BREAKING THE SILENCE: A QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF CHALLENGES AMONG ORPHANED CHILDREN IN SARGODHA DISTRICT ORPHANAGES

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ABSTRACT

Orphans represent a significant population worldwide, and orphan homes are responsible for providing support for holistic development in the lives of children. The purpose of the study was to investigate the psychological, social, and educational challenges faced by orphan children in orphan homes. The theoretical framework of the current study was based on the Attachment Theory by Bowlby, which states how early caregiver relationships influence the psychological, social, and educational development of orphan children in orphan homes. All of the orphan children in SOS Children Village district Sargodha made up the population of the current study. A sample of 206 orphan children was selected randomly from SOS Children Village district Sargodha. Reliable data were gathered using a quantitative survey study design, and the instrument's reliability was confirmed by Cronbach's Alpha, which was found to be 0.89. The obtained data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviations, frequency percentages, and inferential statistics, for instance, the t-test. The results showed that gender was found to be significant regarding psychological, social, and educational challenges. In addition, female orphan children have a greater mean score as compared to males concerning psychological and social challenges. While, concerning educational challenges male orphans have a greater mean score as compared to female orphan children. However, to overcome these challenges it is suggested that it is essential to create efficient programs that can recognize and tackle the emotional, social, and academic difficulties orphaned children confront.

INTRODUCTION

Children are the foundation of any community because they are a symbol of hope and the future. The prosperity of any society depends on their growth and well-being. On the other hand, some children struggle because they don't have parents. According to the definition of Bailey (2009), an orphan is a child under the age of eighteen who has lost both or one of their parents. According to UNICEF (2021), there are 153 million orphans in the world. According to these numbers, the population of orphans would be ranked ninth in the world, ahead of the United Kingdom, Germany, Russia, and other nations, if they had their own nation. Pakistan's percentage of orphaned children is rising. The number of children left orphaned by natural catastrophes, armed conflicts, and parent deaths from sickness is rising quickly (Kavak, 2014). There are 4.6 million orphans in Pakistan (Mahmood et al., 2020). In response, orphanages stand out as alternatives for these children in need of care when their parents are unable to provide it.

According to Williamson and Greenberg (2010), an orphanage is a residential setting where a staff of hired professionals looks after a group of children. However, several issues continue to exist within the walls of

orphan homes, posing a barrier to the orphans' overall development and progress. Hoffman (2004) the cost of these institutions is 10 times more than that of any other local choice for the child. In Pakistan, orphan care has always been a significant and continuous source of concern. Specifically, institutional care such as orphanages is usually criticized for not being able to meet the children's emotional requirements (Akram et al., 2015). Gaydosh (2015) argued that a child's development and well-being are significantly and permanently impacted when a parent passes away. Compared to non-orphans, orphans are more prone to experience mental health issues. Additionally, social rejection, bullying, and stigmatization may befall orphan children (Hong et al., 2015).

Almost 70% of orphans in residential care facilities suffer from serious mental health problems as a result of inadequate parental supervision (Simms et al., 2000). While Lassi et al., (2011) have suggested that there were moderate to severe mental health issues in 50–80% of the orphans. UNICEF (2016) states that orphans from disadvantaged families living in different facilities could experience prejudice, such as having less access to social services, healthcare, and education. They are more susceptible to emotional and behavioral problems that could be clinically serious due to the combination of psychosocial effects (Gaydosh, 2015). Additionally, low self-esteem, inadequate psycho-social care, and various labels associated with life in an institution are experienced by orphans (Saboula et al., 2015). It was discovered by researchers that children who are orphans have lower self-esteem than their classmates who are not orphans and have much deeper relationships with their parents (Johnson, 2020). Growing up in residential care can have several unintended consequences, the most prevalent of which are behavioral issues, developmental delays, a lack of life skills, and trouble establishing and sustaining good relationships (Browne, 2017). Compared to their classmates, orphans are more likely to report psychological issues. Depression, rage, anxiety, and melancholy are among the psychological issues. These difficulties result from their inability to address their sense of loss (Ntuli et al., 2020).

