

# The Orphanage System “Social Justice”

I am excited to share some information about an association in Saudi Arabia which is beneficial for orphaned children in their life. This government program, Al-Wedad, was the first to develop a charity fund to take care of orphans who have no one else to care for them. Al-Wedad provides materials, clothes, food, healthcare, and education for orphaned children in Saudi Arabia. Donors are able to make their donations online and view the children needing care. This program helps orphans succeed and find work in life. Al-Wedad focuses on children in special circumstances without parents to help them never give up and hold high morality throughout their life.

In this paper, I will introduce a sister program to Al-Wedad which helps bring the creative arts to this vulnerable group of children. In my experience, the creative arts enhance life experiences. More than basic care, the program I am introducing will enhance the quality of the life of an orphaned child. To care for an orphaned child, a caregiver must feel comfortable with children, have a warm and caring heart, and be able to develop a bond and relationship with the child. The program I've developed selects caregivers with these qualities and connects them with the child which will benefit the most from their care.

- Detailed description of my bio-psycho-socio-cultural-spiritual being.

To begin, I am a female from Saudi Arabia. I am shy and introverted and enjoy being alone, but also with my family. It is important for me to organize and plan something before completing it. I enjoy having a small group of good friends and do not like to talk in front of people because I feel shy and stressed. Because a unique part of the Saudi Arabian cultural is that women are expected to be highly educated, but also fully take care of the family. Saudi Arabian women enjoy spending time with their family, and are very hospitable. Women in Saudi Arabia tend to be more privacy and feel more comfortable in a female only environment. I am a Muslim woman and this guides my life, both spiritually and physically. I try to be thankful for every circumstance

and outcome that comes my way, although I strive hard to do the best I can in every situation. This lifestyle approach comes from my Islamic culture. According to Islam, women should place God in the center of their life and try to please God in all things. In doing this, she will not be stressed about all the other demands she has on her from family, children, job, society, etc.

As a Saudi Arabian, Muslim, woman, who is introverted and shy, yet enjoys spending time with family and close friends, I have developed deep friendships and am close to my family. In my free time, I enjoy spending time with my friends, family, and being in a comfortable space where I can think and grow. One of the barriers I face living in Saudi Arabia is the limited job market for females. However, this is changing because now the government supports women in the workplace, which makes it easier for women to find work.

- **Developmental Theory (Erikson's Life Stages)**

**Stage 1: Trust vs Mistrust (0-1.5 years)**

My mother gave me a sense of trust as she always provided food, love, and interacted with me as a child. I knew I could count on someone in this life and she was the one. My mother was the person who invested most of her time in helping me develop, and although I cannot remember, she encouraged me to explore my environment and learn basic life skills, such as walking and talking. Both parents contributed to my trust development by being reliable and caring. I feel that my parents succeeded in my development in this stage because my future looks comfortable, successful, and promising. If they had not been able to succeed during this stage, my life would be more stressful and difficult.

### **Stage #2: Autonomy vs Shame (1.5 to 3)**

During this stage, my physical being became more developed and I became more independent. I was able to dress myself, feed myself, walk without help, and choose my own toys to play with. Because my mother trusted me to complete these tasks on my own, I learned to

My parents gave me the space and guidance to discover my environment, leading to my sense of autonomy. During this stage, they encouraged me to attempt to reach new goals, gave me support, and responded when I needed help. It is important for parents to encourage their children during this stage so they learn that they are able to accomplish goals and dreams on their own. Parents should also teach the children how to protect and preserve themselves during this stage. This can be achieved by extra flexibility from the parents. If these goals are accomplished, the child will develop good self-esteem and learn to be autonomous in his or her environment. I am certain that my parents were successful during this stage because I have a sense of autonomy and believe that I can reach my goals.

### **Stage #3: Initiative vs Guilt (3-5)**

This stage is important for teaching a child appropriate social skills. It is difficult to control children in this stage, so the primary focus of the parent should be on teaching and demonstrating good interpersonal behaviors. During this stage, I enjoyed playing with other children. Although I am shy as an adult, I was not this way during this stage. I felt comfortable speaking with my peers and with the adults. Because I began schooling very early, I was smarter than my peers. While most of the other children enter kindergarten at 5 years of age, I began first grade. Initially, I attended kindergarten with

the rest of the children, but the teacher recommended my placement in the first grade. Of course, this was pleasing for my parents and they agreed with that placement.

Additionally, my parents encouraged me to continue learning at home.

During this stage, I was very active and required much protection from my parents. Like most children, I was very inquisitive. Although the incessant questions sometimes aggravated my mother, I feel that she was successful during this stage.

