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(IJEPC)**www.ijepec.com**RESILIENCE AND WELL-BEING AMONG ORPHANS IN
MALAYSIA: A MULTIDIMENSIONAL PERSPECTIVE**

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Abstract:

This study investigates the well-being of orphans in Malaysia, focusing on their social, religious, and psychological dimensions. Drawing upon existing literature, the research explores the unique challenges faced by orphans, emphasising the need for resilience in the face of adversity. The study employs quantitative methods, using structured questionnaires to assess the well-being of eight female orphans aged 7 to 9 years and a 24-year-old caregiver at PJHKS, an orphanage in Kuantan, Pahang. The questionnaires cover aspects of demographic, social, religious, and psychological well-being. Statistical analysis reveals robust social well-being among the orphans, with an average score of 73%, and a strong adherence to religious practices. However, their psychological well-being reports a moderate average of 64%, indicating emotional and mental challenges. The study finds that the orphans exhibit positive social skills and attitudes, and their religious well-being is significantly shaped by the caregivers' dedication to Islamic teachings. However, psychological challenges persist, necessitating further support and

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intervention. The research emphasises the crucial role of comprehensive care in enhancing the overall well-being of orphans and calls for more targeted efforts to address their diverse needs. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of orphan well-being in Malaysia and offer insights for policy and practice in orphan care.

Keywords:

Orphans, Resilience, Well-being, Malaysia, Psychological Support

Introduction

The term "orphan," as defined by Benthall (2019), refers to a child who has lost one or both parents, often the family breadwinners. The profound impact of such loss on children's lives necessitates an exploration of their well-being, particularly focusing on their ability to rebound from adversity, commonly known as resilience. This article delves into the intricate relationship between orphans and resilience, shedding light on the challenges they face and the importance of understanding their well-being in social, religious, and psychological dimensions.

Orphans often encounter difficulties adapting to their new reality, grappling with the emotional turmoil resulting from the loss of parental support. This struggle is magnified for younger orphans, who may find it challenging to navigate these complex emotions. Additionally, older orphans may face educational setbacks, contributing to a negative impact on their overall well-being. The absence of kin support and the necessity to assume caregiving responsibilities for younger siblings, coupled with the grieving process, can lead to emotional distress and hinder their educational pursuits.

Well-being, as defined by Ruggeri et al. (2020), encompasses both functioning well and feeling good. For orphans, disruptions in traditional family structures often lead to neglect of their well-being. Kyaruzi (2022) highlights the deprivation of basic needs, such as food and shelter, for orphaned children, further exacerbated by school dropouts to care for siblings. Psychological problems among orphans are frequently unaddressed, leading to long-term issues like anger, sadness, and self-isolation, as noted by Ntuli et al. (2020).

Social skills, crucial for navigating life within a community, are hindered in orphaned children. Studies by Nsabimana et al. (2019) and Hailegiorgis et al. (2018) emphasize the impact of familial support on self-esteem and social engagement. The article underscores the importance of social well-being, defined by Dunaeva (2018) as seeking positive social lives through meaningful interactions within family, community, and society. It stresses that a stable social well-being is essential for overall development throughout an orphan's life.

Despite the existence of orphanages, the article contends that the well-being of orphans remains a critical concern. Putri & Ziba (2018) advocate for the provision of care, therapy, and protection for orphans, emphasizing the importance of foster parents in nurturing the physical, mental, and educational needs of orphaned children. From a religious context, Islam encourages Muslims caring for orphans with empathy as Allah SWT has verified orphan care as one of the highest righteousness among sincere believers. One of the verses that Allah has emphasised in the Quran is:

"Have you seen the one who denies the Recompense?, For that is the one who drives away the orphan" (Al-Ma'un, verse 1-2)

The psychological well-being of orphans, often overlooked, plays a pivotal role in their overall development. The eudemonic tradition, as outlined by Piñeiro-Cossio et al. (2021), emphasizes virtues and personal growth, underscoring the need for stable psychological well-being in orphans. Pillay's (2018) research highlights the susceptibility of orphans to psychological problems, emphasizing the necessity of creating environments that support emotional, physical, and social well-being.

In Malaysia, the government, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and private agencies have demonstrated significant concern for orphans by providing targeted assistance and training (Mohammadzadeh, Awang, Ismail, et al., 2018). Despite these efforts, the level of support for orphans in Malaysia remains relatively deficient compared to other demographic groups, such as disabled individuals and single mothers. This disparity is attributed to the constrained budget allocated for the welfare of orphans, particularly those who are economically disadvantaged and neglected. Consequently, many orphanages grapple with insufficient donations, exacerbating the economic challenges faced by these institutions. Compounding this issue, the expanding number of orphanages further strains the allocated budget.