Moreover, the social circle at orphanages is small. The orphans typically find it difficult to integrate into society because of their small social network. Naqshbandi et al. (2012) found that the orphans find it challenging to live outside of the orphanage and integrate into society. Compared to children receiving help from their own families, children in institutions learn and experience less (Pienaar et al., 2011). Their adjustment in society is significantly influenced by the distance they have from the socio-cultural aspects of society. According to Hoksbergen et al. (2004), It has been demonstrated that children who were raised in orphanages are more likely to experience social and peer difficulties. Additionally, Bhargava (2005) described that Children's ability to think critically and analytically is developed through education, which is a major factor in determining the well-being of future generations. Although it gives them knowledge, most orphans are unable to pay for free basic education due to the materials that teachers require, and some kids choose not to attend school. Given that they are frequently the ones assigned the duty of tending to the sick, females in particular should be particularly concerned about this. In addition, orphans living in orphanages have different learning challenges than youngsters living in families (Alvi et al., 2017).

According to previous studies, the majority of orphans in residential care facilities for children, including orphanages, were depressed, worried, sedentary, and withdrew from healthful activities (Holden, 2010). Furthermore, the living conditions of the orphans have also gotten worse due to the underqualified, inexperienced, and unprofessional staff working in orphanages. It is unrealistic to expect such residential workers to give orphaned children good, efficient care (Alvi et al., 2017). For instance, Kaur et al. (2018) found that children who don't have stable home environments and parental supervision are often more vulnerable to psychological and mental health disorders. Following that, these children are usually nurtured in institutional homes set up by either governmental or private entities, which give their lives a certain level of structure. These homes' problems with overcrowding, subpar educational settings, inadequate one-on-one time, and frequent moves could be detrimental to the psychological health of the kids living there.

Researchers have conducted the aforementioned studies on the difficulties faced by orphans in various orphanages, and they have discovered that these orphanages provide a multitude of hurdles. However, no such study has been conducted in the case of District Sargodha, Pakistan. The purpose of this study was to close this gap by using the orphans' self-reported experiences living in orphan homes in the Sargodha district.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of Attachment Theory, put out by John Bowlby, provides a strong foundation for comprehending the psychological, social, and educational difficulties that orphan children in foster homes face. According to this theory, early caregiver relationships have a significant impact on how children develop emotionally. Because they are removed from their primary caregivers, orphan children frequently experience attachment disruptions that result in psychological problems like anxiety and attachment disorders. Furthermore, the impact of these early experiences on social connections and scholastic outcomes is explained by Attachment Theory. Researchers can gain important insights for intervention and support strategies by applying Attachment Theory to examine the intricacies of how children's ability to form secure attachments, navigate social interactions, and participate in educational activities is impacted by the lack of consistent caregiving in orphan homes.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to explore the psychological, social, and educational challenges encountered by orphaned children residing in orphanages, with a specific focus on discerning any gender-based distinctions in these challenges.

METHODOLOGY

The current study was descriptive. The research design used for the study was a quantitative survey. The population of the current study consisted of all the orphan children living in the SOS Children Village district of Sargodha. However, as a researcher, one of the reasons for selecting the Sargodha district of SOS Children Village was that it would be more convenient for me to visit them if I needed to personally deliver the questionnaire instead of mailing it. 206 orphan children made up the study sample, which was chosen at random. Next, data was gathered using a questionnaire that the researcher had created. In the research tool, a 5-point Likert scale was used. The specialists and I had several sessions to work on the item's structure. The questionnaire underwent a few changes before reaching its final form in response to suggestions and expert advice. Cronbach's Alpha (α), the dependability coefficient, was computed and found to be 0.89.

