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Social Orphanhood in Russia: Historical Background, Present and Perspective

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Abstract

In the last twenty years Russia is witnessing the growth in the number of children without parental care (the result of the economic crisis, social, economic and political instability in the country, transition of the state social system, loss or reduction of human and spiritual values in families, family crisis. An analysis of the national situation has revealed the number of factors leading to social orphanhood meaning children having biological parents not engaged in raising and taking care of them. The paper reveals historical roots of orphanhood in Russia (World War I, Civil war, Second World War). Modern Russia experiences the third wave of child abandonment. The article describes the main characteristics of child abandonment in Russia, analyses causes of social orphanhood phenomenon (rejection of a new born child in the maternity ward, a force removal of children from their families because of parental rights deprivation on the reason of parents' alcoholism, drug addiction, asocial way of life, disability; violence against women and children). Among the main causes the family crisis is determined

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1. Theoretical Perspective

Caring for disadvantaged children is the main moral norm of every civilized society. There are many reasons due to which more and more children are left to the care of the state and the process of their social formation takes place outside the family in children's homes and boarding schools. In every country and in every society there has always been, is and will be orphans and children who, for various reasons, are left without parental care. In this case, society

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and the state take care of these children development and education. A child who lost his parents is a special, truly tragic world. The need to have a family, a father and mother - one of the strongest needs of the child (Mukhina, 2001). Children abandoned by their biological parents experience trauma affecting their future life (Perry, 2001, 2002). Any society is characterized by the following pattern: the loss or reduction of human and spiritual values in the family leads to the manifestation of child abandonment. As a consequence, growth in the number of children without parental care is witnessed. This trend is especially observed in times of economic crises and wars, as well as in the periods of transition from the old state of the social system to a new one (Korchagina, Pishnyak & Malkova, 2010). No secret Russia today is in exactly that situation, so the relevance of this problem is obvious. In the face of social, economic and political instability of Russia the number of children in especially difficult circumstances is growing. Among them - orphans, socially maladjusted children and young offenders, children with disabilities, refugees and internally displaced children living in adverse environmental conditions. The number of children orphaned at an early age is steadily increasing (Osipova, 2008). In everyday speech and theoretical studies in Russia two concepts are widely used: orphan (orphanage) and social orphan (social orphanhood). Orphaned children - children under 18 years old whose both or one of the parents died. Social orphan - a child who has biological parents, but for some reason they do not engage in raising a child and do not care about him. In this case, the society and the state take care of them (Galaguzova, 2000, p.192). These are children whose parents are not legally deprived of their parental rights, but do not actually care about their children (Vasilkova & Vasilkova, 1999, p.299). Social orphanage is a social phenomenon, caused by the presence in a society of children without parental care due to parental rights deprivation, recognition of parents incapable, missing.

