in the frame of quantitative research, this dissertation takes on the approach of a systemic review. Lastly, the limitations to this approach are highlighted. These are emphasised as it is important to be aware of limitations of the approach before conducting research as an attempt to avoid them in any way that is possible.

In the third chapter, the dissertation looks at the Direct Provision system as a whole. It is vital to the dissertation that there is a understanding of what the Direct Provision system is. In order to do this, there will first be an exploration of the establishment of the system, which will look at the policies behind it and the reason why Direct Provision was established in the first place. Once this is established, there will then be an outline of what Direct Provision is. This will go over who it is for and what the system is meant to provide for these people. This ranges from accommodation to a weekly allowance. Finally, there will be an exploration of the issues within the Direct Provision system. Since the establishment of Direct Provision, many complaints about the issues within the system have been made, both by asylum seekers and scholars. Therefore, this section highlights these issues and, throughout, goes through the recommendations that have been made by government and non-government reports on the topic.

It is in the fourth chapter where we analyse the way in which Goffman’s (1961) concept of the ‘total institution’ can be applied to the Irish system of Direct Provision. Firstly, there is a brief discussion of some of the literature that is already found on this topic. This is a brief discussion as not many scholars have written on this topic of the total institution and the regime of the Direct Provision system. This will be followed by this dissertations analysis. In order to

do this, the three elements highlighted by Schliehe (2016) will be used alongside the issues within the Direct Provision system that was discussed in chapter three. Additionally, within this chapter there will be a discussion of the reform within the system. The protests and hunger strikes that were organised by asylum seekers within these regimes will be explored. This will show the lengths that residents will go to in order to get reform within the system. This is followed by the Nasc investigation into the progress of implementation of the McMahon report, which will show the lack of urgency that the Irish Government has with reforming the Direct Provision system. These factors will show the barriers that asylum seekers face when trying to get reform in a system that is meant to give them asylum from the horrors of their own country. Finally, there will be a discussion of the most recent report made by the government. This is known as the White Paper to End Direct Provision. This will go over the new initiative that is aimed to make Direct Provision more humane for those within the system, and the conditions in which the asylum seekers live less deplorable.

Finally, the fifth chapter discusses the relationship between Direct Provision and the Irish state. As a means to discuss this relationship, first an exploration of the Irish context will be made. By looking at previous forms of the total institution in Ireland, it will be made clear that Direct Provision is the Irish state repeating a pattern. Within the Irish context, the main focus of this section will be on the Mother and Baby Homes, with the last one closing in 1998. This will show the way in which the institution was run and the most recent investigation that was made into the issues that were in it. This section will establish a common theme of total institutions in Ireland. Secondly, there will be a brief discussion of how Direct Provision is making asylum seekers the 'other' in Irish society. While the old 'other' was unmarried women going into these institutions, the new 'other' is asylum seekers going into Direct Provision. Once all of this is established, there will then be a discussion on how this regime benefits the Irish state. This will be seen through the establishment of the system, and the policies surrounding it and how they gained social control over asylum seekers within these institutions. Lastly, there will be a brief discussion of the current situation of implementation of the White Paper in the Direct Provision system. Due to the war in Ukraine, there is growing demand for Temporary Protection in Ireland. However, the government must keep the reform of Direct Provision as one of their priorities. This will be mainly seen through the investigation by Nasc, written by Thornton and Ogunsanya (2022), into the progress of the implementation of the White Paper to End Direct Provision.

Overall, with outlining the concept of the total institution and the Irish system of Direct Provision, there will be an examination of how the concept applies to this regime. By doing this, the dissertation will be able to answer the research questions stated above, through then looking at the reform within the system, the current ‘othering’ of asylum seekers within the system of the total institution and the way in which this total institution benefits the Irish state.

Chapter 1

Goffman's Concept of the 'Total Institution'

Introduction

In this chapter, there will be a discussion of Erving Goffman's concept of the total institution. Firstly, an outline of the concept of Goffman's total institution will be explored which will show the way in which it is defined. Moreover, it will go over Schliehe's (2016) three elements that make an organisation a total institution, which will be vital when comparing it to other organisations in later chapters. Additionally, this will be followed by the applications of Goffman's concept. This will explore two different organisations: a more 'normal' organisation of Lidl and Farrington's (1992) application of it to the modern American prison. These applications show the way in which the elements of the total institution can be applied. Furthermore, the chapter considers the critiques of Goffman's concept. There have been many scholars that have pointed out the flaws and the ways in which this concept can be improved. Overall, this chapter aims to give the reader a better understanding of what Goffman's concept of the total institution is, how it can be applied and some of the critiques of it.

Defining Goffman's 'Total Institution'

Goffman's (1961) text *Asylum* introduced the concept of the total institution. In this text, Goffman outlined his findings from a covert observation of the routines and practices of St Elizabeth's psychiatric hospital in Washington D.C.. According to Goffman (1961: 11), "a total institution may be defined as a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals cut off from wider society for an appreciable period of time together lead an enclosed formally administered round of life." This definition requires that all people are under one roof and under the same authority. There are daily activities that are completed in a group and each member is treated alike. These activities must be tightly scheduled and imposed by a system of explicit, formal rulings and body of officials. From this it can be seen that the special organisation of these sites is crucial. However, it is important to note that Goffman's main intention was not to look at just the architecture of the total institution, but rather the action within these institutions. According to Clegg (2006: 427), "we are dealing with what people actually do in Goffman, not what the designers of their institutions would have to do."

In this, Clegg is comparing Goffman's work to that of Foucault's (1977) work, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* – the power of incarceration, rules and surveillance. This work had themes that were also within Goffman's work. However, as stated above, "instead of focusing on design, [Goffman] studied action, which undoubtedly gave greater acuity to his analysis" (Clegg, 2006: 427). The action in this case would be the interaction between staff and residents, residents and wider society and the way in which these institutions are organised. Overall, Goffman is discussing the way in which actions have power over those in these institutions and can be seen as a form of social control over them. As stated by Scott (2010: 214), "institutions were 'total' insofar as they physically confined their inmates, limiting their access to valued resources: not only material possessions but also time, personal space and control over one's daily routine." To those that are inmates of these institutions, their whole life is conducted within this space. It is safe to say that total institutions are organisations that contain totality of the lives of those who are their members (Clegg, 2006).

There are many different elements to the way in which these members' lives are conducted within the institutions that make it a 'total' institution. Schliehe (2016), discusses three main elements that make a place a total institution: closure, rationalization and bureaucratic organisation. Closure within the total institution refers to both the physical closure of the institution and the closure to social interaction. In terms of physical closure, it does not mean that it is completely sealed off. There is room for there to be movement outside of the institution, "This closure is not to be understood in the general sense of the term, which would apply to all sorts of buildings, but in the sense of 'moral closure'" (Schliehe, 2016: 21). This gives the residents a sense of isolation from wider society. They lack interaction with others that are not within the community that they have created within the total institution. A barrier to social interaction is created among the residents. By doing this it then creates a total institution. Secondly, is the 'rationalisation'. Additionally, this can be seen as routinisation within the institution. According to Schliehe (2016: 21), "the reconstruction of every-day life spheres within the same institution and with a pre-determined plan behind it wherein people on the inside cannot choose freely." The people within these institutions have their days planned. Usually, they would eat at the same time every day, whether that would be in a communal food space, or given food at the same time. Their whereabouts are closely monitored and they do not have the liberty to move freely. This element makes the people within the institution infantilised. They are treated like children within these total institutions. Their sense of autonomy is completely stripped away from them. As stated by Goffman (1961: 17), every

part of “the day's activities are tightly scheduled with one activity leading at a pre-arranged time into the next, the whole sequence of events being imposed from above by a system of explicit, formal rulings and a body of officials”. This leads on to the final element that has to be discussed which is ‘bureaucratic organisation’ in a total institution occurs when there is a “clear distinction between staff and inmates as a ‘line of demarcation’” (Schliehe, 2016: 21). By including bureaucratic organisation within the elements, it shows the important role that the staff have in making places a total institution. They are the ones that have the power and the control over the inmates. They are the enforcers of this total institution and this control over the residents. In order for it to be a total institution, the staff must have a clear authority over those presiding in the institution. As stated by Geppert and Pastuh (2017: 256), “the common characteristic of these strictly hierarchical institutions is the exertion of significant control over members”.

However, many other scholars would include other elements as important in making a place a total institution. According to Mouzelis (1971: 114), “not only are mortification processes inherent in total institutions, but their impact is systemically destructive to the self, in so far as it always reduces self-autonomy and self-respect.” This ‘mortification’ process is highlighted by Goffman (1961: 26), when the person “finds certain roles are lost to him by virtue of the barrier that separates him from the outside world” and therefore, is “coded into an object that can be fed into the administrative machinery of the establishment, to be worked on smoothly by routine operations”. This element has been described as performative and the theatrical element of the total institution. It moulds those within the institution into what general society wants them to be. Additionally, it could come under routinisation as it is repetitive and does not allow them to have a sense of autonomy within the institution. As stated by MacKenzie and Porter (2019: 241):

However, it is important to recall that we are not performing multiple selves, rather we are stretched across the institutional domain as divided actors who are nothing but the roles we play and we have to play all of these roles all the time in any given institutional setting, albeit in a particularly sequenced manner.

These individuals are reduced to being less than human within this element. This element of the total institution is a way to ensure that the staff has control over the inmates and that they perform correctly every day.

Overall, the concept of the total institution is when an “organization has more or less monopoly control of its member’s everyday life” (Clegg, 2006: 427).

Applications

There have been many applications of Goffman’s ‘total institution’ across different organisations. The two that will be discussed herein are the application of the concept to a business organisation and its application to the modern American prison. Both of these applications were chosen as to demonstrate two different ways of applying and interpreting the total institution onto an organisation.