#### **Stage #4: Industry vs Inferiority (5-12)**

This is an important developmental stage. I began to learn to read and write on my own. In addition to learning in the school, these skills were further developed at home. I began to make friends at school and connect with them. One way my mother was successful during this stage was by listening and respecting me. I enjoyed recounting my stories from the day at school, and my mother would listen to me. This helped me feel connected to people and encouraged me to try new things.

Towards the end of this stage, I developed an interest in the arts. My mother encouraged this interest and allowed me to attend a school for the arts. I learned more hands-on art skills, such as drawing, crocheting, and sewing in addition to the regular subjects. Because my parents supported my interests, I learned to try new things and accomplish my goals. Graduating from this school made my parents very proud of me and helped me proud of myself.

#### **Stage #5: Ego Identity vs Role Confusion (teenager 13-17)**

This critical stage transitions children to adolescence. Especially for girls, this stage is important for developing self-care skills. Although I wanted to make all the decisions for myself and take care of everything alone, my mother was close to me during

this stage to provide guidance and direction. She helped me learn the skills I needed to take care of myself. As a Muslim woman in Saudi Arabia, my mother became a crucial part of my development during this stage. There are many roles and expectations women must fulfill within both the Muslim lifestyle and Saudi Arabian culture. Having my mother's support during this stage helped me to develop a strong identity. She taught me how to navigate the social roles between men and women.

Friendship is very important during this stage. My mother provided helpful advice about choosing good friends and how to maintain friendships. Without this support, I would likely have become confused with all the different connections that are made during this stage.

#### **Stage #6: Intimacy vs Isolation (18-40)**

This is the stage where my life is currently developing. At this time, I was accepted into the university to pursue my degree in home economics and art. This acceptance made me proud of all the accomplishments in my life which brought me to this point. My mother was beside me through everything. Having successful guidance during the childhood stages, I am able to navigate the important connections and adult relationships.

During this stage, many people settle down with a partner and perhaps begin families. At the beginning of this stage I decided to marry and moved out of my parent's house for the first time. In the beginning, this connection was somewhat strange and unfamiliar. It was not until my daughter was born that I developed a sense of intimacy with someone outside of my family and close friends.

- **Values**

## **Personal Values I bring with me**

An important personal value I bring with me is striving toward higher education. This has developed through my family, my community, and the world around me. It is important for me to continually learn and educate myself. I also value creativity and the creative arts. In my opinion, creativity is a reflection of myself and provides a release during stressful times. My religion is a personal value which comes from the culture in which I was raised. It provides moral guidance and helps direct the decisions I must make in my life. As a part of this religious value system, I have also come to value my family connections. They provide excellent support when making difficult decisions. Above all, I value hard work and perseverance. These values are necessary for taking care of my family, achieving my goals, and maintaining the other values I hold dear in my life.

- **Two Organizations from larger society**

Two larger society organizations in Saudi Arabia are the system of education and the religion. The educational system in Saudi Arabia benefits from the inclusion of good technology and there are schools in many areas, including the poor areas. Providing decent technology and opening the opportunity to attend school is a solid strength of the educational system in Saudi Arabia. However, although technology exists in the schools, the system resists implementing new teaching methods and does not use the technology well for teaching. This system affected my life in a great way. It, along with my personal values, helped push me to finish my college degree and pursue even higher education.

Another larger system in Saudi Arabia is the orphanage system. Children with no parents to provide for them can reside in a government building for orphaned children. Here the children have a clean living space, an educated caregiver, food, clothing, and

healthcare. This system provides more than basic care for the children. It also gives guidance to help the children achieve success in adulthood. However, the children do not receive individualized care as they would in a family. In order to learn and grow, children need teachers that are educated to meet their specific needs. Recognizing this weakness in the orphanage system in Saudi Arabia sparked a passion for this group of children and inspired me to develop an organization that can provide more substantive and individualized care for the orphans.

- **Identify and describe 3 major events (minimum) or factors in the larger environment that influenced me.**

A major influential factor in Saudi Arabia occurred with the change in the educational system. It started to include higher standards for the curriculum and directed more government money for education. With the development of this system, orphans were able to receive better education. In the past, orphaned children attended a small school with other orphans, but as the educational system developed, they received more support to attend schools with the rest of the public. Because of this change, I was able to interact and learn about the orphans in my community. This sparked an interest in the educational system and development of orphans. I developed compassion for the development of orphaned children worldwide. I realized that this group of children is vulnerable and deserves the same treatment as other children.