2. Russian Context for Social Orphanhood

The roots of modern orphanhood in Russia are of historical character. World War I, a three-year civil war, many years of economic ruin, pestilence and famine left tens of thousands of orphans. Although in the mid 30's XX c. child homelessness was formally over, in fact, this question was not closed. Then Russia fell into the most terrible of all wars on earth, resulted in hundreds of thousands of orphans. However, besides these objective reasons there were others, namely, the destruction of family moral foundations, lack of spirituality and loss of the most important human values. The number of poor children continued to expand due to parents' deprivation of their parental rights because of their immoral lifestyle and drinking, and lack of maternal care and upbringing of their children. According to experts, today Russia is experiencing the third (after the Civil and Second World Wars) wave of child abandonment. The number of orphans is almost the same as it was after the Second World War. For example, in 1945 there were 680 thousand orphans and according to Russian Commissioner for Children's Rights Pavel Astakhov, at the beginning of the 2013 there were 644757 children left without parental care. 83% (62 thousand) of them are social orphans, i.e. orphans with parents alive. However, about two thirds of them (516 592) are raised in families, including adopted children. Others (more than 104 thousand) live in residential care or enrolled in primary and secondary professional education (Pavel Astakhov, 2013). Statistics show that the number of orphans in Russia, accounting for every 10,000 children (and according to the Russian State Committee on Statistics the Russian Federation is now home to 28,3 million children), is one of the highest in the world. Almost 50% of the child population (about 14 million) is in the area of social risk (Mukhina, 2001). Every year about 100 thousand children in need of care are revealed in Russia (74,7 thousand in 2012). According to the Commission for Women, Family and Demography at the RF President in the last 5 years the number of orphans has increased by 70% (Osipova, 2008). More than 104 thousand orphans are living in Russian orphanages. There is a negative trend of a stable from year to year growth of the number of children placed on full government support proportion (based on the total number of identified and registered at the end of the year children left without parental care) in 2007 - 23.7% , in 2008 - 25.0%, in 2009 - 26.6%, in 2010 - 28.2%, in 2011 - 28.4%, in 2012 - 28.5% During the same period the absolute number of children placed in the family decreased by 47.9%: from 129.6 thousand in 2007 to 61.4 thousand in 2012. Including - 34.6% reduction in the number of adopted children: from 14.1 per thousand in 2007 to 9.2 thousand in 2012 (Pavel Astakhov, 2013). Among the pupils of boarding schools, only 5% have no parents, 95% of parents abandoned their children for various reasons, transferred them to a full state support, or are deprived of parental rights (Korchagina et al., 2010). The status of these children is characterized as a state of frustration that arises in situations of conflict or when the needs come up against insurmountable obstacles that somehow leads to

increased irritability and aggressiveness. According to I. Demakova, these children's childhood space often serves as the territory in which "culling" and "selection" are carried out, and here a child first encounters with the problem of inequality (Demakova, 2003). Orphans, children without parental care and a positive experience of a family life are usually not able to create a healthy normal family. Growing up in public institutions, educational systems that are far from being perfect, they often repeat the fate of their parents, losing parental rights, thus expanding the field of child abandonment. According to some researchers of the problem, 40% of children who come from residential institutions, become criminals, 40% - drug addicts, 10% - commit suicide and only 10% - are able to complete an independent life (Rybinski, 1997; Valeeva, 2007). Coming out of these institutions, many teenagers do not find a decent place in life. On the basis of sociological data only 10-20% of boarding schools graduates after 10 years were able to realize themselves in life, do not repeat their parents' mistakes, as the cause of social orphanhood lies in overdue attention of the society to the state of families in difficult situation (Korchagina et al., 2010). At the same time many children living in families also have a sad fate. Conflicts in the family, divorce, parents' alcoholism, poverty, force children to run away from home and wander the country. There are about 1 million homeless children in Russia, up to 2 million - neglected children, those who only spend their night at home, but in the daytime remain without supervision and are brought up by street. As a result about 330 thousand crimes a year are committed by teenagers, 3,5 thousand children commit suicide. According to official statistics, in 2011 the rate of juveniles' suicide rates in Russia was 2.7 cases per 100,000 children, in 2010 - 3 cases, and in 2009 - 3.8 cases. According to WHO, in other states children's suicide rate is only 0.4 to 1.5 cases per 100,000, that is 2-8 times lower than in Russia (Pavel Astakhov's Report, 2013). One of the causes of child abandonment in Russia is a voluntary refusal of parents (usually mother) of their child, most often it is the rejection of a new-born in the maternity ward. From a legal point of view, the rejection of a child is a legal act, which is officially confirmed by a legal document. Within 3 months parents (mother) can change their minds, and a child can be returned to the family. Another cause of child abandonment in the Russian Federation is a force removal of children from their families, when in order to protect children's rights, life and interests parents are deprived of their parental rights. This mainly happens in dysfunctional families in which parents suffer from alcoholism, drug addiction, asocial way of life, disability, etc. Parental rights deprivation is also a legal act that is carried out by the court and issue of a special legal document. A third cause of child abandonment is parents' death. Also there can be included children lost due to some natural or social disasters that force population to chaotic migration (Galaguzova, 2000). Recently the phenomenon of "hidden" social orphanhood announced itself in Russia. Decline in living standards, lower morale, increase in the number of disadvantaged families have led to the fact that children are often "forced out" to the street, enlarging the number of homeless children. Because of uncoordinated system of accounting, high growth in the number of children that have lost custody of their parents, the exact number of child abandonment in our country is unlikely to state. The main reasons of the modern abandonment are parental rights termination, parents' death, parents' voluntary withdrawal from a child (children foundlings, children in clinics or sold to other persons). But the most serious reason we would call such a phenomenon as a dysfunctional family. No less serious problem is young mothers' refusal of new-born children. Today the figure is 12 thousand children. For example, in 2011 in the Republic of Tatarstan 234 children were enrolled in special homes because of their mother's statement on the temporary placement of a child. The reasons were: difficult life situation - (28.6%), serious illness of a child - (25.7%), difficult financial situation - (14.3%), lack of residence - (11.4%), the need for mother's long term treatment - (11.4%), family reasons - (5.7%) imprisonment - (2.9%) (Valieva, 2012). In addition among the prerequisites of social orphanhood there are complex interpersonal relationships in the family, namely, violence against women and children. Each year an average of 14 thousand women in Russia die because of family murder, about 2 million children under the age of 14 are regularly subjected to beatings by parents; 50 thousand of these children run away from home, 25 thousand of them disappear forever. The number of crimes committed against juveniles in the Russian Federation in 2011 was 89.9 thousand. There is a pressing problem to prevent crimes committed against children by their parents, other legal representatives, as well as other persons actually living with their victims. In the past three years a proportion of the total number of crimes of this category has been increasing: in 2009 - 34 777 (32.6%), in 2010 - 32,015 (33.0%), in 2011 - 29 770 (33 , 1%) (State Report, 2012).