These business organisations, such as Lidl, can be seen in a study conducted by Geppert and Pastuh (2017), in which they look at the total institution in relation to work and employment practices. They compare Goffman’s idea of the total institution to that of a business organisation. This is an interesting take as not many scholars relate it to the business world, more so that of organisations and social structures. Geppert and Pastuh’s emphasis is “on the question of how interactions are intertwined with specific a form of managerial surveillance, control and punishment, at the subjective, organizational level” (Geppert and Pastuh, 2017: 256). They seek to explore more so the bureaucratic organisational element of Goffman’s concept. There is an emphasis on the hierarchical way in which this business organisation runs, and the stresses and abuses that come with this. Additionally, they put forward a question of “why ‘oppressive’ and ‘totalistic’ organisational configurations might emerge in the first place and, why they have become ‘normal’ and persistent form of organising and working in some firms” (Geppert and Pastuh, 2017: 256). They conducted their research across different Lidl stores in order to get a deeper understanding of the way in which this organisation runs. The authors do not take the concept of ‘total’ institution too literally. This is a good way of looking at it as Goffman’s concept is more malleable than one may think. It is not completely ‘total’, it is more so looking at the different aspects of an organisation that can create a hostile environment. Something which can be seen through the managerial control and

surveillance that Geppert and Pastuh observe in their article. Overall, Geppert and Pastuh (2017: 270), found that:

Our contribution highlights that intensified surveillance and strong emphasis on disciplinary measures have also become quite common and sophisticated techniques of managerial control in non-manufacturing industries and here especially in the so-called low-skilled service sectors. Furthermore, our framework highlights the cultural, institutional and economic embeddedness of these practices both at the organizational and societal level.

However, the more abusive forms of managerial control are not seen in all stores all the time. They mainly occur when upper management is put under severe stress to meet targets that have not been previously met.

Another study that compares the concept of the total institution to an organisation is Farrington's (1992) discussion of the modern prison as a form of a total institution. Within Goffman's work of applying the concept of the total institution to different organisations, the prison was one of his applications. Goffman showed the way in which prison can be considered a total institution. However, Farrington does not believe that the modern American prison can be called a total institution. Farrington gives many reasons as to why the modern prison should not be considered as a total institution, which mainly focuses on the element of 'closure'. Farrington (1992: 18) states, that "the modern prison is not separate, it is not isolate, it is not autonomous; rather, it is integrated and interconnected, in an important and necessary socially significant ways." He goes on to explore the ways in which the prison is connected with the community. Additionally, the way in which this idea of the prison being a total institution does not fit into the American correctional philosophy. As there is a growing interest in the welfare of the inmate and rehabilitation, America continues to "develop and implement large numbers of offenders to large society, either as a result of, or as part of, their successful treatment" (Farrington, 1992: 17).

Farrington goes on to explain the consequences of believing that the prison is a total institution. Additionally, while he explains that it is not a 'total' institution, there is also discussion of how the ordinary people of America still view it as a total institution. According to Farrington (1992: 18), "when citizens think about prisons, and the goals toward which these

social organizations presumably strive, they tend to do so largely in terms of Goffman's total institutional model." He puts forward that Goffman's concept gives the prisons an image of being retributive. A way for the citizens to think that they are locking the prisoners up and throwing away the key. Farrington believes that American prisons are not able to accomplish what they should in theory be able to accomplish: "they cannot remove the criminal element totally from our midst. They cannot protect society on any long-term basis, and they cannot (and do not) rehabilitate in any systematic way" (Farrington, 1992: 23). This belief that prisons are a total institution within society can lead to many serious consequences. Farrington (1992: 23) states, that "laws are becoming harsher, sentences are becoming longer, prison populations are becoming larger, more and more new prisons are being built, and increasingly large numbers of our citizenry are being incarcerated." This application, or lack thereof, of Goffman to total institutions, shows the impact that it can have on wider society.

Critiques

While there are many applications of Goffman and many academic that support and work within his concept of the total institution, there are also many critics. Scholars have highlighted many limitations of Goffman's concept. Davies (1989: 82), for example, states that "there are weaknesses to Goffman's analysis, both in some of his applications of the concept of total institution and in his method of confirmatory sampling from available samples". Goffman's method of analysis consisted of selective choice of modern or historical examples of life in other total institutions that fit into Goffman's asylum-based model. By doing this, Goffman made it look like that these different institutions were much more alike than they actually were. Therefore, while "total institutions do have important distinguishing characteristics in common – that is what makes the concept a useful and enduring one – but they are not as homogenous as Goffman suggests" (Davies, 1989: 83). Furthermore, while it is a useful way to look at these institutions, with the bias that is seen within the initial stages of the concept, Goffman selecting the examples that he wanted to use for his concept, draws up causes for concern with many critics. Moreover, when discussing the criticisms of Goffman's work Archibald et al (2015: 40), states that "these criticisms presume that Goffman had pretensions to be directly empirical in the logical positivists sense, but some critics have expressed doubts about this and pointed to his frequent use of others' observations as evidence."

Finally, “the contestation of Goffman’s writings on total institutions rarely do little more than object that real institutions are never total” (Schliehe, 2016: 22). Farrington (1992), for example, argues that the modern prison is not a total institution as it interacts with wider society. However, in Goffman’s concept of the total institution, he is not suggesting that the institution is completely closed off and removed from wider society, but rather “as the opposite: an invitation to explore the inside and outside and in-between semi-permeability in its diffuse totality” (Schliehe, 2016: 24). Many people may be confused by the title of the concept and expect this totality when it comes to the analysis of the institution. However, it is much more malleable than one may think. There are different levels of a total institution. Some being more closed and oppressive than others, “Total institutions exist within highly varied external social and cultural environments which may well shape them in as decisively different ways” (Davies, 1989: 94). Therefore, the two dimensions that should be used when looking at a total institution are the degree of bureaucratization and the openness versus the closeness of a place. When discussing Goffman, Crewe et al (2013: 4) state that “he himself drew attention to the non-total nature of institutional life, in which certain domains were more normalised than others”.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a total institution one in which a group of people live under one roof, cut off from wider society, living a formally administered regime. Throughout Goffman’s work there was a focus on action rather than the design of the institution. Therefore, giving more emphasis to what the people within the institutions actually did. Building on this concept, Schliehe suggested three elements of a total institution were put forward. Those were: ‘closure’, ‘rationalisation’, and ‘bureaucratic organisation’. These three elements will help when looking at other applications of the total institution. Moreover, there was then an exploration of two applications of Goffman’s concept. These were a business organisation, Lidl, and the American prison. Applying the concept to the business organisation more so focused on the element of the ‘bureaucratic organisation’, showing how this framework can be useful in finding abuse and managerial control within the workplace. However, Farrington’s application of the concept to the modern prison, was actually arguing that it is *not* a total institution. This argument mainly focused on the element of ‘closure’, saying that the prison is still connected to wider society and is not totally cut off. Finally, the critiques of the concept were discussed. The main critique that many scholars had was the way in which the concept was proven. Goffman used other researchers’ observations as evidence, he picked and chose what to use, therefore making the

total institutions more homogenous than they actually are. Like Farrington's critique of the concept as applied to the prison, many critics say that a real institution is never total. However, other researchers have suggested that the malleability of the concept means that this criticism is unfounded.

Chapter 2

Methodology

Introduction

This dissertation examines the Irish system of Direct Provision, and applies Erving Goffman's (1961) concept of the total institution to this regime. This chapter outlines the methodology used when conducting this research and why it was used. The research questions that will be answered are:

- What are the barriers to reforming Direct Provision when it is considered a total institution?
- How does comparing the Direct Provision system to the concept of the total institution make asylum seekers the 'other' in Irish society?
- How does the Irish state benefit from Direct provision being considered a total institution?

In order to answer these questions, there was an analysis of the way in which Goffman's (1961) concept of the total institution can be applied to the Irish Direct Provision system. The methodological approach used was a desk-based approach, which used secondary data as the source material. The way in which the data was analysed was through a meta-analysis, which was a systemic review of the literature. Furthermore, limitations to the methodology were recognised.

Methodological Approach

This research was conducted through desk-based research, in order to both collect and analyse the secondary data. This method was used as there are many official documents that will be examined with regard to the total institution and the Direct Provision system. This form of research also helps when looking back at historical documents or what happened in the past, especially when looking at the concept of the total institution within Ireland. This method is favourable because of its accessibility. There are many documents that are available online. Additionally, there are no financial cost to conducting this type of research.

The data that was collected was secondary data. “Data are considered secondary when these have been collected for a purpose that is different from that of measuring the results of a quality improvement project.” (Johnson and Sylvia, 2018: 61). In the case of this research, there is a range of secondary data that has been collected. Scholarly articles and books were used to when discussing the total institution, in order to outline the concept, and show the applications and limitations. Additionally, this will be done when discussing the Direct Provision system. Government reports and investigations conducted by non-governmental organisations were also collected for analysis. These aided the scholarly articles and improved the validity of the findings. Of course, when collecting the data, the quality of the documents had to be considered. In order to do this, Newburn’s consideration of authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning of documents was followed (Newburn, 2017).

This research was conducted by an interpretivist approach. Advocates for the interpretivist approach believe that “it is not possible to produce an objective description of reality. Instead, their basic argument is that our descriptions are always colored by our specific historical, cultural, ideological, gender-based, and linguistic understanding of reality” (Sanberg, 2005: 45).

Data Analysis

A meta-analysis approach was undertaken in order to analyse the secondary data that was collected. According to Curtis and Curtis (2011: 228), “a meta-analysis collects and synthesises results from research and calculates overall effects.” This form of analysis can be compared to that of a literature review. When discussing a meta-analysis, it can often suggest a quantitative review of data. However, in this dissertation, meta-analysis was used as a form of a systemic review of literature. As stated by Borenstein et al (2021: 393), when conducting a meta-analysis “the goal is to broaden the base of studies in some way, expand the question, and study the pattern of answers.” There must be an analysis of all of the research within the topic, limitations and all. That is why the collection of the secondary data is important in order to get a wide scope of the literature that is within the topic. However, it is important to get data that relates to the research questions that are being asked. This will aid in the analysis, but you must be conscious of bias when doing this. While it must relate to the question the answer cannot be one-sided, or else there will be no validity to the answer.