Ethical Consideration

Every step of the study was conducted by fundamental ethical standards, and ethical considerations were taken into account when conducting the research. The ensuing moral standards were upheld:

1. The purpose of the research was briefed to all concerned participants, and permission and approval were obtained from the concerned universities before conducting the interviews with participants.

2. It was assumed that anyone's emotions would not be harmed.

3. All the participants were ensured that their identities would be kept secret and used only for research purposes.

Field Experience

Once the official approval from the head of SOS Children Village was obtained, the researcher first had a meeting with the staff to decide when it would be most appropriate to meet the study participants and explain the purpose and goals of the research. Four days were spent on the actual fieldwork for the data collection procedure. Reaching out to every unit in the sample, distributing the questionnaire,

and then picking them back up is an extremely demanding and stressful task. To get reliable data, the researcher was very patient and kind to the responders during the data-gathering process. The majority of the time, respondents were first reluctant to complete the questionnaire. Nevertheless, they consented to collaborate after being informed of the goal and given assurances regarding the privacy of the provided data.

Statistical Analysis

Data collected from the studied sample was revised, coded, and entered in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. Further, data were presented using descriptive statistics in the form of frequency and percentage distribution, the mean score, and the standard deviation. Moreover, a statistics t-test was used to find out the gender-wise difference between orphans.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Demographic information of the orphaned children.

Demographic Information	Frequency	Percentage
Gender of the orphans		
Male	98	47.6
Female	108	52.4
Total	206	100.0
Age of the orphans		
06 to 10 years	83	40.3
11 to 15 years	61	29.6
16 to 18 years	62	30.1
Total	206	100.0
Education of the orphans		
Primary	81	39.3
Middle	86	41.7
High	39	18.9
Total	206	100.0
Orphan Status		
Maternal	106	51.5
Paternal	51	24.8
Double	49	23.8
Total	206	100.0

It can be seen from Table 1 the demographic information of the respondents. The values given in Table 4.1 show that 47.6% of the respondents were male and 52.4% were female. While 40.3% of respondents lie between the age of 06 to 10 years 29.6% respondents lie between the age of 11 to 15 years and 30.1% respondents lie between the ages of 16 to 18. Additionally, 39.3% of respondents enrolled in primary schools 41.7% of respondents enrolled in middle and 18.9% of respondents were enrolled in high schools. Moreover, 51.5% of respondents were maternal orphans 24.8% of respondents were paternal orphans and 23.8% of respondents were double orphans.

Table 2. Group difference regarding gender.

Variables	Mean		Standard Deviation		t	Sig
	Males	Females	Males	Females		
Psychological Challenges	38.234	39.907	3.454	4.780	-2.853	.000
Social Challenges	39.255	50.601	4.365	14.041	-7.669	.000
Educational Challenges	46.459	43.305	13.266	9.713	1.959	.000

In Table 2, the gender distribution of the group was examined using the t-test. The t-test is used to determine whether or not there is a significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups. The independent t-test analysis findings are provided below.

Table 2 showed that the psychological issues, social difficulties, and scholastic obstacles of male and female orphan children were compared using an independent-sample t-test. The table shows that the outcome concerning psychological issues of the female orphan children has a greater mean score (M= 39.907, SD= 4.780) as compared to male orphan children (M= 38.234, SD= 3.454). Further, t value (-2.853) was significant at p< 05.

Similarly, the result of the social challenges demonstrated that the mean score of female orphan children has a greater mean score (M= 50.601, SD= 14.041) as compared to male orphan children (M= 39.255, SD= 4.365). Moreover, t value (-7.669) was significant at p<05.

Additionally, the result about the educational challenges reflected that the mean score of male orphan children has a greater mean score (M=46.459, SD= 13.266) as compared to female orphan children (M= 43.305, SD= 9.713). Additionally, t value (1.959) was significant at p<0.5.

