

## Different Dimensions of Stress among Adolescent Orphans: Counselling as a Solution

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### **Abstract:**

In this study, stress-related issues unique to institutionalised adolescent orphans were identified, their level of stress was evaluated, and a case was made for counselling as the best intervention strategy. The goals were to quantify and assess stress levels, examine stressors and their causes, comprehend counselling and its scientific method, and defend counselling as an evidence-based intervention.

The Stress Scale Manual, created by Dr. Prerna Puri, Dr. Tejinder Kaur, and Prof. Manju Mehta in 2001 to measure stress levels, was used in the study as part of a descriptive research approach to gather sociodemographic data. A statistical analysis was done to look at the frequency and seriousness of stressors and associated problems. Based on the results, evidence-based counselling strategies were suggested to address the identified stress-related issues among the targeted group.

In Tiruchirappalli District, 11 government-sponsored orphanages housed 1,021 adolescent orphans between the ages of 13 and 17. The participants were chosen from a total of 64 orphanages in the district using a multistage random sampling method. Eleven government-sponsored orphanages were chosen using simple random sampling. Two orphanages for boys, two for girls, and two for mixed-gender children were chosen at random from among these. Data were gathered from all 360 participants using a census method because there were few adolescent orphans in the defined age range.

The Stress Scale Manual, which consists of 34 items scored on a four-point scale, was used to collect the data. The responses of each participant were graded using the established norms for the scale. The split-half method was used to calculate the tool's reliability, and the result was a coefficient of 0.90.

After the samples were identified, data were collected, cleaned up, and then analysed with the aid of SPSS software. The size of the effects of stress was calculated statistically. The appropriate counselling strategies were then distilled and presented to support counselling as an efficient intervention for addressing stress-related issues after relevant literature was reviewed to identify them.

The distribution of different stress dimensions among the adolescent orphans was revealed by the study's findings. The majority of respondents (44.7%) and career & academic stress (40.8%) both reported medium levels of overall stress. While irritability showed a fairly evenly distributed distribution among the respondents, stress-proneness was found to be at a medium level for 42.8% of respondents. A significant portion of respondents (38.1%) demonstrated a high level of stress management skill deficiency, while the majority of respondents (46.4%) had a medium level of easy-going personality. Meaningless thoughts and a bad mood were reported at medium and low levels, respectively. Physical signs of stress were moderately common (47.8%), and respondents' anxious behaviour was

moderately common (51.1%). Overall stress was reported at medium levels by a significant percentage of respondents (46.4%).

These results shed light on the prevalence and distribution of stress-related dimensions in the population under study, highlighting areas that call for targeted interventions and counselling strategies to deal with particular stress-related problems.

**Key-words:** *Adolescents, Orphans, Stress, Counselling, Interventional strategies*

### **Introduction:**

Young people go through significant physical, cognitive, and emotional changes as they make the transition from childhood to adulthood during adolescence. Exploration, identity formation, peer pressure, and growing independence define this developmental stage. It also comes with a host of difficulties and stressors, which can seriously harm their general wellbeing. This study by Sahad et al., (2017) used a quantitative method to investigate the differences in mental health between Malaysian adolescents who were orphans and those who were not. 240 orphans and 240 non-orphans between the ages of 13 and 17 made up the sample, which was chosen using a multistage sampling technique. The validated Malay version of the Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale 21 Item (DASS21) was used to evaluate mental health. The findings showed that orphans and non-orphan adolescents' mental health differed significantly, with orphans showing higher levels of mental health problems like depression, anxiety, and stress. These results underline the significance of programmes and interventions being implemented by various stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), orphanage facilities, and guardians, to prioritise and support the mental wellbeing of orphan adolescents in Malaysia.

This another study by Dr. Seema Irshad, (2017) compared orphans and people from typical family backgrounds in terms of their levels of stress and alienation, as well as the relationship between the two. There were 40 subjects in each group for a total of 80. Both the Alienation Scale and the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) were used to gather the data. The findings indicated a significant relationship between stress and alienation, proving that being under more stress was linked to experiencing more alienation. Orphans also showed higher levels of stress and alienation compared to people with typical family backgrounds.

