

SOCIAL ORPHANHOOD

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 Analysis

The United Nation's data shows that the increasingly rampant global events such as wars, natural disasters, plagues, social chaos, economic problems and unlawful intercourses have led to the number of the world's orphan¹ to surpassed 140 million in 2015. According to Islamic *fiqh* literature, the term² "orphan" is used to describe children who lose their father before they reach puberty. Whereas in modern international literature, the term³ "orphan" defines children who lose one or both of their parents before reaching the age of 18. Taking into account that 2.2 out of 7.6 billion of the world population⁴ consists of children, it is estimated that 6.5% of the total number of children in the world are orphans; and unfortunately, this number in on the rise due to the said causes.

In this article, besides the general definition of orphanhood, another type of orphan hood called as 'social orphanhood' will be elaborated and some recommendations on how to solve the problems of social orphans will be provided.

Term and Causes of Social Orphanhood

Besides the number of orphans by its general definition, there are also children who live just like orphans even though both of their parents are alive. Literatures describe this situation as "social orphanhood". Many children⁵ are living without the protection of their living parents, due to reasons such as:

- Substance abuse,
- Abuse, neglect,
- Parents who live far from their children,
- Parents who suffer from physical and psychological problems,
- Negative characteristics or parents and bad treatment of children,
- Poverty,



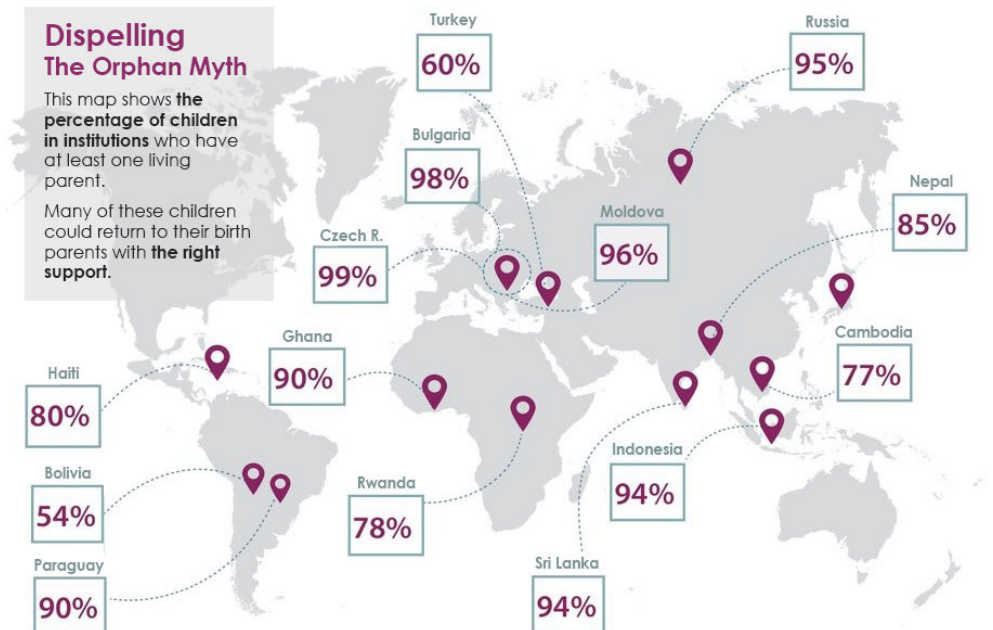
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- Parents who work abroad or in long period,
- Social and family problems,
- When a child is born as an illegitimate child,
- Unwanted pregnancy and child⁶ etc.

Due to these reasons, many parents don't take care of their children and these children live without meeting their sufficient security, health, education, physical and psychological needs. In the end, these situations potentially lead to the damage of children's' mental, physical and psychological health and development. Moreover, it is not enough for children to simply have living biological parents, because when their social needs of having parents are not met it inevitably will cause destructive effects on children.

And even when some of them may have enough food, drink, bed and basic needs, they still lack their parents' care, love and attention when one of their parents are actually still alive. Therefore they have to cope many problems and face many difficulties.¹¹

This map reflects the whole situation well:



Source: Lumos

Statistics

The number of children who suffer from social orphanhood is almost parallel with the number of children who are victims of wars and natural disasters. According to the UN, the number of children living in orphanages reached 2.7 million⁷, and social orphans from the number has not been confirmed. However, there are estimations regarding this matter.