Regrettably, orphans in Malaysia experience notable under-privilege, particularly concerning socialization, education, and access to nutrition, when contrasted with their non-orphan counterparts. It is imperative that these challenges be brought to public attention, prompting a collective effort to address the multifaceted needs of orphans. Despite the strides made in providing assistance, there remains a critical gap in the allocation of resources for the comprehensive well-being of orphans.

Notably, research focusing on the social well-being of orphans in Malaysian orphanages has been scarce. Recognizing this gap, our study was undertaken to deepen the understanding of the well-being of orphans in Malaysia. The primary objective of this research is to explore and assess the social, religious, and psychological aspects of the well-being of orphans at PJHKS and their school. Furthermore, we seek to contextualize our findings by comparing them with other relevant research conducted in Malaysia and internationally. By shedding light on the unique challenges faced by orphans, our research aims to contribute valuable insights that can inform policies and interventions aimed at enhancing the overall well-being of orphans in Malaysia and beyond.

Methodology

This research employed a quantitative approach, utilizing structured questionnaires to gather data on the social well-being of orphans. The questionnaire was meticulously designed to elicit comprehensive information about the orphans' social experiences. Additionally, a separate questionnaire was administered to a caregiver, providing valuable insights into the orphans' well-being from the perspective of someone intimately involved in their care and growth.

Sample Size

The study focused on female orphans aged between 7 and 9 years, with the caregiver being 24 years old. Both orphans and caregivers shared the Malay ethnicity and Islamic faith. A total of

8 female orphans and 1 caregiver participated in the study. All the orphans attended primary schools, specifically SK Peramu and SK Tanjung Lumpur, both located in Kuantan, Pahang. Among them, 3 orphans attended SK Peramu, while the remaining 5 attended SK Tanjung Lumpur.

Data Collection Procedures

Permission for data collection was obtained from the Pusat Jagaan Hembusan Kasih Sayang administration before the visit. A pre-visit discussion with the group leader and administrator helped identify potential participants and secure authorization from the caretaker. Upon arrival, a researcher introduced the purpose of the visit to create rapport with the orphans. An initial activity fostered a sense of ease and familiarity. The 40 children were randomly divided into 4 groups, each comprising 10 children. During the session, interviewers engaged with the children to understand their interests and aspirations, adapting communication to each child's level of understanding. Subsequently, a structured interview session was conducted with 10 children, ensuring impartiality in responses. The interviewers utilized a Google Form for questions, and the completed questionnaires were collected and later analyzed.

Questionnaire

The researchers developed two distinct questionnaires, one for the orphans and another for the caregiver, drawing on their understanding of psychosocial well-being and references from validated questionnaires. The orphan questionnaire comprised 32 questions, covering demographic, social, religious, and psychological aspects, while the caregiver questionnaire included 28 questions. Both questionnaires were administered through Google Forms, providing a structured guide during interviews. The full questionnaire can be found in the appendix.

Statistical Analysis

Statistical analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS version 26. Pearson's correlation was employed to assess the relationships between social, religious, and psychological aspects among orphans. The results were expressed as percentage correlations, offering a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between social, religious, and psychological dimensions. This analytical approach enhances the interpretability and applicability of the study's findings.

Results

The findings derived from a research visit to Pusat Jagaan Hembusan Kasih Sayang, situated at Lorong Karyawan 2, Taman Guru, Kuantan, Malaysia. The orphanage, established on March 25, 2010, housed a total of 42 Malaysian female Muslim orphans as of 2022. These orphans were attending primary schools, with 5 enrolled at SK Tanjung Lumpur and 3 at SK Peramu, averaging 8.25 years of age.

The mean age of the orphans was calculated to be 8.25 years, reflecting a diverse range within the group. Notably, the majority of orphans had been at the center for 1 month, while two had been in residence for 12 months, and one orphan had been at the facility for 24 months. This variation in the duration of stay contributes to the complexity of understanding the well-being and experiences of these orphans.

Furthermore, an exploration of the relationship between age and the number of siblings revealed a nuanced picture. A detailed analysis of the mean and standard deviation values highlighted the variance within the group, providing insights into the diversity of the orphans' family backgrounds. Understanding these variations is crucial for tailoring interventions and support services to meet the specific needs of individual orphans.

Table 1.0: The Relationship Between Mean And Standard Deviation Values.Age And The Number Of Siblings.

Variable	Mean	SD
1.Age	8.25	.886
2. Number of siblings	3.38	2.446

Table 1.0 provides a comprehensive overview of the mean results obtained for various facets, encompassing age and the number of siblings among the orphan participants. The mean averages for age and the number of siblings were calculated at 8.25 and 3.38, respectively. This signifies that, on average, the participating 8 female orphans had an age of 8.25 years, while the overall group averaged 3.38 siblings. Meanwhile, the standard deviation values for age and the number of siblings were 0.886 and 2.446, respectively, indicating the degree of variability within these parameters.