Limitations

It is important to be aware of the limitations of the methodology before starting the research. When conducting research with secondary data, or existing data, through a meta-analysis there can be many limitations. Two of them being: the lack of control over the data and the risk of bias when analysing it. According to Yorke (2011: 257), when collecting secondary data, a disadvantage to this may be that “the collected data may not capture exactly what the researcher would have preferred to collect: the researcher has to make do with what is available, and a compromise between the real data and the ideal data is almost inevitable.” This shows the lack of control that the researcher has over the data that they collect. They have to be conscious of the sources that are being collected. This then leads into the second limitation, which is the risk of bias when collecting and analysing the data. As stated by Yorke (2011: 257), is that “the compromises that often have to be made when analysing existing data can introduce bias into the findings, and the outcomes of analyses may have limited generalizability beyond the context within which the original data were gathered.” Overall, if one is not careful these limitations could intrude on the conclusion of the research. Therefore, it has been noted throughout this research and have aimed to try and steer clear of bias from the conclusion of the research.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this dissertation examines the Irish system of Direct Provision, and applies Goffman’s (1961) concept of the total institution to this regime. The methodology used to analyse the way Goffman’s (1961) concept can be applied to the Direct Provision system was desk-based research. This approach collected secondary data that ranged from scholarly articles to government reports. The form of data analysis used was a meta-analysis, which was used as a systemic literature review. Additionally, limitations to the research were found in order to help aid during the research. While nothing could be done about the lack of control over the secondary data that is out there, there were efforts made to avoid the research from being biased.

Chapter 3

Direct Provision in Ireland

Introduction

In this chapter there will be an exploration of the Direct Provision system in Ireland, which is Ireland's system of housing and providing different services to asylum seekers. Firstly, there will be an introduction to Direct Provision. This will outline the establishment of Direct Provision and the Acts that were brought into Irish law. There will then be an outline of the system, which will explore what Direct Provision is. This will discuss the living conditions and the weekly allowance the asylum seekers get in Direct Provision. Lastly, there will be a discussion of some of the issues found within Direct Provision. This will outline the deplorable conditions in which they live, the poor relationship between staff and residents, the isolated area in which the centres can be situated, which includes the problems with transportation and the resident's right to work. This chapter closes with an overview of how these serious issues can be resolved.

Establishment of Direct Provision

In 1956, Ireland signed the 1951 UN Geneva Convention, which related to the Status of Refugees. However, at this time the country had no system for those who sought international protection here. This made it difficult to track those who tried to get into the country. Due to this, the government developed the first legislative framework in the 1996 Refugee Act. Additionally, Ireland started to accept persons seeking protection under the EU Reconciliation and Resettlement Programmes. Initially, when this was put into law, Ireland still did not have a specific system that took care of asylum seekers. At the start, "asylum seekers were treated as homeless under Section 10 of the *Housing Act, 1988*, which gives local authorities the power to provide emergency accommodation through a variety of mechanisms" (Dunne et al., 2013: 3). They would also go onto the social welfare scheme that every other Irish citizen was on. However, the Irish state concluded that these measures were not appropriate in dealing with the increasing number of asylum seekers coming to Ireland. Therefore, they established the Direct Provision system in 2000. In addition, the Directorate of Asylum Seeker Support and the Refugee Agency were merged to create the Refugee

Integration Agency in 2001, which worked within the main body of what was at the time the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. According to a recent statement by the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderic O’Gorman, there are: forty-two permanent centres; three Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres (EROCs); twenty-two Emergency centres (opened prior to 2022); eight pre-reception centres; and ninety-six emergency centres (opened 2022 and to date in 2023), (Dáil Éireann Debate, 2023). The centres that form the focus of the dissertation are the forty-two permanent centres across Ireland. Since the establishment of Direct Provision there have been a few issues that have been pointed out. Due to this, there have been investigations into asylum seekers’ experiences of Direct Provision. The two main reports for this are the McMahon Report (2015), and the Day Report (2020). These raised issues concerning Direct Provision and suggested some recommendations on how to solve the problems within the system. However, in order to understand these issues and recommendations there needs to be a more in depth outline of the system.

Outlining Direct Provision

The Direct Provision system is a system in Ireland that provides refuge to asylum seekers. An asylum seeker is a person who has made an application for refugee and/or subsidiary protection status. The Direct Provision system in Ireland was intended to provide individuals with adequate accommodation on a full-board basis, and include other measures which would meet the basic needs of asylum seekers (Doras, 2019). This accommodation is provided by these centres which are situated in different areas across Ireland. These centres are sited in disused hostels, hotels, caravan parks, guest houses, holiday camps and so on. Generally, these sites are situated in isolated locations to the rest of Irish society. The accommodation is intended to be for short-term use, no longer than six months, as asylum seekers’ applications are being processed. If their application is granted they may look for housing elsewhere. However, if it is not they must leave the country. According to Uludag (2016: 49), “Ireland ranks significantly below the EU average in granting refugee status. Austerity and current economic crisis cannot be used as an excuse for this shamefully low rate.” According to Citizens Information (2023), asylum seekers do not get to choose where they live, but they can ask to live in a certain location if they, for example, have to be close to a hospital where they are getting medical treatment. The ‘full-board basis’, would include their breakfast, lunch and dinner. This is provided by allowing them to use the canteen at certain times, or

buffet style meals. However, these are all at specific times and the asylum seekers did not have freedom to make or eat food whenever they feel like it. As stated by Dunne et al., (2013: 2), one of Direct Provisions purpose is “the prevention of widespread homelessness among asylum seekers and secondly keeping out false asylum seekers.” Therefore, with the introduction of Direct Provision the State was able to keep track of the number of asylum seekers that are in the country and are seeking refuge. According to the Irish Refugee Council (2020), as of April 2020 there are around 7,400 people in Direct Provision and emergency accommodation. Direct Provision provides: somewhere to live; meals; a weekly allowance; and a medical card. However, those seeking asylum do not have to accept Direct Provision. When applying for international protection, they can choose to go into Direct Provision or live elsewhere. However, if they choose to live elsewhere, they are not entitled to any assistance from the State. That would include, social welfare or help with housing costs.

Firstly, the accommodation. Asylum seekers are placed in one of the forty-two centres across Ireland while they are waiting on their application to be processed. These centres are under different management by a range of private companies. As stated by Lentin (2016: 22), “the centres are managed by private for-profit companies under the supervision of the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA), an arm of the Department of Justice and Equality.” Therefore, while there is a set of rules that they have to follow when the asylum seekers are in the centre, different management deals with situations differently. In general, many residents are living in shared rooms, with shared bathrooms. The majority of the accommodation is usually in these former hotels and hostels, and centres have moved away from the caravan parks and guest homes as the system became more established. Within these rooms there can be up to nine individuals sharing. Additionally, families are expected to share their rooms. They also have regimented mealtimes, as stated above. Most of their day in there is structured. Not being able to move around without telling members of staff where they are going and what they are doing.

In addition to providing accommodation to those seeking asylum, other measures, such as the Direct Provision weekly allowance, is provided to asylum seekers. According to the Asylum Information Database (2023), in 2021, protection applicants receive a weekly allowance of €38.80 per adult and €29.80 per child. A group of migrant advocacy organisations called for the daily expenses allowance to be increased during the pandemic. This request was refused, (Asylum Information Database, 2023). These statistics are still relevant today, as

asylum seekers are still getting the same amount for their weekly allowance. Up until 2017, asylum seekers were not allowed to seek work in Ireland. However, due to the elongated time that there were waiting in Direct Provision, if they were waiting for nine months or over for the applications to be approved, they are now able to apply to seek employment. If they are successful, depending on income, either their weekly allowance would be reduced, they would pay to stay within Direct Provision, or they could look for accommodation elsewhere under the supervision of Direct Provision. Overall, the establishment of Direct Provision was Ireland's way of giving asylum seekers their right to housing and food when seeking refuge within this country. It is seen as a stepping stone when these individuals are waiting on their applications to be processed.

Issues within Direct Provision

Unfortunately, while it was meant to aid those seeking asylum, from the early stages of its establishment, Direct Provision has received many criticisms. As stated by Breen (2008: 623), "the reality of life on Direct Provision provides numerous examples of Ireland's failure to protect the human rights of asylum seekers." This can be seen through research conducted on the asylum seekers' lived experience within the system. Many organisations have been aiding this fight for reform and for greater respect for human rights within the centres, some of those being: Doras, Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC), Nasc, Movement of Asylum Seekers in Ireland (MASI) and many more. These organisations have conducted many investigations and have written many reports on the human rights abuses within this system. Some of the main problems that were repeatedly highlighted were: the deplorable living conditions; the negative relationship between staff and asylum seekers; the isolated areas in which centres are situated. Another issue related to Direct Provision is the lack of sufficient supports and care services. Additionally, it can be seen that there is a gendered element when discussing some of the issues within the Direct Provision system. Women and children within the system can be seen to suffer more from some of the issues in the system.

However, in the report by the Working Group to Report to Government on Improvements to the Protection Process, including Direct Provision and Supports to Asylum Seekers (2015), they set out to look at ways in which the protection process and Direct Provision can be improved. This report is known as the McMahon Report and is the first full investigation of Direct Provision. This report found that:

National and international commentary on the Irish protection system has been focused on the conditions in Direct Provision. It is, however, universally acknowledged that the biggest single issue facing protection applicants is the length of time that they have to wait for a final decision on their claim.

(McMahon report, 2015: 14).