For example, it has been detected⁸ that 80-90% of world's children who live in orphanages are social orphans and a study found that 80% out of 30.000 children living in 750 different orphanages actually have one living parent.⁹ From here it can be seen that for many parents, the only solution available is for them when they face certain problems is to give their children up to orphanages. The result now is there are many social orphans have to live in these orphanages.

The Effects of Social Orphanhood

Social orphanhood poses similar effects to biological orphanhood, such as:

- Psychological problems
- Physical problems and diseases
- Physical and Psychological trauma
- Worthlessness, feeling unloved and isolated
- Low self-esteem
- Interruption of education
- Decline in academic success
- Risk of substance abuse
- Risk of alcohol addiction

- Risk of committing crimes
- Anger and aggressiveness
- Lack of discipline at orphanages and school
- Risk of being kidnapped
- Risk of being victims of abuse
- Economic problems, the risk of being child labor
- Social problems
- Career and marriage problems in adulthood

In addition to biological orphanhood, there are some different and serious psychological problems in social orphanhood. An orphan acknowledges that he/she do not have parents, that they died and the orphan would accept this reality in the long term; in social orphanhood the orphan acknowledges that he/she has one parent alive, but the parent simply would not take care of the child, making them feel abandoned, and therefore social orphan children are much more fragile and vulnerable.

Of course not every orphan has major problems, but it needs to be understood that the risks of children growing up without parents cannot be overlooked.

Recommendations

It is an undeniable fact that the presence of a mother and a father figure plays an important role in children's mental, emotional, behavioral, physical, social and psychological development process. Every child needs their parents' love, care and attention to ensure their healthy development. It is an already sad situation when a child loses both parents, because the challenges that they will face will be much greater compared to other children. The risks are even more for social orphans because they understand that they are being abandoned, and this will pose serious risks if not taken care of seriously. With the percentage of social

orphanhood, we are talking about a big number of the world's future.

Therefore the of issue social orphanhood should not just be addressed by individuals, but the global society is responsible in finding the solution. This is more than just a religious and humanitarian perspective, but this is more about the global stability for the generation to come.

Below are some recommendations to address the issue of (particularly social) orphanhood:

- The government and the society should help potential social orphan hood families and prevent them from giving their children up.
- But for existing orphans, the steps that should be taken include:
- Let orphans know that they are not alone
- Let orphans realize their value and importance
- Orphans' self-esteem should be maintained to prevent inferiority complex and negative feelings
- Listen to orphans to understand their problems
- The government and legal institutions should protect orphans and their rights
- Orphans should be provided with good role models
- The right of education and career of orphans must be protected
- Doctors and psychologist must be made available to address orphans' psychical and psychological problems
- The government should provide orphans with economic support and scholarships to prevent them becoming child labors
- The laws to protect and supervise orphans' right should be made and implemented

- There needs to be a social awareness about the issue of social orphan hood so the society could also contribute accordingly helpful contribution to orphans

Every child is a beacon of hope whether they are orphans or not. And every child, orphans or not,

need the exact same love, care and attention to safeguard their healthy development. The future is in their hands, whether they are orphans or not. So it is up to this generation to decide the people who will inherit this world when we are gone, those who are loved enough, or those who lack of it.

Endnotes

- ¹ “Orphans”, UNICEF, <https://www.unicef.org/media/orphans>
- ² “Yetim”, *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/yetim>
- ³ “World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision”, United Nations, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/publications/world-population-prospects-the-2017-revision.html>
- ⁴ “Orphans”
- ⁵ “Who is an Orphan?”, Children of Grace, <https://childrenofgrace.com/who-is-an-orphan/>
- ⁶ “Child Labour”, ILO, <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/child-labour/lang--en/index.htm>
- ⁷ “Number of Orphans Drops in Countries Around the World”, Learning English, <https://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/number-of-orphans-drops-in-countries-around-the-world/4174571.html>
- ⁸ “Every child needs the love of family”, Global Child Advocates, <https://globalchildadvocates.org/socialorphans>
- ⁸ Emma Batha, “Most Children in Orphanages are not Orphans”, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/most-children-orphanages-are-not-orphans>
- ¹⁰ “The Plight of Orphans in Belarus”, Child Fund International, <https://www.childfund.org/Content/NewsDetail/2147489706/>