Moving on to Table 2.0, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to explore potential linear relationships between the social, religious, and psychological well-being of the orphans. The analysis revealed that there were no statistically significant correlations observed among these dimensions which was surprising.

Table 2.0. The Relationship Between Social, Religion, And Psychology On The Mean AndStandard Deviation Values.

Variable	Mean	SD	1.Social	2.Religion	3.Psychology
1.Social	40.25	4.367	-	.366	.209
2. Religion	18.38	.916	.366	-	.026
3. Psychology	9.63	.744	.209	.026	-

Table 2.0 furnishes a detailed breakdown of the mean results obtained from each question posed to all orphans across different dimensions of the survey, namely social, religious, and psychological. Delving into these averages, the total scores for each orphan's responses within the social domain yielded a mean of 40.25. Comparatively, the religious and psychological segments reported mean averages of 18.38 and 9.63, respectively. The standard deviations provide additional insights into the variability within these scores, with social responses showing a standard deviation of 4.367, and religious and psychological parts displaying standard deviations of 0.916 and 0.744, respectively.

Interpreting the mean scores, the orphans exhibit a robust social well-being, evidenced by a high score of 73%. Similarly, their religious dimension reflects a commendable score of 72%. However, when it comes to psychological well-being, the orphans report an average well-being score of 64%.

Examining the caregiver's profile, she is a Malay, Muslim, Malaysian, and married woman with an educational background up to SPM. Despite lacking specialised childcare or early education training, she has been dedicatedly working as a caregiver for a year. Her responsibilities include caring for 42 orphans, preparing meals and snacks, and providing emotional support. Notably, she observes that the orphans often confide in her, showcasing their social competence. However, occasional complaints of bullying emerge, emphasizing the complexity of their social dynamics.

The caregiver attests to the orphans' overall good physical health, contingent on ongoing infections within the centre. School teachers report positive behaviour, with no extreme conduct and active participation in sports activities. The caregiver highlights positive interactions, emphasizing the teaching of basic Islamic knowledge and the orphans' freedom to socialize. The neighbourhood extends moral support, and there are no complaints from residents. Despite relatives frequently visiting, the caregiver notes that the orphans express occasional feelings of loneliness, potentially stemming from missing their families. This paradox highlights the nuanced emotional experiences of the orphans, suggesting a need for further exploration and tailored support.

Discussion

Social Well-Being

The findings from interviews with the children at PJHKS indicate a positive outcome in terms of social well-being, with the children consistently providing high marks for each question in this dimension, resulting in an overall score of 73%. This underscores the strong social skills of the children, their excellent attitudes towards one another, both within the orphanage and at school, akin to the observations made by Thompson and Berridge (2008) in their study on children's welfare. The caregivers play a crucial role in shaping their behaviour and fostering kindness, a notion supported by research from McCall et al. (2014), who emphasize the importance of caregiver-child interactions in an orphanage setting. The few complaints from teachers about problematic behaviour confirm the overall positive social well-being of the orphans, aligning with the findings of a study conducted by Gertler et al. (2014), which suggests that children in care settings can develop positively in the right environments.

In Malaysia, attention has been given to orphans through government and non-governmental initiatives, contradicting the prevalent neglect mentioned in the literature, as reported by

UNICEF (2017). However, challenges such as education and housing persist. The results from PJHKS suggest that the orphans, despite their circumstances, exhibit commendable moral values and do not display problematic social behaviour, particularly at school. This aligns with the findings of a UNICEF report (2017), highlighting the resilience of children in adverse circumstances.

Comparing these findings to a study in Ethiopia, where orphans exhibited problematic behaviour and resistance to making friends due to a lack of love and attention (Abebe & Aase, 2007), emphasizes the importance of providing emotional support to orphans. Schools, caregivers, and government agencies can collaborate to ensure orphans receive the necessary support for optimal social well-being, enabling them to lead fulfilling lives, as recommended by Betancourt et al. (2013) in their study on child welfare.

Thus, nurturing positive social skills from childhood is crucial for overall well-being, as the ability to interact with kindness and excellent social skills forms a foundation for a healthy life. This concept is supported by the work of Masten and Coatsworth (1998), who argue that the development of social competencies in childhood is key to later success in life.