Adolescent orphans, who have lost one or both of their parents and are frequently housed in institutionalised settings like orphanages or foster homes, are particularly stressed out. These young people experience particular circumstances that may lead to increased stress and emotional turbulence. During this crucial period of development, the absence of a secure sense of belonging, nurturing relationships, and family support can be extremely felt. Even though they are designed to offer care and support, institutional environments can add more stress to the lives of adolescent orphans. Their stress levels may also be increased by issues like crowding, a lack of privacy, a lack of resources, and frequent carer changes. Grief, loneliness, and a sense of separation from others can also be brought on by the loss of parental figures and the rupturing of familial ties. This cross-sectional study by Mohammadzadeh et al., (2018) examined 307 male and female adolescents (aged 13 to 18) living in nine private orphanages in the Klang Valley region of Malaysia to determine the prevalence of stress, coping strategies, and predictors of stress levels. The main instruments were the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale-21 and the Brief COPE scale. The results showed that female adolescents and those with higher levels of education had a higher likelihood of experiencing stress. In terms of coping strategies, girls were found to use self-distraction, emotional support, humour, and religion more frequently than boys. As stress predictors, denial, venting, religion, humour, planning, and active coping were discovered. Given the high prevalence of stress and the observed negative coping patterns, the study

highlighted the urgent need for interventions to reduce stress & improve coping strategies among institutionalised Malaysian adolescents.

It is critical to comprehend the various dimensions of stress that adolescent orphans experience in order to address the unique stressors they encounter. Stress can show up in many different ways, such as psychological, emotional, and physical symptoms. The constant need to adjust to new environments and carers, feelings of abandonment, or ongoing future uncertainty can all cause psychological stress. Intense sadness, rage, or anxiety linked to their life circumstances can be signs of emotional stress. Headaches, trouble sleeping, and changes in appetite are just a few examples of how physiological stress can show up as symptoms. A Research carried out by Kaur, S., & Rani, C. (2015) states that, the state of one's psychological well-being has a significant impact on their capacity to manage and respond to difficult life circumstances. Maintaining psychological well-being requires a number of psychological components, including resilient coping, a positive self-concept, and productive coping. For people to establish these determinants and get through challenging times during the developmental stage of adolescence, social acceptance and support, especially from parents, are crucial. People who don't have supportive parents frequently have to overcome significant obstacles in their daily lives and struggle to manage stress in various areas. It improves their self-competencies, like self-efficacy and self-esteem, as they struggle to deal with daily annoyances. This viewpoint informed the current study's goal, which was to evaluate the stress resilience, coping mechanisms, and self-concept of adolescents from intact and orphaned families. In comparison to adolescents from intact families, the hypothesis predicted that orphans would show higher levels of stress resilience, effective coping mechanisms, and self-concept. Adolescents from intact families (n=30) and orphan adolescents (n=30) were the subjects of the study. The Adolescents' Coping Scale, Stress Resiliency Profile, and Self-Concept Questionnaire were completed by the participants. The t-ratio was calculated, and the results showed significant differences in stress resiliency profiles (deficit focusing and necessitating) and coping mechanisms (problem-solving and reference to others) between orphan adolescents and adolescents from intact families. The main conclusions confirmed that, in comparison to their peers, orphans showed higher levels of stress resilience, productive coping, and self-concept.

For the purpose of creating effective interventions that address the particular needs of adolescent orphans, it is essential to recognise and comprehend these dimensions of stress. Counselling, which provides a supportive and therapeutic environment for addressing stress-related issues and fostering resilience, is one promising intervention. Adolescent orphans who seek counselling have a safe place to express their feelings, think through their experiences, and create coping skills for stress management.

Through counselling, qualified professionals can work with these young people to pinpoint the particular stressors they experience and investigate ways to lessen their effects. This might entail instructing them in relaxation methods, problem-solving techniques, and productive communication techniques. Psychoeducation on stress reduction, self-care, and healthy coping mechanisms can also be given through counselling. Furthermore, a crucial component of the counselling process is the therapeutic bond that develops between the counsellor and the adolescent orphan. As a result of the relationship's encouragement of trust, empathy, and validation, the young person can navigate their stressors and build resilience and a sense of self-worth.

Researches have confirmed the effectiveness of counselling as an intervention for stress-related problems in adolescent orphans. According to studies, counselling can help this population's psychological health, lessen their anxiety and depressive symptoms, boost their self-esteem, and develop more effective coping mechanisms. This particular study done by Anne Samyukta, (2016) adopts a positive stance, in contrast to earlier studies that have

primarily focused on the negative aspects of mental health when comparing orphans to non-orphans. This study compared the cognitive preferences and aspirational levels of orphan children and non-orphans. The sample from Hyderabad included 40 orphans and 40 non-orphans. The Levels of Aspiration Measure was used to measure their level of aspiration, and the Story Pictorial Embedded Figure Test was used to evaluate their cognitive style. The findings showed that orphan children had more field independence than non-orphan children, but there was no discernible difference in their aspiration levels.