3. Conclusions

The range of causes of childhood disadvantage is very wide. Among the most important factors there should be singled out family crisis phenomena: violation of family structure and functions, upsurge in divorce rate and number of single-parent households, anti-social way of life of some families, falling living standards, deteriorating conditions of children's living standards, psycho-emotional overload growth among adult population reflected on children, expansion of cruelty to children in families and residential institutions while reducing responsibility for their fate.

Generalized description of a Russian family in recent years has changed:

- decreased number of children in families;
- reduced proportion of households with two or more children;
- increased number of families without children;
- increased number of costs, illegitimate births, undesirable children, single-parent families;
- increased probability of parents' death;
- increased number of families deprived of their basic living conditions due to forced migration, unemployment, non-payment of salaries, allowances and pensions;
- increased number of disabled parents;
- accelerated development of maladjustment process characteristics of industrial type of civilization;
- deterioration of financial and economic situation, reducing the possibility of the family to meet needs and interests of children;
- increased number of families living in a pre-crisis state;
- increased number of child victims of ill-treatment and various forms of violence, including sexual abuse by parents. -

Family crisis is the result of general economic life frustration, unemployment, poverty of common people, as a family is a microcosm of all the problems and diseases of society. But the phenomenon of a family crisis involves millions of people's fates, and unfortunately, not only adults. Children are not to blame that they were born in a difficult time for their country. Everyone knows that a particular family gives us a picture in miniature of the same contrasts and contradictions in which society is moving. The growing number of divorces is one of the factors that adversely affects the fate of children. There are more and more families in Russia where children are brought up by one parent, there increases a number of children born out of wedlock. Financial difficulties, narrowing of the scope of intra-communication in a single-parent family have a negative impact on children. They are harder to make contacts with their peers, especially among boys there are more common neurotic symptoms. Over 50% of juvenile offenders have grown in a single-parent family, more than 30% of children with mental disabilities grew up without a father. Additional risk factor for the development of a child becomes parents' unemployment. Today, the Russian state and society face extremely important tasks. First, by improving social and economic relations there should be enhanced the prestige of the family and strengthened its moral and household basics. It is necessary to renew the basis of human and spiritual values, which in turn would significantly affect the reduction of the number of children without parental care. Second, society must act as a guarantor of social security of these children, take responsibility to provide them with conditions for normal life, learning, development of instincts and abilities, training, adaptation to the social environment, thus compensating for the lack of parental care.

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