

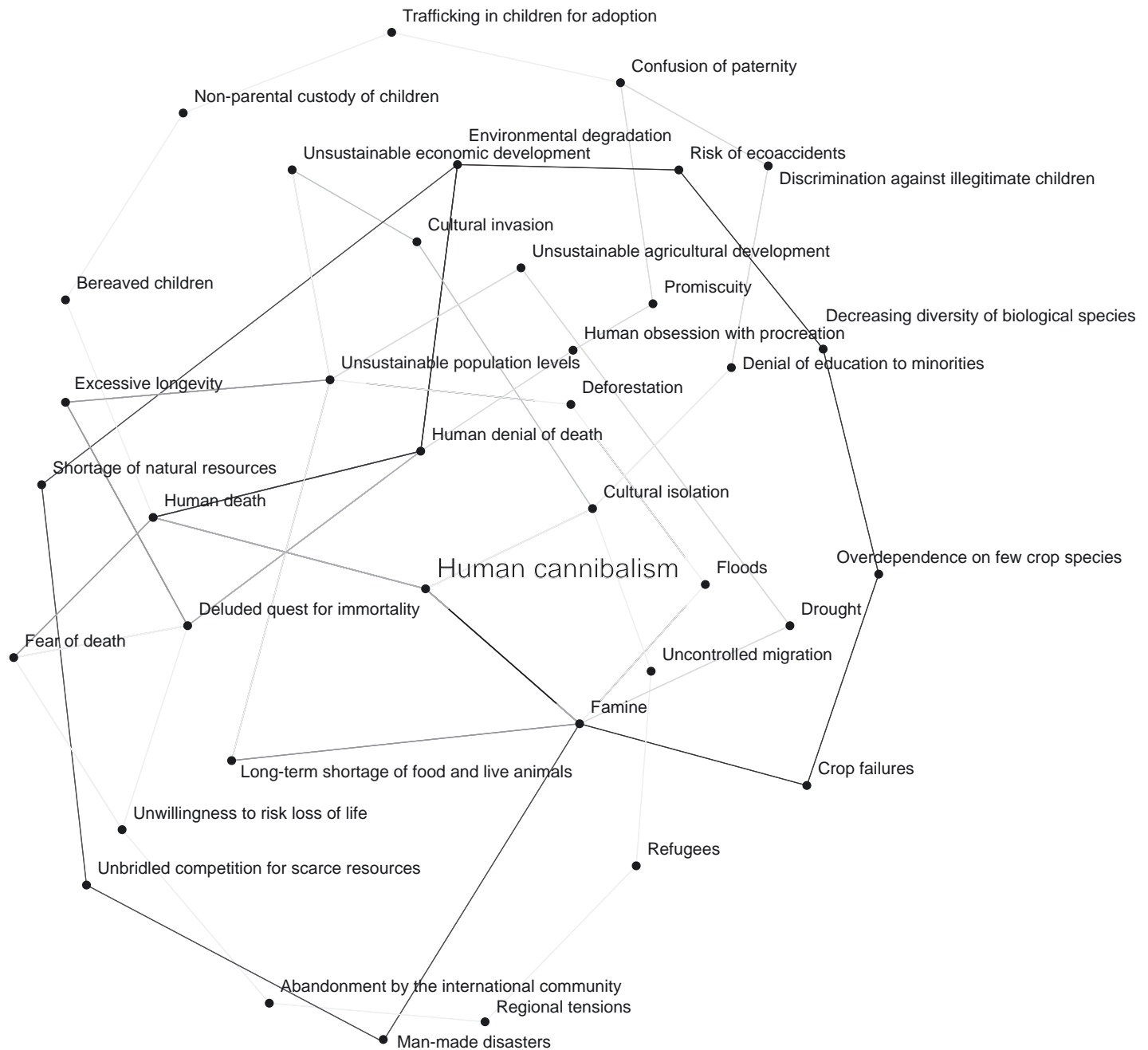
**Figure 10.2.24.**  
**Human cannibalism**

**Database:** World Problems and Issues

**Link type:** aggravated by problems (loops only)

**Network nodes:** 46

**UIA database:** <http://db.uia.org/scripts/sweb.dll/uiaf?DD=PR&CL=2&DR=F2513>



Human flesh may be consumed as a food or as part of a ritual, especially in order to obtain spiritual power over enemies, or to pay respect to dead relatives (endocannibalism). The practice of cannibalism goes back to early history and was found on all continents. The term is derived from a Spanish form of Carib, an early West Indian tribe of cannibals. Cannibalism is still occasionally practised among tribes in interior New Guinea and prevailed until recently in parts of west and central Africa, Melanesia (especially Fiji), Australia, New Zealand, Polynesia (especially Sumatra), and North and South America. Reports circulated in recent years have implicated several heads of state in cannibalistic rites. Cannibalism is occasionally reported in the case of people marooned without food, isolated in a grounded aircraft in subarctic conditions, refugees and shipwreck survivors at sea without food, or prisoners of war left to starve. Incidence problems are also reported in connection with severe famine conditions although, as in the case of the famine in the Ukraine in the 1930s or the siege of Leningrad, efforts are made by the authorities to suppress such information. The probability of cannibalism increases amongst the civilian population in war zones in the event of extended disruption of food supplies. Psychologically disturbed individuals have been known to kill and eat victims, for example, a Japanese university student in Paris killed and ate a Dutch woman student at the same university. There are occasional reports of cannibalism in connection with satanic rituals. In 1993 it was alleged that some of Mao Tse Tung's supporters during the Cultural Revolution practised cannibalism as an ultimate affirmation of the defeat of their political enemies.