Within the Direct Provision in Ireland, the length of time that was meant to be spent in the system is six months. Unfortunately, the time it takes to process these applications are becoming longer and longer. Due to this, some applicants have been within the system for decades. When looking at the experience of the people within Direct Provision, the McMahon report (2015: 15), found that there was “a constant underlying theme is one of intense frustration or despair arising from the lengthy determination process and resulting lengthy residence in centres originally designed for short stays of six months.” Additionally, it creates a lack of uncertainty among the people. Asylum seekers feel as though they have been forgotten by the state, and that their plea for refuge is going unnoticed. This long-term stay within the system creates a sense of fear, powerlessness and invisibility (O’Reilly, 2018). Moreover, one of the fears of asylum seekers is “that they may not be capable of independent living when they get a final decision on their claim” (McMahon report, 2015: 15). Therefore, the recommendation from the McMahon Report was that the State needs to work on their application procedure. The McMahon report (2015), suggests that the solution need to address the stage within the system the persons at, as no person should be in the system for five years or more. Additionally, “at close of the six month period the authorities commit to review of the operation of the solution for those in the system for five years or more and prioritise remaining long staying cases” (McMahon report, 2015: 17).

Furthermore, another investigation that was made was by Doras (2019). This investigation looked at the experiences of living in Direct Provision, which focused on the Mount Trenchard accommodation centre. This centre is a single male centre which is located 40km from Limerick city, and five kilometres from the nearest town, Foynes. The main findings from this investigation were problems with: safety and wellbeing; isolated location; physical living conditions; and operational and staff issues (Doras, 2019). Firstly, the isolated location. Many centres are located outside of a town. There is a sense that the state want to keep asylum seekers out of site and out of mind to the general Irish population. While there is

public transport, this can be very limited at times. In the case of Mount Trenchard, there is one bus, which is free, that goes into the town, in the morning then comes back in the evening. However, as they have to spend the whole day there, residents would have to buy lunch in town and therefore would eat into their allowance if they go (Doras, 2019). Therefore, not many residents would choose to go into the city during the day. Unfortunately, due to this isolation, many residents suffer from mental health issues. They have a feeling of social exclusion from wider society. As stated by FLAC (2010: 135), “the impoverished and isolated situation in which direct provision residents find themselves is not in line with the government’s own initiatives to avoid social exclusion and to eliminate consistent poverty.”

Secondly, the physical living conditions. As stated by FLAC (2010: 89), “the situation in Direct Provision varies from centre to centre and this includes the amount of space provided to either an individual or a family.” Within Direct Provision many of these centres provide shared rooms. In the case of Mount Trenchard, there are two single rooms, the remaining sixteen rooms have 83 bed spaces, which share a minimum of three and up to eight adults accommodated per room (Doras, 2019). Due to these shared rooms, asylum seekers have expressed their right to privacy is being impacted. Additionally, it can exacerbate their mental health issues and increase tension between residents as they have no other place to go, due to the isolated area to which the centre is located, (Doras, 2019). Moreover, this was also seen in the investigation conducted by FLAC (2010: 89), where:

Families are also obliged to share rooms which may be suitable when the children are infants but as the size of the family increases or the children grow older, it causes problems in terms both of space and of privacy and development.

This is caused by the overcrowding in Direct Provision because of the long wait time for applications to be processed. Another report that was set out to investigate Direct Provision was the Report of the Advisory Group on the Provision of Support including Accommodation to Persons in the International Protection Process. This is better known as the Day Report. As stated in the Day Report (2020: 60), “the current system of direct provision was not designed as a long-term system”. Their stay within the system was only meant to be for six months, not years at a time. Additionally, Direct Provision “has evolved as circumstances changed but has

always been reactive, dealing with problems as they arise rather than as part of a coherent, purpose designed system” (Day Report, 2020: 60).

Finally, the operational and staff issues within the centres. In the case of Mount Trenchard, the staff are actually employed by a private company contract by the Department of Justice to manage day-to-day operations. The Doras report (2019) outlines their views of staff: “residents had differing views on the supportiveness of staff.” In one way they were good as they respected the resident’s privacy. However, they were found to be ill-equipped to solve internal problems or emergency situations that arise in the centre, and they are passive towards the residents, not building any relation with them (Doras, 2019). A recommendation for this problem would be that the staff get adequate training. Not just training on how to deal with emergency issues, that is the basic necessity, but also for them to be aware of their equality obligations and of diversity issues when providing services and supports to persons in the system (McMahon report, 2015). Additionally, the residents are under constant surveillance from members of staff. This varies from centre to centre, some being more relaxed about the monitoring than others. When discussing the constant surveillance of asylum seekers, is important to note that in the “RIA requirements stipulate residents must register their presence daily [...] Any resident deemed absent without adequate cause may have their allowance stopped and be ‘re-located’ rendering them homeless” (Hewson, 2022: 681). With the incorporation of a large number of cameras being placed around the centre, residents feel that they are being watched constantly, and that their right to privacy, like with the living conditions, is being stripped away. As stated in Hewson (2022: 682), “residents and their conduct are dependent on whims of management [...] increasingly sophisticated surveillance technologies are deployed alongside street level manipulations and the arbitrary application of rules.” This control that the staff has over the residents lead to a poor relationship between the two. This creates tension within the centre, with everyone being on edge and not knowing when the next conflict may arise, as it could be over a piece of bread. In 2018, a mother was denied a slice of bread for her sick child, outside mealtime, this received backlash from the public and the Department of Justice had to send out an apology for the conduct of the staff, promising that it would not happen again. When giving a statement to *The Irish Times* the Department of Justice said the RIA said: “The contractor has since reverted to us to advise that this unfortunate, but isolated incident was a miscommunication between staff” (McGreevy, 2018). However, on the opposite end of the spectrum, in a report conducted by the Ombudsman on Direct Provision (2018), found that complaints about attitude of centre staff to residents can

have a cultural or communication dimension. In the example given in the Ombudsman report (2018: 11), a resident was “deeply reluctant to ask for more food as doing so would be regarded as begging in her culture”. Other complaints residents made about the staff were described as “once-off” altercations (The Ombudsman, 2018: 11). Therefore, it is important for there to be an improvement in the relationship between the resident and staff, the staff would benefit from diversity training.

Furthermore, parenting within the Direct Provision system can be more difficult with these issues. Since the establishment of the Direct Provision system asylum seeking women that were pregnant received negative discourse in the Irish media. According to Luibhéid (2004: 339), “there was also a widespread representation of asylum seeker women engaging in childbearing as a means of exploiting and abusing the system, nation, and Irish people”. This was a common discourse among people in Ireland during the early 2000s. It can be seen that “the notion that women were having babies so that they could gain residency and then live off welfare was widely suggested” (Luibhéid, 2004: 339). However, due to the issues that are seen above, it is highly unlikely for this to be true, with the elongated time to wait for the application to be put through. Additionally, the issues within the Direct Provision system can be heightened with the addition of children. The issues of this can be seen in a study conducted by Ogbu et al (2014: 260) which are: “ensuring the protection and moral guidance of their children, basic care and nurturing of children, the educational/social development of children, coping with financial stress and threats to their psychological well-being”. These issues are hard for those with a two parents within the system. However, this can cause added stress to single mothers within the system. As stated in FLAC (2010: 111)

The situation of women seeking asylum is described as being ‘partially harrowing’ as they may have to assume more responsibility as the decision maker of the household, a role with which they may not be familiar as it may have been traditionally held by a father, husband or brother.

This situation can lead the women in the Direct Provision system to have deteriorating mental health. This can be particularly difficult within the confines of Direct Provision as they are isolated and have limited resources to support at their disposal (FLAC, 2010).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter sought to give the reader a better understanding of the Direct Provision system in Ireland. Firstly, there was a discussion of the establishment of Direct Provision. This showed the signing of the 1951 Geneva Convention in 1956. While there were measures between 1956 and 2000 for asylum seekers coming to Ireland there was no official system. Therefore, Direct Provision was established in 2000 in order to accommodate the asylum seekers searching for refuge in Ireland. The chapter then provided an outline of the system, showing that it is a way in which asylum seekers can get accommodation, meals, a weekly allowance and a medical card, if they decide to go into the Direct Provision system. However, Direct Provision is notable for the many issues that have arisen within the system since its establishment. The ones focused on in this chapter were the deplorable living conditions, the poor relationship between staff and residents and the isolated areas in which the centres can be situated. This was seen through the McMahon Report and the Day Report. Additionally, recommendations on how to resolve these issues were discussed throughout.

Chapter 4

Understanding the Direct Provision System as a ‘Total Institution’

Introduction

This dissertation so far explored the concept of the ‘total institution’ and the way in which the Direct Provision system works. This chapter presents an analysis which seeks to apply Goffman’s concept to the system of Direct Provision. This will be shown through Schliehe’s (2016) elements that make up a total institution, which are: ‘closure’; ‘bureaucratic organization’; and ‘routinization’. In order to show the way in which Direct Provision can be compared to the concept of the total institution, examples will be drawn from the issues outlined within the system. Therefore, by outlining that the elements of the total institution are the issues of Direct Provision, it can be said that a system for potentially vulnerable people which seeks to provide asylum should not resemble a total institution. Following this, there will be a discussion of the protests and hunger strikes that were conducted by asylum seekers in order for them to get their voices heard and for there to be reform in the system that they live in. This will be followed by an exploration of the proposed reform of Direct Provision. This will include an illustration of whether the recommendations of the McMahon Report, which was discussed in the previous chapter, have been implemented. Additionally, the government’s White Paper to End Direct Provision will be mentioned.

The Direct Provision System and the Total Institution

There is some literature on the concept of the total institution as applied to Direct Provision. However, articles by Loyal and Quilley (2016) and Nedeljkovic (2011), have mentioned the ways in which the Direct Provision system in Ireland can be compared to that of Goffman’s concept of the total institution. These two articles will aid in this analysis of Direct Provision as a total institution.