Adolescent orphans can be empowered to develop the skills and resources they need to navigate the challenges they face and thrive despite their circumstances by receiving counselling that addresses their stress and emotional needs. However, it's crucial to keep in mind that counselling strategies for adolescent orphans should be contextually and culturally appropriate. Effective intervention must take into account the distinct cultural and social influences on their lives. Incorporating culturally appropriate practises, including carers or other trusted adults in the counselling process, and taking into account the wider social support networks that are accessible to these young people are some examples of how to achieve this.

### **What is stress?**

WHO ( ) mentions, A condition of anxiety or psychological strain brought on by difficult circumstances is referred to as stress. It is a natural human reaction that drives us to face challenges and potential risks. Despite individual differences in intensity, stress is a universal experience. However, how we respond to stress has a big impact on how well we are as a whole.

### **Indicators of stress in young individuals can manifest in various ways (Source: <https://www.apa.org/topics/children/stress>, n.d.)**

- Irritability and Anger: Children may find it difficult to express their feelings, which can cause tension to build up and an unfavourable mood. Children and teenagers who are under stress may act more irritable or argumentative than usual.
- Behaviour Shifts: A previously obedient young child may suddenly engage in disruptive behaviour, while a previously outgoing teenager may become withdrawn and resentful of leaving the house. Unusual behavioural changes may be a sign of severe stress.
- Sleep Issues: A stressed-out child or adolescent may frequently complain of being tired, sleep more than usual, or have trouble falling asleep at night.
- Neglecting Responsibilities: Stress may be a factor if a teenager starts out of the blue to put off doing their homework, forgetting commitments, or showing increased procrastination.
- Changed Eating Patterns: Stress can result in both excessive and reduced food consumption.
- Increased Illness: Physical symptoms of stress are common. Children who are under stress frequently complain of headaches or stomach aches and may make frequent trips to the school nurse's office.

### **What is Counselling?**

The Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia define professional counselling as: *“Professional counselling is a safe and confidential collaboration between qualified counsellors and clients to promote mental health and wellbeing, enhance self-understanding, and resolve identified concerns. Clients are active participants in the counselling process at every stage.”*

Which means Professional counselling entails a safe and private collaboration between licenced counsellors and those seeking assistance with the intention of promoting mental health, raising self-awareness, and addressing particular issues. Clients participate actively in the counselling process at every stage.

### **How Counselling Works?**

(Source: <https://www.visioncounselling.com.au/what-is-counselling/>)

- With the help of a professional counsellor, individuals, couples, or family members can meet in a private setting to talk about their personal struggles.
- In order to help the client navigate their issues, the counsellor draws on their training, using a variety of tools & techniques while demonstrating empathy & understanding.
- Establishing goals is the primary purpose of counselling, and those goals may be changed as long as the client and counsellor both agree.
- The importance of the client-centered approach to counselling is frequently emphasised, allowing the client to choose the best course of action with the help of their therapist. According to what is required, the counsellor can provide assignments, tools, techniques, and suggestions.
- The client ultimately has a key role in choosing actions that are best for their wellbeing and is a crucial component of the counselling process.

### **Methods:**

#### **Aim:**

The aim of this study is to assess the degree of stress encountered by institutionalized adolescent orphans, to identify stress-related concerns specific to this population, and to provide a rationale for counselling as the most appropriate intervention strategy

#### **Objectives:**

- To measure and evaluate the levels of stress experienced by institutionalized adolescent orphans.
- To identify and analyze the specific issues and factors contributing to stress among institutionalized adolescent orphans.
- To understand the true meaning of counselling and it's scientific process.
- To provide evidence-based justification for the implementation of counselling as a suitable intervention for managing stress in institutionalized adolescent orphans.

### **Research Design:**

The study uses a descriptive research approach. Questionnaire will be used to gather information about the institutionalized adolescent orphans' sociodemographic characteristics, and the validated Stress Scale Manual, created by Dr. Prerna Puri, Dr. Tejinder Kaur, and Prof. Manju Mehta in 2001 will be used to evaluate the level of stress. In order to get knowledge on the prevalence and seriousness of stressors and related issues, the obtained data will be statistically analysed appropriately. Evidence-based counselling strategies will be suggested to address the identified stress related issues among the targeted group in light of the findings.

