
The Peculiarities Of Guatemala Orphanage System

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to explore the view of Guatemala on children and its orphanage system as a whole. The resources that are used in this research are online-articles such as the New Yorker and the New York Times Co. report on the event; and previous scholar review studies on effect of orphanage on orphan, examples are: neglectant in care facility, sex trafficking, paper orphan, etc...

Introduction

The orphanages problem in Guatemala is a recently widespread events, starting with the burning of an orphanage in the country. on March 8, 2017. The incident started with a group of about 55 young girls in the Hogar Virgen del Socorro protesting against the physical abuse they received. The staff promptly punish them by locking the girls in a room, unfortunately the mattresses in the room later catch on fire, killing 40 girls in there. Additional investigation in the facility reveal that not only were these children were being mistreated, in some cases, teenage orphans in the facility would face being sex trafficked, being sold for organ harvesting purpose, or being sexually abused by the staff. Not only did these findings outline the weaknesses of child protection laws in the country, and more importantly, the corruptness of orphanage as a place that treat children as an asset rather than actual human beings.

Lack of concern

The fire tragedy is not the first instances of aggressiveness toward children in Guatemala. In 2009, a four years old named Keneth was found decapitated, and later three sister who was beaten and killed by two grown women, all in an effort to kidnap and sell these children for profit (Steele, 2015) . By 2015, the problem continue with upward of around a thousand kids being reported as missing, and around 20 cases of sexual abuse daily. (Steele, 2015). Children who are without parents have to either face a life ravaging in the street, where they have to fend for themselves, or a life in an orphanage institutions. The orphans who lived at Hogar Virgen del Socorro at the time of the fire were even discovered to be tied up and held in cages, with their head shaved clean (Rosenthal, 2017). As demonstrated, orphanage does not guaranteed a safe environment for children. Neglectances and malpractice are so rampage in institutes, that orphan residing here suffered deeply from mental disability. Family is an important factor for a child's life, and without one, children mind is mentally damage (Bano, Fitims, & Bilai, 2019). Aside from the mental health risk, abuse is another factor. Placing a child in an orphanage quadruple their chances of being victim of abusive behaviors and sexual violence (Moloney, 2018). This problem is all too common, and it is significantly worse in Guatemala. Because of the lack of regulation implemented, staff could easily take advantage of the children by beating or in some cases similar to the events in Hogar Virgen del Socorro, sexually abuse them. One report showed that adolescent girls at another orphanage had been impregnated by the staff working there and male intern (Goldman, 2017). As adults, staff members can threaten the orphans to remain silent to cover up the wrongdoing.

Trafficking and paper orphans

Not all children living in Guatemala orphanage are orphans, in fact, 4 out of 5 children in orphanages are paper orphan, meaning a child who still have at least one surviving parents (van Doore, 2016). Poor families or wanted to sell their child away because of financial reasons, while others do so because they wanted to protect their child from street gangs (Goldman, 2017). Regardless, agencies would then recruited these children for trafficking purposes, adding to the incriminating business. Parents who later tried to recover their children were threatened and prevented. Out of those who are being trafficked away, the lucky one are used to take advantage of the Western tourism who pay to volunteer with the orphan (van Doore, 2016). Or, used as substitution for international illegal adoption, as evidenced by the fact that Guatemala is the second most common origin for adoption in the U.S. (Crawley, 2013). While the unlucky one are transported to organ harvester or into the sex industry. In 2013, one incident where a woman dressed as a nurse infiltrate one hospital and stole a newborn baby for the purpose of illegal adoption, before promptly abandoning the baby. These actions violated the international Trafficking Protocol the country had signed on 2017, outlining the banned on trafficking children under any circumstances. Despite the money being sent from foreign organizations, looking to help with the injustice, "orphanages and the children receive nothing." (Moloney, 2018). A study conducted by a professor Rafsanjan University of Medical Sciences showed that trafficking are most prevalence in time of crisis or internal turmoils (Razaein, 2016). And indeed Guatemala had recently underwent a civil war killing approximately 200,000 people, giving criminal activity a chance to grow exponentially. Corruption has bypass the law, continuing with the blatant exploitation of the system, giving the illegal business to the chance to flourish in the post-war era in developing countries like Guatemala.

Impact on the children's behavior

Children's minds are like a sponge, they soak up their surroundings and imitate them to an extent. In Guatemala, whenever someone is suspected of abusing a child, the town would beat him/ her up without proper trial (Steele, 2015). Because violent nature of the country, children living there, especially those would reside in an orphanage, reported to have more violent outburst, and shown sign of self-harming. At Hogar de Abrigo y Bienestar Integral, an orphanage for disable children, children interaction were ranging from rocking back and forth to biting, hitting and even poking themselves in the eye (Rosenthal, 2017). Additionally, children who have been in instituted care for less than a year is also affected by these problems, and shown sign of improper conduct (Kaur, Vinmakota, Panigrahi, & Manasa, 2018). A study conducted by three professors at the Gujarat University found that orphans residing in orphanages typically suffer from social related disorder such as anxiety, social phobia, and conduct disorder (Bano, Fitims, & Bilai, 2019). This connect makes perfect sense considering that orphanage usually have to deal with a large amount of children at a time, and to provide emotional need for each and everyone of them is near impossible. Nevertheless, these children academically performed worse than their peers, and lack prosocial behavior (Kaur, Vinmakota, Panigrahi, & Manasa, 2018). On the other hand, children who are victims of trafficking suffer similar mental issues along with physical problems regarding memory, stomach pain, and headache (Razaein, 2016). This is due to the problems of poor nutrition and psychological stresses that bring during the trafficking process (Razaein, 2016).

Conclusion

Children in Guatemala are facing serious life-threatening situations from abuse to lasting trauma. Fixing the orphanage system could be a big leap for Guatemala as well as the rest of the world, especially seeing how broken it is. More governmental involving need to happen, by placing stricter regulations, and assign more enforcer to implement the actions. In theory, with stricter government control, all of the problems of paper orphans, abuse, trafficking, and violent could be greatly reduced. However, with the country's current state, the freshly recovered government would not have the capability to do so. That leaves the responsibility to the people and organization to do their part in the community by educating the public about the current issues, and work together to fix them.

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