According to Loyal and Quilley (2016: 79), “through unintended secondary effects DPD [Direct Provision and Dispersal] centres also operate as total institutions”. These

secondary effects being that of segregation and institutionalisation, which impacts asylum seekers' well-being negatively. Loyal and Quilley found that "in processing asylum seekers, DPD centres progressively strip them away from any vestige of autonomy and self-determination, corroding the sense of self and self-esteem that, for Goffman, constitutes an essential dimension of the process of individualization in modern societies". It is like this institution is making the asylum seeker the other in Irish society. This is not uncommon when it comes to Ireland's history with similar institutions, which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter. Additionally, Nedeljkovic (2018: 289), believes that Direct Provision is continuing Ireland's shameful tradition of confinement, and that "these centres resemble what sociologist Erving Goffman termed a 'total institution'". Moreover, much like Schliehe's (2016) three elements to describe the total institution, Nedeljkovic (2018) describes the three main characteristics of a total institution that coincide with Schliehe's criteria. Therefore, in order to look at the way in which Direct Provision can compare to that of the total institution the elements that were put forward by Schliehe (2016) will be used, those being: 'closure', 'bureaucratic organization' and 'routinization'. Through this we are able to see some of the forms of confinement that are evident in Goffman's concept. Nedeljkovic (2018), when discussing Goffman's work, it was stated that even though it was first published over 50 years ago, in 1961, it would be hard to find a more accurate account of these centres". These elements are highlighted through the issues seen within the institutions that were discussed in the previous chapter. They will be briefly be discussed again in relation to the ways in which they can be compared to the elements of the total institution.

Firstly, 'closure' within Direct Provision. Within the concept of the total institution, 'closure' can mean both physical and social closure, or isolation. As stated by Goffman (1961: 17), "all aspects of life are conducted in the same place and under the same single authority". They must be housed under the same roof, therefore, leading to isolation from wider society. The physical isolation was seen with the investigation into the Mount Trenchard centre, conducted by the organisation Doras (2016). This was where the centre was physically isolated from wider society. Additionally, there can be a sense of social isolation and moral closure that comes with this physical sense. According to Loyal and Quilley (2016: 76), one of the rationales of the Direct Provision system is "to segregate, render invisible, and confine ethnographically distinct groupings away from the general citizen population whilst acting as a deterrent and reducing immigration to a minimum". By isolating asylum seekers from the wider community is in fact making them the 'other' within Irish society. Therefore, by making them

the other is then creating a moral closure between asylum seekers and wider society, which is the key feature of a total institution.

Secondly, is the 'bureaucratic organization'. As they are housed under one roof and doing the daily activities together, these have to be monitored by a higher authority. According to Goffman (1961: 17), "the whole sequence of events being imposed from above by a system of explicit, formal rulings and a body of officials". As stated above this is to do with the relationship and being a distinction between staff and, in this case, resident in the centres. The running of Direct Provision is done by private businesses, however, this was always the case. Previous forms of institutions in Ireland were mainly run by the Catholic Church. These centres "are run and controlled by the state in cooperation with private businesses rather than by the Catholic Church" (Loyal and Quilley, 2016: 78). Within a total institution, there must be a clear distinction between who is staff and who is the resident or inmate. This is in order to know who holds the power within the space. As stated by Archibald et al (2015: 257), "the 'staff-inmate divide' is typical for total institutions, thus creating two groups that lack a shared sense of community with each other". In the case of Direct Provision, it is the centre staff that hold the power over the residents. This can be seen through the constant surveillance of the residents within the system, which is done through both camera surveillance and the constant monitoring of where the residents are going by staff. This constant monitoring by staff creates a clear divide between staff and resident. Additionally, in Lentin (2016), there is an exploration of people's experiences within Direct Provision. Within this exploration there is an example of the negative relationship between these two groups. As stated by Lentin (2016), staff may enter their rooms without permission, or may punish or humiliate them for perceived infractions. This type of divide is common within a total institution.

Finally, the element of 'routinization'. This is the regimented way in which the asylum seekers are forced to live. According to Goffman (1961: 17),

Each phase of the member's daily activity is carried out in the immediate company of a large batch of others, all of whom are treated alike and required to do the same things together [...] all phases of the day's activities are tightly scheduled with one activity leading at a pre-arranged time into the next.

While it is either together in a group or separate, the people within these total institutions have their days mapped out for them in detail. As stated by Loyal and Quilley (2016: 79), “in total institutions, human needs are organized so that nearly all aspects of an individual’s life take place under one roof”. Within the concept of the ‘total institution’, this can be seen as one of the main elements. It is essential for a place to be seen as a total institution that all daily activities are conducted under one roof, and that they are living a formally administered round of life. This is evidently seen through the routinisation within the Direct Provision system. The regimented form of life can be seen through the aforementioned surveillance of residents. Moreover, the routinisation of day-to-day can be seen through their daily activities. Asylum seekers have a curfew at night time, if they are not going to be back for this they have to inform a member of staff. Another way that their daily lives are routinised are the mealtimes. Within the system, each centre has a scheduled mealtime, this can be buffet style. The residents are not allowed to go into the canteen facilities after these hours or they would be reprimanded by members of staff. By making the residents do these routines, and not allowing them to have the freedom to even cook when they want is infantilising them. They are being treated like they are children within this system. This can lead to their sense of self-worth deteriorating. Due to this, we are able to see the way in which the Direct Provision can be deemed as a total institution.

Journey of Reform in Direct Provision

Now that there has been a link made between that of the Direct Provision system and Goffman’s concept of the ‘total institution’, it is important to note that this link is not one of a positive nature. As it can be seen from the examples given, the main way to compare the system to a ‘total institution’ is through the issues within the system. Therefore, it is important to note the ways in which the system can move away from being a total institution to a better system of refuge for asylum seekers. Recommendations from the McMahon Report (2015) were highlighted in the previous chapter. In this section, there will be an exploration of the progress of the implementations to these reports. This will be seen through the investigation conducted by Nasc (2017).

Firstly, it should be noted that asylum seekers were looking for reform within the Direct Provision system long before the publication of the McMahon Report in 2015. Asylum seekers organised protests in order to voice their frustrations. For example, in 2010 “a group of

approximately 200 asylum seekers housed at a facility called Mosney accommodation centre initiated a call for a hunger strike as part of a protest against being moved to accommodation centres in other regions in Ireland” (Conlon, 2016). These hunger strikes can be seen after the publication of the McMahon Report also. For example, in 2016, an Iranian man went on hunger strike in Ireland’s Direct Provision system after coming over from England. The man went on hunger strike for thirty-five days in order to avoid deportation to Iran, and to be able to apply for asylum in Ireland. It was reported in *The Irish Times* by Holland and McDonagh (2016) that the man “had feared that if sent back to the UK he would be deported back to Iran”. Unfortunately, asylum seekers have to resort to these drastic measures in order to have their voices heard. Additionally, “protests that involve hunger strikes [...] have become a disturbingly familiar and commonplace form of protest among asylum seekers and irregular migrants in detention and detention-like settings in industrialized nations around the world.” (Conlon, 2016). These strikes can be caused by any or a combination of the many issues identified as problematic within the system. Therefore, this is just another reason as to why the recommendations should be implemented as soon as possible.

The Nasc Working Paper on the Progress of Implementation of the McMahon Report (2017), sets out the ways in which the government were able to improve the system since the publication of the McMahon Report in 2015. While there was good progress on the implementation of the recommendations two years after the report was published, there were still some issues. For example, Nasc (2017: 2) found that “there were many recommendations listed as ‘Implemented’ in the progress reports, which we had evidence to suggest were only ‘In Progress’ or ‘Partially Implemented’”. Additionally, Nasc (2017) discovered that those that were labelled as ‘Partially Implemented’ were actually ‘Not Being Progressed’. Overall, while the implementations were in progress, they were not being progressed as quickly as being reported by the government. These inconsistencies are concerning as they are not showing the true progression of the recommendations. Nasc (2017: 4) stated that their key area of concern “with the implementation of the McMahon Report is the general slow pace of progress and lack of implementation of recommendations, particularly amongst the departments other than Justice that provide services and supports to people in the protection process”. The slow pace of implementation of the recommendations and the lack of detail when reporting on the progress of the implementation suggests that the Irish government has not made the well-being of asylum seekers within the Direct Provision system a priority.

Reform: A White Paper to End Direct Provision and to Establish a New International Protection Support Service.

The White Paper is the government's outline of how it intends to end Direct Provision. While the title of the report suggests that the government intend to get rid of Direct Provision. This is actually not the case. According to Thornton and Ogunsanya (2022: 9), "the White Paper belatedly acknowledges that direct provision fails to 'respect the dignity and human rights' of persons subjected to this system". The government's intention is to improve the conditions and process of Direct Provision. Therefore, "the White Paper on Ending Direct Provision provides a partial roadmap to better respecting, protecting, and fulfilling the economic and social rights of persons seeking protection in Ireland" (Thornton and Ogunsanya, 2022: 2). Within the report, there is a want to move away from the total institution, and to a more respecting an beneficial system for those seeking asylum in Ireland. As stated in the White Paper (2021: 28), "The White Paper sets out the government's approach to fulfilling the commitment in the Programme to end Direct Provision and to replace it with '*a new International Protection accommodation centred on a not-for-profit approach.*'" In order to do this, they propose a two phased approach to the system.

Phase One: "the applicant will be accommodated in a Reception and Integration Centre for four months. The focus of Phase One will be on identifying needs, defining pathways, and linking applicants to appropriate services" (The White Paper, 2021: 28).

Phase Two: "the emphasis is on fostering an independent life within the community" (The White Paper, 2021: 29).