### **Selection of the Respondents:**

The current study concentrated on 1,021 adolescent orphans, ages 13 to 17, who lived in 11 orphanages in Tiruchirappalli District that were supported by the government. To choose the participants, the researcher used a multistage random sampling strategy. Under the JJ Act 2000, there were 64 orphanages in the district in 2012 (53 self-supporting and 11

receiving government assistance). Simple random sampling was used to select the 11 orphanages that would receive government funding; there were 3 orphanages for boys, 5 for girls, and 3 for mixed-gender children. Two boy's orphanages, two girl's orphanages, and two mixed-gender orphanages were randomly selected from these 11 orphanages to collect data. Data were gathered from all 360 participants using a census method due to the small number of adolescent orphans in the 13–17 age range.

#### **Tools of Data Collection:**

The Stress Scale Manual, created by Dr. Prerna Puri, Dr. Tejinder Kaur, and Prof. Manju Mehta in 2001, aims to enhance awareness of stressful events and their potential influence on respondents. The scale consists of 34 items rated on a four-point scale. Scoring was conducted for each participant following the scale's established norms. The tool's reliability, determined using the split-half method, yielded a coefficient of 0.90.

#### **Methodological Framework of the Study:**

Once the samples for the study were identified, data collection commenced and was subsequently subjected to cleaning and analysis utilizing SPSS software. Statistical inferences were derived, enabling the determination of the extent of stress impacts. Subsequently, pertinent literature was reviewed to identify appropriate counselling strategies, which were then distilled and presented to substantiate counselling as the appropriate intervention for addressing stress-related concerns.

#### **Findings of the Study:**

The level of various dimensions of stress among the adolescent orphans is as follows:

These results shed light on the prevalence and distribution of various stress dimensions among the respondents, highlighting areas that may call for focused interventions and counselling techniques to address their particular stress-related problems.

- **Generalized stress:** The majority of respondents (44.7%) reported experiencing medium levels of generalized stress, followed by 29.2% who reported low levels and 26.1% who reported high levels of stress.
- **Career and academic stress:** Similar patterns emerged for career and academic stress, with the highest percentage (40.8%) indicating medium levels of stress. Low levels were reported by 28.3% of respondents, while 30.8% reported high levels of stress in this domain.
- **Stress-prone tendency:** The data revealed that 42.8% of respondents had a medium level of stress-prone tendency. Meanwhile, 31.4% reported high levels of stress-prone tendency, and 25.8% reported low levels.
- **Irritability:** The distribution of respondents' irritability levels showed a relatively balanced distribution, with 37.5% reporting medium levels, 36.9% reporting low levels, and 25.6% reporting high levels of irritability.
- **Easy-going personality:** 46.4% of respondents demonstrated a medium level of easy-going personality, while 29.7% had a high level. Only 23.9% reported a low level of easy-going personality.
- **Low level of stress management skill:** A significant proportion of respondents (38.1%) had a high level of stress management skill deficiency. 33.1% reported a medium level, and 28.9% reported a low level.
- **Negative mood state:** A slightly higher percentage of respondents (44.7%) reported a medium level of negative mood state. 29.2% reported low levels, while 26.1% reported high levels of negative mood state.

- **Meaningless thoughts:** The majority of respondents (61.4%) reported a low level of meaningless thoughts, while 25.0% reported a medium level, and only 13.6% reported a high level.
- **Physical symptoms of stress:** Almost half of the respondents (47.8%) reported experiencing a medium level of physical symptoms associated with stress. 34.2% reported high levels, while 18.1% reported low levels.
- **Apprehensive behaviour:** The data indicated that 51.1% of respondents had a medium level of apprehensive behaviour. Meanwhile, 38.1% reported high levels, and only 10.8% reported low levels.
- **Overall stress:** A significant percentage of respondents (46.4%) reported medium levels of overall stress. Meanwhile, 28.3% reported low levels, and 25.3% reported high levels of stress.

### **How Counselling Helps?**

(Source: <https://www.visioncounselling.com.au/what-is-counselling/>)

Counselling covers a broad range of problems and difficulties that people might run into. Its objectives also include assisting with stress management, offering anxiety and depression treatment, facilitating goal re-evaluation or setting, and providing clarity and direction. It can also deal with issues in relationships or mediate disputes between lovers.

One of the main benefits of counselling is that it offers a secure, private setting where people can speak openly about personal issues and problems that they might find difficult to share with others. This might be brought on by apprehension or a sense of unease when confiding in their regular support system, friends, or loved ones.

Professional counsellors who have received the necessary training and credentials respond to clients' problems with sincere concern and empathy. They use techniques and tools that are supported by evidence to help people deal with difficult feelings, actions, thoughts, or circumstances.

### **Counselling Strategies to address stress related Issues:**

#### **Generalised Stress:**

- To help adolescents effectively manage their stress levels, teach them relaxation exercises, deep breathing techniques, and mindfulness techniques.
- Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT): Assists patients in recognising and challenging harmful thought patterns as well as creating more effective coping mechanisms.
- Help teenagers develop time management skills by helping them prioritise their tasks, set attainable goals, and manage their time well to lower stress.

