Impact of Self-Esteem on the Happiness of Institutionalised Boys

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Abstract: Self-esteem is one’s attitude towards oneself and it is described as a favourable or unfavourable attitude toward the self and happiness is the experience of joy, contentment, or positive well-being, combined with a sense that one’s life is good, meaningful and worthwhile. The present study aims at assessing the influence of self-esteem on the happiness of institutionalised orphan boys. The questionnaires, Oxford Happiness Questionnaire and Rosenberg Self-esteem Questionnaire were administered to 200 institutionalised orphan boys from Chennai from various orphanages. The findings indicate that self-esteem may be a significant predictor of happiness among institutionalised boys of Chennai. Their view on their self-worth and value in orphanages can be improved through devising policies and providing facilities, care and support hence contributing to the enhancement of their happiness.

Keywords: happiness, self-esteem, institutionalised children, orphan boys

INTRODUCTION

Children who are living in institutions without parents to look after them are often referred to as ‘orphans’. The children will be under the supervision of adult caretakers appointed at the institutions. The adult guidance they receive depends on these caretakers and the environment the children grow up in. Thapa (2020) researched self-esteem and depression among orphans and non-orphans from a small district of Nepal. The study findings suggested that there is a significant relationship between levels of self-esteem among orphan and non- orphan children of the district.

Self-esteem is one’s attitude towards oneself and it is described as a favourable or unfavourable attitude toward the self” (Rosenberg, 1965). Self-esteem is most often found to be lower among people who have gone through trauma. People who were physical abuse, sexual abuse, have significantly lower mean self-esteem than others. Results of the scale can be categorized as high self-esteem and low self-esteem. High self-esteem is an indication of positive assessment of the self. Higher self-esteem indicates higher levels of adjustment in dimensions such as sociability (Martin et al., 2014), quality of life (Konrad et al., 2012) and psychological health (Boyd et al., 2014).

Self-esteem of a person can be increased by giving them unconditional acceptance (Rogers, 1957). A number of studies have been conducted on self-esteem and trauma and most of them conclude that trauma has a significant impact on the self-esteem of an individual and it causes lower self-acceptance, self-image and self-concept as a whole. And hence is the source of anxiety and depressive symptoms of some individuals (Slaninová & Staínrova, 2014). A long-term study in the field of childhood trauma conducted on 1420 people concluded that childhood trauma was much more common than assumed. It was also found that there is a rise in risk of impairment throughout the lifespan in a broad range of areas (Copeland et al., 2018). The categories of self-esteem are Global self-esteem, Domain specific, Trait self-esteem, and State self-esteem, Stable and Authentic or True.

D’Mello, Meira and Nelson (2018) in the results indicate that students with higher self-esteem have more friendships and academic success. However, it was also found that there is no significant correlation between self-esteem and academic achievement. Erango and Ayka (2015) researched psychosocial support and parents’ social life as a determinant of self-esteem of orphan children and showed that orphans are most probable to have low self-esteem and psychosocial support and a parent's social life are factors that can reduce the risk of low self-esteem. Sethi and Asghar (2016) in their study findings indicated that orphan children have higher levels of self-esteem while non-orphans showed better social and physical competence. Studies indicate that self-esteem is the most powerful predictor of happiness. Also the influence of gender on happiness was moderated by neuroticism, which related to self-esteem, directly affecting happiness (Furnham & Cheng, 2000, 2003) found that extraversion was significantly correlated with positive affect, negative affect, depression, and happiness and neuroticism significantly correlated with positive affect, negative affect, depression, and happiness to a similar degree. Self-esteem and relationships with parents had a direct predictive power on happiness. According to research, cheerful people have higher eudaimonic life satisfaction and hedonic life satisfaction than the ordinary person. Although the relative importance of each can be extremely subjective, all of them can play a vital influence in the overall feeling of happiness. Some hobbies can be both joyful and meaningful, while others can be more one-sided. (Lear, 2002). The term happiness has a long history. It was figured in the western thoughts ever since antiquity over the years the term has been endowed with many different meanings. Happiness in common language is “appreciation of life”. Happiness is a long philosophical tradition, with a biological core, and a close match with economics, psychological standing, sociological significance, and political implications; this is way more than other concepts can offer. “New science of happiness” is a topic where researchers have contributed more from all the areas (Layard, 2005). Diener and Biswas-Diener in 2008 stated that “helping step by step is the way to unlock the mysteries of psychological wealth” (Frey, 2008) even attests that happiness research has revolutionary potential. The
satisfaction ratings became a gold standard in measuring an individual utility, which is true for economics. Happiness is the experience of joy, contentment, or positive well-being, combined with a sense that one’s life is good, meaningful and worthwhile (Lyubomirsky, 2007). Happiness is the subjective state of feeling positive.

According to Aristotle, Happiness is the meaning and purpose of life, the whole aim and the end of human existence” And in a broader sense, this new science promotes the subjective measurements of well-being, and consequently shifts the power from the expert for example: the scientist to the layperson. The normative implications are far reaching. Happiness can be equated with a sense of pleasure and contentment rather than other intense emotions; it can also be an internal and external experience, whereas mindfulness is being and experiencing the moment. The study puts forth the question on the importance of happiness and mindfulness and how important it is for an individual to be experiencing happiness and be mindful in the tasks they perform. Happiness being a subjective feeling it differs from individual to individual, across cultures and based on many aspects. (Lear, 2002)

Pannells and Claxton (2008) showed a relationship between creative ideation and external locus of control and it also shows a significant positive relationship between happiness and creative ideation. Sindane (2011) in their findings show a weak relationship between happiness and locus of control, and an insignificant relationship between creativity and locus of control. It also shows that extraversion correlated with happiness while neuroticism had no significant difference between groups on locus of control. Mostafaei, Aminpoor and Mohammadkhani (2012) compared the happiness of orphanage and non-orphanage children of Iran. The findings suggested a significant difference in the positive and negative emotions among orphan and non-orphan children. Orphan children were reported to have more negative emotions and less positive emotions compared to non-orphan children.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted to draw the influence of happiness on the self-esteem of institutionalised boys. The mean, standard deviation and the variance of the variables were found. The correlation test was conducted on the data of the dependent variables to find the relationship between them. Also, the regression analysis was conducted to find the influence of one variable on the other.