At first glance, this new system envisaged for asylum seekers looks promising. It is more accommodating to the asylum seeker, and is based on the background of their welfare-based approach. It moves away from the restricted, total institution, that is their communal accommodation to a more community-based accommodation. The proposal looks to set out to treat asylum seekers with a sense of dignity and respect that has been lacking in the Direct Provision thus far. Even in the recent social climate, still "the current direct provision system violates the economic and social rights of persons seeking protection". (Thornton and Ogunsanya, 2022: 2).

However, “the proposals will not reorder the Irish IP applications *procedure*” (Coakley and MacEinri, 2021: 1037). While the state wishes to change the way in which asylum seekers are housed and looked after, some parts still remain the same. Overall, it looks as though the state wants to remain in control of this new system, and with the history that the Irish state has, it is likely that they will fall back into old patterns. As suggested by Coakley and MacEinri (2021: 1037), a “far more wide-reaching reform is necessary if the Irish IP applications infrastructure is to finally pivot away from its current de-humanizing procedure and toward an IP system that genuinely embraces the IP applicant’s human rights”.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter outlines the ways in which the Irish Direct Provision system compares to Goffman’s concept of the ‘total institution’. Firstly, the dissertation looked to situate my analysis within the existing literature. This aided in this researches’ analysis of the topic. In order to analysis Direct Provision as a total institution, Schliehe’s (2016) three elements were used. This used the elements of: ‘closure’; ‘bureaucratic organization’; and ‘routinization’. For the purpose of this analysis, examples of issues within the Direct Provision system were used as a way of showing how these three elements are present within the system, therefore, making Direct Provision a total institution. Additionally, as it was issues that were used to show that this system is a total institution, it highlights the point that there is a need to move away from this model. This led on to the second part of this chapter which considered reform within the system of Direct Provision. This outlined the protests and hunger strikes that asylum seekers organised in order to try and get reform within the system. Moreover, the progress of the implementations of the recommendations from the McMahon report were discussed. This shows a lack of urgency from the government in implementing reform in the system. Finally, there was an outline of the most recent reform within the system, though it is not implemented yet. This is in the form of the White Paper to End Direct Provision. While the government are not getting rid of the system and making a new one altogether, like the title suggests but, they are reforming Direct Provision so that it is better suited to asylum seekers and more of a humane system. This is promising as the implementation of the reform from other reports were going slow. However, that leaves the question of whether the implementation of the White Paper will be slow as well.

Chapter 5

Direct Provision and the state

Introduction

In this chapter there will be an exploration of the relationship between Direct Provision and the Irish state. Firstly, in order to understand the relationship between Direct Provision and the Irish state, we must first recognize the connection between previous total institutions and the state of Ireland. This will show the way in which unmarried mothers and children were ‘othered’ in Irish society. This will lead to an analysis of Mother and Baby Homes, which will explore the recent commission of investigation into Mother and Baby Homes and will consider how this relates to the concept of the total institution. Once this has been laid out, while the unmarried mother was the old ‘other’, there will be a discussion of the new ‘other’ within Irish society, the asylum seekers. This will show the way in which asylum seekers are feeling like the ‘other’ within Direct Provision, and the way in which this total institution is making them feel like the other. Additionally, by looking at both of these contexts we will be able to see how this total institution may benefit the state, both through policy and as a means of social control. Finally, there will be a brief discussion of the progress of the implementation of the government’s White Paper to End Direct Provision. This will show the current situation for the full implementation of the White Paper by 2024.

Irish History of Total Institutions

Within the Irish context, many domains of institutional life were normalised in society, leading to very high rates of institutionalisation. In order to understand the total institution within the Irish context, we must first look at Ireland’s history of ‘coercive confinement’ (O’Sullivan and O’Donnell, 2012). There were many forms of coercive confinement in Ireland including: reformatory and Industrial Schools; Asylums; Prisons; Borstals; County Homes; Magdalene Laundries; and Mother and Baby Homes. It has been seen that “those incarcerated in non-criminal justice institutions, especially children in industrial schools, unmarried mothers and those in psychiatric hospitals, spent longer on detention than the vast majority of convicted prisoners” (O’Donnell and O’Sullivan, 2020: 5). Those children sentenced to industrial schools would not be free until their sixteenth birthday, meaning that they would spend up to four to

six years in custody before regaining their freedom. Additionally, for those in the Magdalene Laundries, Mother and Baby Homes and psychiatric hospitals, their “confinement was measured in decades” (O’Donnell and O’Sullivan, 2020: 5).

During the early to mid-twentieth century there was a rhetoric in Ireland that “both the state and the Church emphatically presented women’s place as being in the home and the ideal role of the Irish woman as a mother” (Luddy, 2011: 112). The nation put forward women as being pure and representing the ideals of Ireland. However, if a woman was anything but this ideal figure, there would be serious repercussions for her. This is where we see the establishment of many institutions of containment for women in Ireland. These institutions included: The Magdalene Laundries and Mother and Baby Homes. Additionally, Industrial Schools were established for the children of Ireland. In order to understand the establishment of these institutions “it is important to realise the link between the public sphere (the nation) and the private sphere (the family) and how the former instructed the latter”, as in how the state influenced the family of these women (Pembroke, 2013: 56). The state funded these homes in order to keep the morally “poor” women separated from “good” women. Moreover, unmarried mothers and their children became “a symbol of unacceptable sexual activity and a problem that had the potential to blight the reputation not only of the family but of the nation” (Luddy, 2011: 10). Therefore, the state put forward these institutions as a reformatory measure. The state believed that they were helping these women stay away from a life of sin and prostitution. However, when they got into these institutions they were treated as criminals and less than human. While most were not technically being detained under the law, there was a “social, political or moral pressure and coercions on these women to remain in these homes” (Gallen, 2022: 109).

These institutions can be seen as a form of social control from the Irish state. During their time in these institutions, they were living in deplorable conditions and were psychologically and physically abused by members of staff. While the state funded these homes, it was the Catholic Church that ran these institutions. They were seen as the bureaucratic organisation that had the power over the women and children in these institutions. Additionally, due to the deplorable conditions and the lack of care from the staff within the institutions, there is no surprise that the infant mortality rate was high. As stated by Smith (2020), figures suggest that an infant being maintained by a local authority in 1946-47 was twice as likely to die if resident at the Tuam Mother and Baby Home than any other publicly

funded care setting. This shows the lack of care and human rights given by the staff to the women and children that were in these institutions.

These forms of coercive confinement can be compared to that of the total institution. As previously established, Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries were places in which women and children were detained for a long period of time. They all lived under one roof and participated in daily activities, such as work together. To put it in the sense of Schliehe's (2016) three elements: they experienced "closure" in the sense that they were living and working within these institutions with little contact with the wider community; they had no sense of autonomy, all decisions were made for them, like the giving up of their baby; and the bureaucratic organisation that was the Church in this context, made sure that they kept to a strict routine every day and that they behaved themselves in the institutions. However, some may argue that these were not total institutions as they were not completely cut off from the wider society, for instance, women could, in some cases, still have visitors, and the institutions were located in the centre of communities. However, it is important to note that even though they were allowed visitors, these visits had considerable restriction and were always supervised by a member of staff.

Moreover, these women and children were "othered" by Irish society, making it a moral closure, as previously discussed. As stated by Pembroke (2013: 65),

Ireland at this time can also be likened to a 'total institutions', under constant surveillance from the local clergy and the criminal justice system, supported by successive Irish governments and Ireland's elite and feared by those who were deemed to transgress this Catholic normative order.

For many years there had been silence about these institutions due to the shame and stigma surrounding them. While there was talk of these institutions, the abuses faced by these women and children in Mother and Baby Homes specifically, did not blow up in the public sphere until the mass grave in the Tuam Mother and Baby Home was found in 2015. While the McAleese Report was conducted, this investigation more so focused on the abuse seen within the Magdalene Laundries and not the Mother and Baby Homes across Ireland. It was this scandalous finding of the mass grave on the grounds of the Tuam Home, that was researched by Catherine Corless, that created the investigation into Mother and Baby Homes across Ireland

(Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes, 2021). So many children had unrecorded deaths when in these homes. The infant mortality rate was swept under the rug and ignored by many people. Smith (2020) argues “that the evidence in the state’s own archives reveals that the high-infant mortality rate at the Tuam home was known and that the state played an active and ongoing role in inspecting and overseeing its operation without desire to intervene.” This shows the role that the state played in condoning the abuse that was conducted within these institutions. However, very few records were kept by the Catholic Church during that time, or were preserved and made available to researchers, which meant that it was hard to get evidence of the abuses that occurred in these institutions. As stated by Haughton et al (2021: 2), there is a “difficulty for researchers in breaking these silences given the absence of documentary and historical material because lack of religious and other records”. Many studies have relied on survivors’ accounts of their experience or governmental reports. Additionally, making it hard for the survivors to seek justice and redress for their lived experience.

In recent years, there have been many investigations by the state into the abuses that were experienced within these institutions. The most recent of them being the Commission Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes (CIMBH, 2021). While this report is a step in the right direction for getting justice for the survivors of Mother and Baby Homes, there must be an acknowledgement of the criticisms of the report in order to truly understand why this is insufficient from the state. In research conducted by Condon (2021), he discussed Catriona Crowe’s criticism of the report mentioned. As discussed in the article Crowe found the report to be “unsatisfactory in relation to the pertinent questions of coercion, physical abuse, and forced adoption,” additionally showing concerns about its methodology (Condon, 2021). This is one of the reasons why the government’s reports and investigations should not be the sole resource when conducting studies on Mother and Baby Homes and other institutions of this time. Additionally, they undermined the voices of the survivors, which can be seen through the words used within the report. For example, in Section 16 of the Executive Summary, when exploring the abuses that these women and children experienced in the institutions, “it appears that there was little kindness shown to them [...] The atmosphere appears to have been cold and seemingly uncaring” (CIMBH, 2021: 5). The reiteration of the word “appears” and the utilisation of the word “seemingly” conveys the impression that they are doubting the lived experiences of these women and children. Additionally, the lack of information that they are able to give to both the public and the victims is a violation of their human rights. As stated by Smith (2020: 148), “Reparation without access to information constitutes a continuing

violation to human rights.” This all links to the state’s lack of empathy for the women and children within these institutions. Today, these women and children are still fighting for redress and proper justice for what they went through in these institutions. The last Mother and Baby Home closed in 1998, and the survivors still suffer today.