#### **Career and Academic Stress:**

- Setting and executing goals: Assist teenagers in creating attainable academic goals and a plan to reach them, which includes breaking down tasks into manageable steps.
- Teaching time management, organisation, and effective study methods will help students perform better academically and feel less stressed.
- Career exploration: Assist teenagers in considering their options for a career and making decisions about their future while easing their anxiety.

#### **Stress-Prone Tendency:**

- Building stress resilience Give advice on how to increase resilience by using coping techniques, self-care routines, and cultivating a positive outlook.
- Techniques for emotional regulation: Show people how to control their emotions by helping them recognise their triggers, relax, and create effective coping mechanisms.
- Introduce mindfulness techniques to help people become more self-aware, manage their stress, and improve their general well-being.

**Irritability:**

- Anger management skills: Teach methods for identifying triggers, controlling anger, and adjudicating disputes amicably.
- Training in communication skills: Assist teenagers in developing their communication abilities, such as assertiveness, active listening, and conflict resolution, to lessen irritability and improve relationships.

**Easy-Going Personality:**

- Self-analysis and stress awareness To promote a more centred and resilient outlook, assist people in recognising and comprehending their stressors as well as exploring their values, strengths, and interests.
- Teaching relaxation techniques, such as progressive muscle relaxation or guided imagery, can help people feel calmer and less anxious.
- Promote self-care: Stress the value of self-care activities, such as taking up a hobby, going for walks in the park, or practising mindfulness, to enhance general wellbeing.

**Low Level of Stress Management Skill:**

- Training in coping mechanisms: To help adolescents successfully manage and cope with stress, teach them a variety of coping mechanisms, such as problem-solving, encouraging self-talk, and seeking out social support.
- psychological training for stress reduction: Inform people about the physiological and psychological effects of stress and teach them effective stress management strategies.
- Creating a network of supporters Encourage people to build a support network by fostering positive connections and looking for assistance from dependable friends, family, or mentors.

**Negative Mood State:**

- Cognitive restructuring: Assists people in recognising, challenging, and replacing unhelpful thought patterns with more uplifting and grounded ones.
- Encourage people to keep a mood journal in order to increase self-awareness and spot trends or triggers that lead to depressive states.
- Encourage participation in activities that foster positive emotions, such as exercise, hobbies, interaction with others, or using one's creativity.

**Meaningless Thoughts:**

- Cognitive-behavioural interventions: Apply CBT techniques to reframing and challenging negative or meaningless thoughts in order to promote a more upbeat and goal-oriented mindset.
- Encourage teenagers to set meaningful goals and explore their values and interests in order to develop a sense of fulfilment and purpose.
- Psychotherapy and existential counselling: Offer a secure setting for people to investigate more profound existential issues and discover their own personal meaning in life.

**Physical Symptoms of Stress:**

- Techniques for reducing stress include teaching breathing exercises, relaxation techniques, and physical activities like yoga or exercise to lessen the physical side effects of stress.
- health instruction Teach teenagers the effects of stress on the body and the value of leading a healthy lifestyle, which includes getting enough sleep, eating right, and exercising.
- Mind-body therapies: Introduce techniques to strengthen the mind-body connection and reduce physical symptoms, such as meditation, mindfulness, or biofeedback.

**Apprehensive Behaviour:**

- Exposure therapy involves exposing patients to feared situations or experiences gradually in order to lessen anxiety and boost confidence in handling anxiety-provoking situations.
- Cognitive restructuring: Assists people in recognising and combating their anxious thoughts while substituting more realistic and well-balanced thought patterns.
- Teach relaxation exercises and stress-reduction techniques to lower physiological arousal and foster calmness in anxiety-provoking circumstances.

#### Overall Stress:

- A holistic approach to counselling Utilise a variety of counselling strategies that are tailored to the needs of the individual, such as CBT, mindfulness, relaxation techniques, and stress management psychoeducation.
- Self-care and stress management techniques: Encourage people to prioritise self-care activities, create healthy coping strategies, and create a balance between their personal and professional lives.
- Connect people with social support networks, counselling services, or other community resources that can offer additional support and advice on stress management.

#### Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper emphasises how critical it is to address stress among adolescent orphans and highlights counselling as a workable remedy. Practitioners and policymakers can work to improve the lives of adolescent orphans and promote their mental health and well-being by focusing on the various dimensions of stress and acknowledging counselling as an evidence-based intervention.

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