Research Design

The study follows a quantitative non-experimental research design.

Objectives

To determine the influence of self-esteem on the happiness of institutionalised boys.

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and happiness among institutionalised boys.

H₀₂: There is no significant influence of self-esteem on the happiness of institutionalised boys.

Sample

The sample for the study was taken from orphanages in Chennai. The sample was selected through convenience sampling and the number of subjects in total was 200 boys who are parentless and institutionalised between the ages of 11-25.

Measures

Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale: Rosenberg Self Esteem (RSE, 10-item) was developed by Morris (1965) and it measures global self-worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self. The scale is believed to be unidimensional. All items are answered using a 4-point Likert scale format ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. RSES has test-retest correlations ranging from .82 to .88. Cronbach’s alpha from various samples has a range of .77 to .88.

Oxford Happiness Questionnaire: Oxford Happiness Questionnaire was developed by (2002) psychologists, Michael Argyle and Peter Hills. In this questionnaire there will be 29 questions, where the subjects need to respond to measure the levels of happiness. The scale was tested and it showed a concurrent validity of 0.73 and internal reliability of 0.92

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data collected was analysed using SPSS. The data was tested for mean and standard deviation and Pearson’s Correlation test and Linear Regression test was used on the data to evaluate the data.

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of Happiness and Self-Esteem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>101.00</td>
<td>9.497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>14.54</td>
<td>2.723</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The mean score for self-esteem among institutionalised orphans of Chennai were found to be 14.54, indicating an overall low level of self-esteem. The mean score for happiness among institutionalised orphans of Chennai were found to be 101.00, indicating an overall average level of happiness.

**Table 2: Correlation between Happiness and Self-Esteem**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
<th>Correlation Coefficient (r)</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self Esteem</td>
<td>.275**</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)**

Happiness and Self-esteem are found to have a significant high positive correlation (p<.01) between each other among institutionalised orphans of Chennai. Similarly, Shuja (2021) on the complex model of differences on gender and institution type in academic achievement, happiness and self-esteem among orphan and nonorphan children from Pakistan, shows a significant correlation between happiness and self-esteem among institutionalised orphan children. Whereas, Yap et al. (2021) established that self-esteem had a positive correlation to happiness among adolescents in Malaysia.

**Table 3: Regression of Self-Esteem on Happiness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Adjusted R²</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig. (2 tailed) (p)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self Esteem</td>
<td>.275a</td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>0.959</td>
<td>16.182</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Predictors: (Constant), Self Esteem
b Dependent Variable: Happiness

Simple linear regression was computed and the table shows the results. The correlation value (R) shows a significant low positive relationship between happiness and self-esteem. The p value (p= .001, p< .05) suggests a very significant influence of self-esteem on happiness of the institutionalised orphan boys. For each unit increase of self-esteem, 0.959 (β) increase in happiness. There is 7.6% (R²) of accounted variance for self-esteem on happiness. Similarly, Shuja (2021) in the Pakistani population on the happiness and self-esteem among orphan and non-orphan children based on their gender and institution, found that self-esteem significantly predicts happiness. Whereas, Yap et al. (2021) established that self-esteem had a positive correlation to happiness among adolescents in Malaysia and Cheng and Furnham (2003) established the similar results in adolescents.

**CONCLUSION**

The major purpose of the research was to examine the relationship between the variables, happiness and self-esteem and to predict the influence of self-esteem over happiness among institutionalised boys. The findings of the study concludes that, there is a significant low positive correlation between self-esteem and happiness among institutionalised boys and self-esteem predicts happiness among institutionalised boys.

The studies on institutionalised children are very infrequent. It is important to understand the environment in which the children grow up. The psychological factors that influence their behaviours are relevant to be studied. Understanding the happiness and self-esteem of children who are institutionalised and the influence of their self-worth and value on happiness can help build a better environment for the growth of these children. (Erango & Ayka, 2015). Studies have shown that orphan children show low self-esteem. Further studies can be done to understand whether improving their living conditions can improve their feelings of self-worth and hence, their happiness. Finding the causes behind this sense of low self-worth and helping them improve their thoughts about their own value and worth can help increase their overall happiness. Their view on their self-worth and value in orphanages can be improved through devising policies and providing facilities, care and support hence contributing to the enhancement of their happiness.

The study is not without any limitations. The present study was limited to a single geographical location- Chennai. The study was conducted on only boys and especially, boys who are institutionalised orphans. The study was conducted on individuals of a wider age range. It can be suggested to choose a random sampling technique and a larger sample for future studies on these variables and population to be able to generalise the findings as well as provide a better understanding on it to facilitate interventions accordingly. Another suggestion may be to include samples from all the genders to have a more representative sample of the population. Further studies can also focus on the influencing factors of the variable and opt for unstructured questionnaires to collect data to derive a better conclusion on the status of these variables in the population.

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References


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