

# A Cross Cultural Definitions of Orphanages

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**Abstract—** Orphans are children with one or both deceased parents in need of care and protection. while, on behalf of the government, the task of running an orphanage as well as providing physical and social facilities is under Social jurisdiction. Therefore, this article aims to discuss cultural definitions of orphanages using the findings of previous studies. The findings show that there is a difference in the definition of orphanage.

**Keywords—** cultural, institutional care, residential care, orphanages, children institutions, orphans

## I. INTRODUCTION

Orphans are children with one or both parents having passed away (Awang et al., 2004; Zhao et al., 2009; The Faith to Action Initiative, 2014; UNICEF, 2015; Bani Ismail et al., 2018; UNICEF, 2019). Children with one deceased parent are classified as ‘single orphans’ or an orphan, while children with both parents being deceased are classified as ‘double orphans’ or an orphan (The Faith to Action Initiative, 2014; Monasch & Boerma, 2004; UNICEF, 2017).

Historically, developments in the housing of children have been closely linked to the involvement of the British colonial government (Awang et al., 2004) in addition to the influence of Islam which has greatly shaped the running of orphanages, especially in Peninsular Malaysia since the 15th century (Fulcher & Faizah, 2000). Governments, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), private and religious-based bodies have also taken initiatives to provide housing for orphans and provide educational facilities and skills for them, just like for any other children.

On behalf of the government, the task of running orphanages as well as providing the physical and social facilities is under the jurisdiction of the Social Welfare Department (Azlini et al., 2020). The Department of Social Welfare provides funds to cover the expenses of orphanages, as well as channelling donations and financial assistance from outside parties concerned about the welfare of these orphans. This is because the Orphanages for Poor Orphans is said to be an institution dedicated to the caring and raising of children who have deceased or missing parents (Kamath et al., 2017). However, different countries have different views and definitions of orphanages.

## II. A CROSS CULTURAL DEFINITIONS OF ORPHANAGES

Institutional care, residential care, children’s institutions, orphanages, are used synonymously in this paper to refer to residential facilities in which groups of orphan and vulnerable children are cared for by paid personnel in a non-family-

based environment (Nnama-Okechukwa & Okoye, 2019).

In Western countries, the first orphanages were called ‘orphanotopia’ and were founded by the Catholic church in the 1st century to support orphans (O’Ayotunde, 2013). Orphanages are widely established in developing countries (Roberts, 2016). Each country has a different definition of orphanages (Wisegeek, 2015). In addition, orphanages are part of every community’s culture (Reddy & Ramya, 2017).

According to O’Ayotunde (2013), Orphanages are institutions that house children whose parents have passed away or whose origins are unknown. They are public institutions created to provide care and protection for children of parental death. In short, Orphanages are residential/residential institutions dedicated to the care of many children (O’Ayotunde, 2013). According to The Faith to Action Initiative (2014), Orphanages are home organizations dedicated to children whose parents or parents are unable to support their children’s lives or needs.

In other words, orphanages is an institution and placement for children whose biological guardians are dead or otherwise unable or unwilling to look after their children. (Wisegeek, 2015). Some Orphanages hire professional workers such as nurses, teachers, and others involved in the care and upbringing of these children. Others offer only basic necessities such as food, shelter and education. Children sent to Orphanages are children whose parents have died, or their parents are alive but are unwilling or unable to care for them. Most Orphanages seek to place these children in a traditional family environment. This is because it is believed to be safer and appropriate that these children live in Orphanages.

In addition, Milani (2014) stated that orphanages may refer to any care institutions such as a hospital ward, nursery or boarding house where children live together in a group with limited access. However, according to Milani again, the term orphanage today has a negative connotation. Other alternative names for orphanages are group homes, pediatric institutions, children’s homes, rehabilitation centers and pediatric care centers.

Some Orphanages are separated by gender, but most orphanages accomodate both genders. Usually orphanages buildings will emulate many aspects that may exist in the home. Rooms where children sleep and other related rooms may be found at Orphanages. If the orphanages functions as a school, then the classroom is also important (Wisegeek, 2015). In addition, some Orphanages will only provide care for children up to a certain age and may later transfer them to adoptive families or other institutions.

Orphanages are often associated with volunteer groups and religious organizations. Many religions see the care of orphans as an obligation. So Orphanages with many different religious sects are common. However, some countries prefer orphanages to be sponsored by the government, although the care provided is not as good as those provided by religious organizations or volunteers. In many areas, there are fears that foreigners or religious people who care for these orphans will give the wrong education to the orphans.

In many places, orphanages are considered as acceptable residential care facilities for children without parents or guardians. However, it is also quite common to find Orphanages where children are not very well taken care of even when they are well regulated. Nevertheless, it is not considered harmful to children.

However, according to a study by The Faith to Action Initiative (2014), it is clear that orphanages involves all types of residential care, from small (15 children or less) to large-scale institutions. The number of Orphanages is considered by many to be underestimated because many orphanages are not registered and children living in them are not formally counted (The Faith to Action Initiative, 2014).