Overall, it is important to be informed of the history that the Irish state holds within institutions like these as they “form part of the complex web of dysfunctional and dehumanising Irish state response to vulnerable people” (Haughton et al, 2021: 262). Additionally, these institutions were able to benefit the state as it was a way of which to control a large proportion of the population. There were many women and children that were subject to these institutions throughout the years. With them being segregated from society within these institutions it then made them the ‘other’.

The “othering” of Asylum Seekers in Ireland

These continuing failures to respond to the needs of vulnerable people can still be seen in the contemporary Irish context, relating to the Direct Provision system. This ‘othering’ that we have seen put onto single mothers and their children in Ireland is now being put onto asylum seekers. There are many ways in which the Irish state have ‘othered’ those within Direct Provision. By treating them as less than human, this creates a sense that they are less than the rest of Irish society. Within Irish society “asylum seekers are perceived or represented as liminal beings, and thus feared, ‘othered’, homogenized and stereotyped, and how they in turn perceive themselves, becoming in a way the label they are given” (O’Reilly, 2018: 835). This can be done through the elements of the total institution. Firstly, the isolation of the centre, cutting them off from wider society. Secondly, from the rationalisation, this lack of autonomy that they feel.

Firstly, the space in which asylum seekers live can contribute to the way in which asylum seekers are othered in Irish society. Generally, asylum seekers feel as though they are disconnected from the community, therefore, these isolated centres do not help with these feelings as they are pushed far away from society. Their fear is also heightened with the prolonged waiting time for their application to be processed. They are living in uncertainty every day. This adds to this ‘culture of control’ (O’Sullivan and O’Donnell, 2007), which is seen within total institutions. As stated by O’Reilly (2018: 824). “While asylum seekers in the

DP system are free to come and go, a ‘culture of control’ keeps them marginalized, ‘distanced’ both physically and psychologically, yet connected to and monitored by the system, simultaneously outside yet inside the juridical order.”

Secondly, when discussing the lack of privacy, a lack of autonomy can be seen as well, in some centres. While some centres have a communal kitchen, where asylum seekers are able to cook their own food, many have a set time for food. While there were no complaints about the quality of food that was being provided to them, instead “there was a widespread dissatisfaction with the regimented manner food was distributed: via canteen and buffet at fixed times.” (Hewson, 2022: 683). Overall, we are able to see the way in which the Irish state are asserting power over those in the centre through constant surveillance and routinisation. This gives them a form of control over asylum seekers. As stated by O’Reilly (2018: 839), “control in the DP system is reinforced through a pervading sense of fear, powerlessness and invisibility, which characterized the experience of long-term living in this system. Weakness and fear lead to various forms of self-censorship and self-regulation.” The state are controlling them, therefore, making asylum seekers fear them, in order for them to conform to their wants.

Overall, through this new total institution, the Irish state are making asylum seekers feel like the ‘other’ in Irish society.

Benefits for the Irish state

Finally, there will be an exploration of the way in which Direct Provision, as a total institution, benefits the Irish state. This is seen through both the initial establishment of the system, and the policies surrounding it and the social control that they have gained over these asylum seekers.

Firstly, according to Thornton (2014: 4), “Direct Provision was introduced as to prevent asylum seekers from accessing social assistance payments.” Asylum seekers have been put in a unique category in Ireland where they have no statutory right to social support. They rely solely on the Direct Provision system to provide support for them to live. Even with the establishment of Direct Provision, asylum seekers are still getting blamed for issues that are not their fault. However, while the establishment of this regime is “preventing asylum seekers from abusing Ireland’s allegedly ‘generous’ welfare system, [...] migrants and asylum seekers

have been blamed for the country's housing shortages, for overcrowding schools and hospitals, and for welfare fraud, all of which preceded their arrival" (Lentin, 2022: 60). Therefore, this blame being put on asylum seekers is directing attention away from the state's struggle to solve that problem. Additionally, in many articles it is stated that by making Direct Provision in Ireland less attractive than the one in England can decrease the amount of asylum seekers seeking asylum here, (Loyal & Quilley, 2016; Lentin, 2016). Moreover, this statement was noted by John O'Donoghue, the Minister of Justice at the time of the system's establishment. Therefore, by creating these poor conditions, the Irish state are trying to decrease the numbers of asylum seekers that are coming into Ireland.

Moreover, these deplorable conditions in which the asylum seekers live in can be seen as a form of control from the state. It can be seen as one of the many disciplinary techniques that are being used within these centres. However, when poor living conditions are mentioned, it is not just the hygienic standard of living that is being acknowledged, it is also the communal living arrangements of the centres. In many cases, those who are single are expected to share rooms within these centres. According to a report conducted by Doras (2019), these living arrangements can have a negative effect on a person's mental health. As stated by Hewson (2022: 683), "disciplinary techniques often engender negative experiences that may deter potential applicants and damage those already present." The poor living conditions are only one technique. These disciplinary techniques can be considered a strict routinisation of this total institution. Asylum seekers are constantly supervised by staff and have no control over their day-to-day life. It can be seen through a study conducted by O'Reilly (2018: 838), that "distancing, marginalisation, surveillance and control over every day rhythms, activities and spaces touch every part of everyday life in the DP system." It is a regimented form of living. Asylum seekers have little form of privacy within these centres. There are many cameras around the centres that are monitored. In addition to being directly observed within the centres, residents' general whereabouts are constantly monitored (Hewson, 2022: 681). They are obliged to sign in and out of the centre when leaving. Additionally, if they are leaving for the night a member of staff must be notified, as there is a curfew they have to be back for if they are gone for the day.

This type of conduct can be seen in previous institutions in Ireland. As stated previously, the total institution of the Mother and Baby Home is one example of which the Irish State exerted their power over people in Ireland. As stated by Garrett (2017: 368), "the

situation of present-day asylum seekers is, of course, very different to that of ‘unmarried mother’ in the past. However, there are detectable similarities in terms of how the state has endeavoured to manage and contain them.” As discussed previously, Ireland has had other means of coercive confinement throughout the twentieth century. By comparing these previous institutions with Direct Provision, it should highlight the way in which history is repeating itself in Ireland. Therefore, the public must be concerned with the running of Direct Provision as there are violations of human rights and institutional abuse at play in Ireland once again. As we have seen, the government have not taken accountability for the actions within the running of the Mother and Baby Homes. Additionally, the decentralization of the women and children’s experience, has caused them to not fully acknowledge the conditions in which this abuse was rooted. This, therefore, creates a stronger likelihood of this abuse happening again. As stated by Haughton et al (2021: 263), “institutionalisation in Ireland is marked by secrecy, human rights abuses, and contested state inquiries and state apologies, and it is not clear when any major change in this dynamic will manifest.”

Current Implementation of the White Paper

In a report researched by the non-governmental organisation Nasc, written by Thornton and Ogunsanya (2022), they make a review of the implementation of the White Paper on Ending Direct Provision. The report emphasised at the start that “In spite of the significant challenges due to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and arrival of persons in Ireland entitled to Temporary Protection, implementation of the White Paper must remain a priority for Government and society” (Thornton and Ogunsanya, 2022: 2). Even with the significant landscape changes, the changes in the Direct Provision system is needed now more than ever. There is an “increase in new international protection applications in 2022 and the over 50,000 Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection who have fled the war in Ukraine and have now made Ireland their home” (Thornton and Ogunsanya, 2022: 8). This increase in application has put pressure on the system. Moreover, those with Temporary Protection status have different entitlements to those in Direct Provision. Those with a Temporary Protection are entitled to to enter employment, access social welfare and housing akin to Irish citizens. However, international protection applicants, those seeking asylum, their entitlement are very different. This can be seen through the aforementioned conditions that are deplorable. However, the Irish government are only hoping to have the White Paper fully implemented by next year, 2024. Unfortunately, the White Paper is only a commitment by the government to reform Direct

Provision, there will be no sanctions if they fail to meet these commitments. “Therefore, a White Paper is merely the commencement of a process, and significant activist and civil society pressure must be maintained to ensure commitments are met” (Thornton and Ogunsanya, 2022: 9). Therefore, Nasc conducted this report in order to assess the progress of the implementation of these commitments a year after the White Paper was published. They reviewed four key areas of the White Paper in the report: Right to work; Right to housing; Rights of persons who are highly vulnerable (with focus on housing); and Right to social assistance. Within the report, an extensive number of recommendations were made in each of these sections. These recommendations were made in order to make the implementation more swift. Unfortunately, with the pace that the government are going now in order to implement this Paper, it is looks highly unlikely that there will be a full implementation of this Paper by 2024. According to Thornton and Ogunsanya (2022: 8), “Dr. Day has stated that it will not be possible to end the system of direct provision by 2024”. Dr. Day was the chair of the Day Report (2020).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has explored the relationship between the system of Direct Provision and the Irish state. Firstly, by looking at the history of total institutions in Ireland, we were able to get a grasp of the state’s history of total institutions and ‘othering’ specific people. This was outlined through an exploration of the Mother and Baby Homes in Ireland. By looking at the way it compares to a total institution, we are able to see the lack of enthusiasm from the government to sort this issue. This then led on to the exploration of the new ‘other’ in Ireland, asylum seekers. This discussed the way in which the total institution made asylum seekers feel like the ‘other’, through closure and routinisation. Moreover, we explored the way in which this benefitted the state. By first looking at policy, moving the blame onto the asylum seekers, and then the state’s desire for social control over this group. Finally, there was a brief discussion of the current situation of the implementation of the White Paper to End Direct Provision. This acknowledges the current situation with the war in Ukraine and the rise in people looking for Temporary Protection in Ireland. However, the implementation of the new system must remain a priority for the government. The implementation of the Paper is slow, much like the implementation of the recommendations from the McMahon (2015) report, that was mentioned in the previous chapter. However, while some things are changing others are not. Therefore, there is fear that the government will return to their old habits and not give asylum seekers the dignity and respect that they deserve. Overall, while there is a move in the

right direction, with Ireland's history of total institutions it is hard to know what the future will hold for Direct Provision and the persons who come to Ireland seeking asylum.