Religious Well-Being

In the context of religion, caregivers at PJHKS play a significant role in instilling Islamic teachings and values in orphans. The caregivers ensure a disciplined adherence to Islamic practices, creating a nurturing environment for the orphans to deepen their understanding of Islam. This is in line with the findings of Abdullah and Rashid (2012), who noted the importance of religious education in Islamic orphanages. The orphans display commitment and discipline in performing religious practices, such as prayers, Quran reading, fasting, and dhikr, reflecting the observations made by Rahman and Omar (2015) on the religious engagement of children in Islamic care institutions.

Religion serves as a motivation for caregivers, aligning with studies in multiple countries that highlight the role of religious beliefs in inspiring caregivers to serve orphans with compassion. According to a study by Hussein (2010), religious faith often drives the commitment and dedication of caregivers in Islamic institutions. The influence of Islam is deeply embedded in the background and environment of PJHKS, contributing to the overall religious well-being of the orphans, a phenomenon that is supported by the findings of Ahmed and Salah (2013), who explored the impact of Islamic environments on the development of orphans.

This aligns with global studies indicating the indirect influence of religion on the well-being of orphans through the actions of caregivers. For instance, a study by Saleh et al. (2016) found that religious beliefs provide a source of comfort and moral support for orphans, contributing to their overall well-being. These findings are consistent with the broader research in the field of religious psychology, particularly the work of Pargament (1997), who emphasizes the importance of religion in coping and resilience, especially in the context of vulnerable populations like orphans.

Psychological Well-Being

Psychosocial well-being is crucial for a child's overall development. In the psychological aspect, PJHKS orphans report a mean score of 64%, indicating overall positive psychological well-being. This finding is in line with Masten and Powell's (2003) theory on resilience in

children, which emphasizes the ability of children to adapt positively despite adversity. Despite the challenges of losing parents, the orphans support each other, demonstrating resilience and a lack of feelings of abandonment by society, reflecting the concepts discussed by Ungar (2008) regarding social support as a critical factor in resilience.

Comparisons with studies in Baghdad and Mpumalanga Province (South Africa) highlight cultural variations in coping strategies. For instance, a study by Al-Krenawi and Graham (2007) in Baghdad showed that orphans there tended to internalize their struggles, contrasting with the active problem-sharing approach observed among PJHKS orphans. However, the study underscores the importance of psychological support for orphans, especially in regions where cultural coping mechanisms may differ. This is supported by research by Pillay (2012) in Mpumalanga Province, emphasizing the need for contextually appropriate psychological interventions.

Psychological support is therefore crucial for orphans, and the positive psychological well-being observed among PJHKS orphans suggests that their support systems are effective in fostering resilience and emotional health. This aligns with the findings of Betancourt et al. (2011), who argue that supportive environments and relationships are key to promoting psychological well-being in orphans and vulnerable children.

Conclusion

The assessment of well-being among orphans at the orphanage reveals a commendable overall level of well-being. The orphans exhibit robust social well-being, reflecting their positive interactions and attitudes towards each other. Their religious well-being is notable, with a strong application of religious knowledge in their daily lives. However, their psychological well-being shows a moderate level, indicating potential emotional and mental challenges faced by some orphans.

Despite the insightful findings, the study encounters certain limitations. The primary constraint stems from the small sample size, comprising only 8 interviewed children. This limited sample may not fully capture the diverse perspectives and characteristics present within the broader orphanage population. Additionally, the study's short duration poses challenges in thoroughly observing the children's behaviour and conducting comprehensive interviews with all PJHKS residents.

Communication barriers also surfaced due to the limited vocabulary of younger children. Furthermore, some orphans had recently joined PJHKS, possibly impacting their familiarity with the environment and their ability to provide detailed or accurate information about their experiences. The self-formulated questionnaire, tailored to the age range of the orphans, introduces potential standardization issues, affecting the consistency and comparability of the collected data.

To enhance the robustness of future studies, it is recommended to extend the research period, increase the sample size, and implement standardized questionnaires. Moreover, improvements in the orphanage environment, including enhanced facilities and the creation of child-friendly spaces such as colourful murals and additional playgrounds, could further contribute to the overall well-being of the orphans. Despite the challenges, the orphans display positive

behaviour and a commitment to Islamic values, evident in their modest dressing and exemplary conversational manners.

Allah S.W.T greatly honours orphaned children to the extent that they are mentioned in the Quran, Surah an-Nisa, verse 36:

Worship Allāh and associate nothing with Him, and to parents do good, and to relatives, orphans, the needy, the near neighbour, the neighbour farther away, the companion at your side, the traveller, and those whom your right hands possess. Indeed, Allāh does not like those who are self-deluding and boastful, (An-Nisa, verse 36)

In this verse, the orphan and the needy are the third group that are mentioned. As a Muslim, it is our responsibility to help and care about them as necessary as one would do for his or her own relatives.

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