Thus, the orphanages is for the child with both parents deceased (Awang et al., 2004), excluded or unable to provide care (UNICEF, 2008), of unknown origin (Ashaalan & Al-zeiby, 2016) and from poor families (Bilson & Cox, 2007). In addition, according to (Reddy & Ramya, 2017), orphanages are institutions dedicated to the care and education of orphans, abused, abandoned and neglected children, such as children whose parents are unwilling or unable to able to take care of them. Orphanages provide accommodation, food, clothing services (Zimmerman, 2005), health care, education and recreational activities (Ashaalan & Al-zeiby, 2016), guidance and counseling to enrich the lives of orphans living there.

Orphanages are located in all states and regions of the country. They are owned and managed by governments, non-governmental organizations, religious institutions and private or philanthropic individuals. In Malaysia, there are two types of care centers: residential care centers and day care centers. Residential care centers are any premises where four or more persons are accepted for care as occupants therein, whether for wages or otherwise and a person who is a relative of the manager of the premises shall not be taken into account in determining the number of persons received for care (Laws of Malaysia, 2006).

Meanwhile, day care centers are any premises that accommodate four or more persons receiving care for a continuous period of more than three hours a day between sunrise and sunset, and at least three days a week, whether wages or wages; a person who is a relative of the manager of the premises should not be taken into account in determining the number of persons accepted as residents (Laws of Malaysia, 2006). In this respect, the relatives in this context are the legal guardians of the individual, or a person of legal

affiliation, blood or statutory status such as the father, mother, siblings, grandfather, grandmother, uncles, aunts or nieces and nephews (Law of Malaysia, 2006).

In the orphanages concept, it is classified as a residential care center as it offers care and protection services to orphans. Day care centers also offer care and protection services, but the children do not stay at the institution for 24 hours. Previously, orphanages was the home of orphans, but today, there are other institutions that also offer care and protection services to orphans such as the *pondok*, madrasahs and even tahfiz centers. Therefore, these institutions can be categorized as orphanages because they provide protection and care to orphans as well as to other children.

In Malaysia, the age of children living in orphanages is between 7-18 years old. But in the West, they also accommodate children aged 0-6. In Malaysia, children aged 0-6 are under the care and protection of the Department of Social Welfare. Some of the institutions responsible for the care and protection of orphans aged 0-6 are the Children's Home, Hope Park and Children's Care Center.

In addition to providing protection and care services, Orphanages also provide educational services to orphans. This means that the children go to the same place as their *pondok*, tahfiz and madrasah. The setting up of Orphanages has several objectives for the caring, educating and upbringing of orphans; owning, developing and administering orphanages as well as the assets owned by the orphans and promoting welfare work among members and the public (Rahyl Mahyuddin et al., 1993). If these children do not have relatives to support their lives, then the orphanages is one of the places that will provide them with protection, healthcare, food, education and accommodation (Akram et al., 2015).

Reasons for institutional care for children in other developing societies are varied. There are however concerns with institutional child care due to the various risks and negative effects it has on child development and family well-being (Nnama-Okechukwa & Okoye, 2019). In most developing societies, several factors leading to the institutional care of children outside the family environment have been identified by scholars (Chaitkin et al., 2017; Jones et al., 2012; Connelly & Ikpaahindi, 2016;). Factors such as poverty, family breakdown (parental divorce/separation), parental death or loss of caregiver, health challenges, HIV/AIDS, migration, discrimination, orphanhood, child exploitation, child abuse/neglect, poor or unequal provision of social services, conflict, ethnic/communal clashes, insurgency, natural disaster, and disability account for the institutionalization of children in many developing societies (Nnama-Okechukwa & Okoye, 2019).

### III. CONCLUSION

If we are to communicate with humility, credibility, and integrity, orphan advocates must both accurately understand

and carefully present orphan-related statistics. Failure to do so undermines the strength of advocacy and can misguide the actions that organizations and individuals take on behalf of orphans. Meanwhile, an accurate grasp and communication of the true nature of the need provides a strong foundation for an effective, well-focused response. Although reflecting only broad projections, the estimated 153 million children worldwide are orphans (UNICEF, 2019). Millions of orphans and vulnerable children in developing societies around the world live in institutions and other alternative child care system (UNICEF, 2017).

It is however difficult to provide accurate statistic on the number of vulnerable children living in institutions and other residential childcare facilities in many developing societies. This is because institutional child care in such societies are not properly registered and often not regulated, hence the challenge with accurate statistic (Nnama-Okechukwa & Okoye, 2019). Difficulty in obtaining accurate statistic of children in institutions are due to the fact that some countries do not countor keep record of children in institutions operated by non-government organizations (NGOs) (McCall & Groark, 2011).

The efforts to place orphans in Orphanages are laudable endeavors. Therefore, the growth and development of these orphans either physically, mentally or spiritually should be given as much attention as for similarly aged children of with intact families. The existence of orphanages can reduce the government's burden of protecting and caring of these orphans from the grip of poverty and social problems.

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