Another influential factor in Saudi Arabia is the religion. Before Islam, there were not clear rules regarding orphans. Each caregiver decided what rules to follow for the child and many orphans were not treated fairly. Islam introduced fair and equitable rules governing the treatment of orphans. Knowing this, I realized that the orphans deserve a

fair chance to develop more than just the basic needs. Islam advocates for the fair treatment of orphans, so providing fair opportunities for them is part of my worldview.

A final factor is the economy in Saudi Arabia. When the economy declines, it becomes difficult for families to provide for one another. Support for orphans will decrease as families need to focus on their immediate needs. When the economy rises, the government will be better able to support and provide for the orphans in the society. When orphans are able to be cared for properly by the government, I feel more comfortable and at ease. However, the changes in the economy which resulted in impoverished care for the orphans increased my desire to help. These changing economic situations lead to my view that all governments should create a fund for the support of orphans during high economic times to be used during economic struggle.

- **Capacity Building for Al-Wedad Charity Foundation**

The government in Saudi Arabia provides stable housing, food, clothing, education, and health care for the orphans, not leaving any basic need unmet. Local communities augment the government assistance by donating funds and resources. Families are able to personally care for an orphaned child by donating money to a charity, such as Al-Wedad, or by taking an orphan into their home. Donors are able to give money through charities anonymously, if they choose, and care for an orphaned child from a distance. Many people volunteer to help the orphans reach success and receive training for job placement. When an orphan becomes able to work, private business owners may employ him/her or the government can assist in finding employment. All of these organizations and individuals are stakeholders in such charity programs.

- **Experience and influences I carry to help Al-Wedad Charity Foundation**



I feel that the experiences and influences that I have had in my life have brought me to a place where I am able to help the Al-Wedad Charity Foundation. My creativity and abilities in creative arts could be used to help develop a special art section in the organization, to promote the children's abilities in art, and help with use of art therapy. Experiencing trust from my mother during the crucial stages of development has given me a good foundation to help provide the same for the orphans this program reaches, through the development of a program that would help to establish one-on-one, motherly-type relationships to encourage bonding and trust in another human. However, my heart is a major limitation for me because I empathize with these orphans and it makes me upset to see them not having a home. Not being able to separate my feelings from my work in this organization causes stress in my life and may discourage my participation over time.

- **Plan and Implementation Stage for Program on Creative Arts & Program on Mother-Child Bonding**

Planning and implementing a program on creative arts and mother-child bonding will occur in five stages. The first stage will introduce a Saudi Arabian Al-Wedad Charity Foundation Creative Arts Program Development Plan which will advocate for the program to the government, to the orphanage director, and to the arts community. Its main goal is to raise money to help pay for supplies, incentives for the children and the many other expenses incurred by such an organization. Contributions will be sought from both government resources and through private donors. A secondary goal of the Al-Wedad Charity Foundation Creative Arts Program Development Plan is to recruit

volunteers who will participate in an Arts Building Program. Other goals include implementing and assessing the program.

The second stage is to introduce a Saudi Arabian Al-Wedad Charity Foundation, Mother-Child Bonding Program which will advocate for female volunteers in the community and educate them about this mentorship program. This program will provide education sessions for females who want to take part, perform background checks, contact references, and consider all other qualifications of interested participants. This program will assign women who pass these background and reference checks as “mothers” to the children and begin the program. It will be an important priority to assess the program frequently during this stage.

The third stage involves policy changes necessary for implementing this program and forming alliances. Policy changes within the current Al-Wedad Charity Foundation will have to be made to accommodate the two new programs, but later the policy may be implemented at the government level to allow for more funding of the Creative Arts and the Mother-Child Bonding programs. The Creative Arts Council, Abdul Latif Company, schools, and universities will be important allies for the Create Arts program to attain funding and resources through art teachers and programs. Good allies for the Mother-Bonding program are Islamic centers, mothers who do not have children, and grandmothers in the community.

The fourth stage provides education about the plan for Creative Arts & the Mother-Child Bonding through community lectures, printed education materials about the programs, online materials about the program, television advertising, advertisement at

the art centers and schools for the Creative Arts Program, and advertisement in the Islamic Centers for the Mother-Child Bonding Program.

The fifth and final stage is evaluating the effectiveness of the Creative Arts Program & the Mother-Child Bonding Program. Data can be collected from the community about the needs for these programs through surveys, observation, interviews with key players, and data about existing programs. We will document the goals of the program before implementation and continually assess the effects it has on the students, the organization, the volunteers, and all key players.

Orphaned children are an important topic for me. As I developed within my religion and learned the importance of caring for orphans, I felt compassion for them. Caring and providing for orphans became an important goal for me. With the advent of a Mother-Child bonding program, I feel the orphans will receive more holistic and improved care.

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