Conclusion

In conclusion there was an examination of the way in which the concept of Goffman's (1961) total institution applies to the current regime of the Irish system of Direct Provision. Additionally, the dissertation was able to answer the research questions that were asked.

Firstly, there was a discussion of the concept of Erving Goffman's (1961) 'total institution'. This outlined the concept, which showed the main elements that are needed for an establishment to be considered a total institution. This included that the people must live under one roof, and follow a 'formally administered round of life' (Goffman, 1961: 11). This section also illustrated the three key elements of the concept that makes an institution 'total'. These were highlighted by Schliehe (2016) and were: 'closure'; 'bureaucratic organization; and 'rationalization'. These became a prominent feature of the dissertation as it aided in later chapters. Following on from the outline of the concept was the other applications of the concept. These applications included one to a business organisation of Lidl and an application to a prison. While the business organisation chose a more malleable way of looking at the concept, Farrington's (1992) application to the prison emphasised the totality of the concept. This application to the prison was a critique of the way in which Goffman applied his concept to the American prison. This leads into the final section in this chapter which is the limitations. The main limitation of the concept of the total institution was the way in which Goffman collected his evidence for his initial study. Goffman's method of collection was based on convenience rather than looking for many variations of establishments. Finally, the other limitation was the totality of the concept, which was brought up by Farrington (1992) in his study. However, this limitation has been highly debated as it can be seen within Goffman's material that he encourages the malleability of the concept of the total institution.

The second chapter discussed the research methods used while writing this dissertation. The methodological approach was that of desk-based research. This has a high use of secondary sources as the data. It is was cost efficient and the has a great availability to data. The way in which the data was analysed was through a meta-analysis. This used a systemic review of literature. Lastly, the limitations to this research approach were highlighted. This included the lack of control over data and the risk of bias when analysing the data. It is important to note

that these limitations were identified before commencing the research as to try and avoid these risks as much as possible.

In the third chapter, there was a discussion of the Irish system of Direct Provision. There was first an exploration of the way in which the system was established. This looked at the different policies that were enacted for the establishment of Direct Provision in 2000. Additionally, there was a general discussion of the system as a whole. This was discussed as it is important to know what the system was intended to do. This section established what an asylum seeker was and what Direct Provision is intended to give them, which is accommodation, meals, a weekly allowance and a medical card. “Under the convention Ireland committed itself to providing a place of safety for refugees, to respecting and valuing human rights, and to protecting vulnerable and at-risk individuals” (Loyal and Quilley, 2016: 72). However, with the establishment of the Direct Provision there are critiques that come with it. Since the opening of the system, many issues within it have been highlighted by both asylum seekers and scholars. Many investigations and reports have been conducted on the issues within the Direct Provision system. These included the McMahon Report (2015), the Day Report (2020) and the Doras investigation into the Mount Trenchard centre. The issues within the system include: deplorable living conditions; the negative relationship between staff and asylum seekers; the isolated area in which centres are situated; the lack of sufficient supports and care services; and some of the gendered element of these women and children suffering within the system. Additionally, there are many more investigations that are not conducted by government or non-governmental organisations. With these emphasis on the issues came recommendations on ways to resolve them.

Moreover, in the fourth chapter, there was an analysis of the way in which the concept of Goffman’s total institution applies to the system of Direct Provision in Ireland. In order to do this, there was first a discussion of the current literature that is available on this topic. However, there is limited research within this area, but the research that was found was suitable to this dissertations analysis of applying the concept to Direct Provision. This is followed by this dissertations analysis. As stated previously, a prominent feature that aided this analysis was that of Schliehe’s (2016) key elements. By first looking at ‘closure’, this first was established in Goffman’s frame and the moved onto exploring some of the isolation issues within the Direct Provision system. It is important to note that it is not just physical closure but also moral closure that is present within the institution. This moral closure was seen to be

present in Direct Provision as well. The second element, was 'bureaucratic organization'. This went over the way in which the staff were clearly distinct within the system. Additionally, it mentioned the issues that are present with the negative relationship between staff and asylum seekers. Lastly, was 'rationalization' or routinisation. This was clearly stated within Goffman's (1961) work as a key feature of the total institution. The example of this within the Direct Provision system was with the mealtimes and the curfews that were set. Overall, through this analysis we are able to see the way in which the concept of Goffman's (1961) total institution can be applied to the Irish system of Direct Provision. Moreover, within this chapter there was an exploration of the journey of reform within this system. Due to the poor conditions, many asylum seekers organised protests and even hunger strikes in order to try get the government to improve the system. This was then followed by a look at the progress of the implementation of the recommendation from the McMahon report (2015), two years after it was published. This showed how the government was very slow with these implementations. This was then followed by a brief discussion of the most recent report for reform, the White Paper to End Direct Provision. This showed the government's commitment to try and create a more humane system for asylum seekers. However, with the slow implementation of the McMahon report it will be interesting to see what the implementation of the White Paper will be like.

Finally, in the fifth chapter there was an exploration of the relationship between Direct Provision and the Irish state. So as to understand the relationship between the Irish state and Direct Provision, there was first an illustration of the Irish context and the state's history with previous total institutions. Within this section there was a focus put on Mother and Baby Homes. However, other forms of total institutions in Ireland like: the Magdalene Laundries, Industrial Schools, Mental Asylums and so on, but the main focus was on Mother and Baby Homes. It can be seen that during this time it was the unmarried mother that was labelled as the 'other' in Irish society. During this section, there was a brief analysis of the way in which Mother and Baby Homes can be seen as a total institution. The aim of this section was to establish a common theme of total institution in Ireland's history. While this old 'other' was that of the unmarried mother, the new 'other' in Irish society is the asylum seeker in Direct Provision. Therefore, the next section discusses the way in which the asylum is seen as the other because of this total institution. Finally, we are brought on to an illustration of the way in which Direct Provision being seen as a total institution benefits the Irish state. This was seen through the establishment of the system and the policies surrounding the establishment and the way in which they gained social control over the asylum seekers. The policies included that

they made the system less attractive so that not as many seekers would come over from the UK. As stated by Loyal and Quilley (2016: 82), “it can therefore be argued that the punitive and prolonged treatment that asylum seekers are likely to receive in Ireland is not accidental but part of a deliberate deterrence strategy common to other state practices”. By doing so, this created a number of issues within the system, and can be argued that this made it into a total institution. Moreover, with the deplorable conditions and surveillance this created a form of social control over the asylum seekers within the system. Therefore, by comparing the previous forms of the total institution in Ireland, it can be seen the way in which history is repeating itself with the Direct Provision system. The final section that was discussed was an investigation into the implementation of the White Paper to End Direct Provision. Much like the implementation of the McMahon Report (2017), this is just as slow. The added pressure of the war in Ukraine was noted, however, the reform of Direct Provision must remain a priority for the Irish government. The report had many recommendations on ways for the implementation of the new system to be swifter. Unfortunately, it does not look like the government will have a full implementation of the new Direct Provision system by 2024.

Overall, through the analysis within this dissertation it can be said that the concept of Goffman’s (1961) total institution can be applied to the Irish system of Direct Provision. Throughout the dissertation, it was also able to answer the research questions:

4. What are the barriers to reforming Direct Provision when it is considered a total institution?
5. How does comparing the Direct Provision system to the concept of the total institution make asylum seekers the ‘other’ in Irish society?
6. How does the Irish state benefit from Direct Provision being considered a total institution?

Firstly, it can be seen that the barriers of reform within the total institution of Direct Provision is that the government lacks urgency when dealing with reform within the system. As stated in Thornton and Ogunsanya (2022: 9) “a White Paper is merely the commencement of a process, and significant activist and civil society pressure must be maintained to ensure commitments are met”. In order for there to be real change within the system there must be a constant advocacy for it. The state must feel under pressure to make

the changes as it is not right the way asylum seekers are treated and made to live within the Direct Provision system.

Secondly, it can be seen in the fifth chapter, that the isolating nature of the total institution and Direct Provision system makes asylum seekers cut off from society. Therefore, through this moral and physical closure, this makes asylum seekers *feel* like the 'other' and make Irish society *view* them as the 'other'. This was seen through the previous total institutions in Ireland, with women and children, and now through the Direct Provision system, with asylum seekers. Ireland has a history with segregating whoever they seem the 'other' by putting them in these total institutions. As stated by Loyal and Quilley (2016: 74-5), these total institutions are "disempowering and dehumanizing, and having well-documented negative effects on life chances, mental health, and well-being, these centres are regarded as unsuitable places to accommodate adults, let alone children". The othering of asylum seekers within this system is causing negative effects of their mental health. This system needs to be reformed in order to give these people their human rights.

Finally, the way in which the state benefits from Direct Provision being seen as a total institution is mainly through the social control element. This is mainly to do with the routinisation and the treatment of the asylum seekers by the staff of the centres. The key elements of routinisation and bureaucratic organisation contribute to the social control within the system and therefore benefits the Irish state. As stated by Loyal and Quilley (2016: 79), "in processing asylum seekers, DPD centres progressively strip them of any vestige of autonomy and self-determination, corroding the sense of self and self-esteem that, for Goffman, constitutes an essential dimension of the process of individualization in modern societies".

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