Findings

It can be seen from the results, as depicted in Table 1, that 52.4% of respondents were females and 47.6% were males. While 40.3% of respondents lie between the ages of 06 to 10 years 29.6% of respondents lie between the ages of 11 to 15 years and 30.1% of respondents lie between the ages of 16 to 18. Additionally, 39.3% of respondents enrolled in primary schools 41.7% of respondents enrolled in middle and 18.9% of respondents were enrolled in high schools. Moreover, 51.5% of respondents were maternal orphans 24.8% of respondents were paternal orphans and 23.8% of respondents were double orphans. Further, the research question of the current study was what are the gender-wise differences concerning orphans towards their psychological, social, and educational challenges? The findings, drawn from Table 2, demonstrated that gender was a crucial factor when it came to psychological difficulties. Likewise, a noteworthy disparity in gender was observed concerning the societal obstacles faced by orphans. Furthermore, the findings indicated a noteworthy difference in the average scores of male and female orphan children about educational obstacles. In addition, female orphan children have a greater mean score as compared to males concerning psychological and social challenges. While, concerning educational challenges male orphans have a greater mean score as compared to female orphan children.

Discussion

The current study's main goal was to investigate the psychological, social, and educational challenges faced by orphan children in orphan homes. The major findings of the study were very significant because they clarified the primary obstacles that strongly predict the obstacles that orphan children in orphanages will experience. The sample adequately reflected the population, based on the findings. Additionally, it was disclosed based on the findings from Table 2, that there were gender disparities in the psychological issues

that orphan shelters had to deal with. The subsequent outcomes align with the conclusions of an earlier investigation carried out by Aziz et al., (2023). This led to the conclusion that children who were orphans exhibited anxiousness the greatest. Of the 77 females, 21 (27.27%) experienced anxiety; only 2 males experienced anxiety. Data from orphanages revealed that anxiety issues were more common in women. Similarly, Li et al., (2024) explored that male orphans typically had the lowest psychological distress, whereas girls orphans typically had the most. The results also showed, as evidenced by Table 2, that, compared to male orphans, female orphans faced greater social obstacles. These findings align with those of Mahanta et al. (2022) who discovered that Noteworthy is the fact that because of cultural conventions that place particular expectations on girls, female children frequently face more severe problems than their male counterparts. The long-term absence of parents adds to the complexity of these concerns. In addition, the findings of the research study reflected, as extracted from Table 2, that male orphan children faced more educational and learning challenges rather than females. These results are consistent with the conclusion given by Tu et al., (2009) which concluded that In terms of acting out and learning challenges, boys scored higher than girls did. In terms of task orientation, frustration tolerance, and peer social skills, boys scored lower than girls.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this research study, it was concluded that there was a gender-wise difference among the challenges faced by orphan children in orphan homes. It also infers that male and female orphan children were significantly different from each other regarding their psychological and social problems. Females have more psychological and social challenges rather than males. Similarly, the result showed that male orphan children faced more difficulties and they faced more challenges regarding their education. Thus, based on the study findings it is suggested that it is essential for orphanages to have counselling services easily accessible for the kids to support the mental health of the abandoned. Creating efficient programs that recognize and address the emotional difficulties orphaned children confront is also crucial. We can raise these kids to be resilient, emotionally and physically strong adults by putting these strategies into practice. Additionally, the children's recreational services, such as social activities that primarily unite orphans rather than leave them alone, need to be improved. This will help orphans receive better emotional support. These steps will improve the caregiver's role and foster community social networks. Further, Children who are orphans can benefit from a psychosocial counseling program that is created and implemented to address their behavioral and psychological issues. Additionally, the political authorities should also be prepared and committed to implementing the national and international policy papers as well as allocating a reasonable budget to help orphan children. Last but not least, to safeguard the rights of orphan children, policymakers ought to review the relevant laws and regulations. Not to mention, orphans ought to be given more chances to lead their peers or take part in classroom activities. These could help them become more self-assured and perform better in school.

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