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" Attachment Styles and Emotional Intelligence of Orphan and Non-orphan Adolescents "

Shakeela Ibrahim

Mahnoor

Assistant professor, COMSATS University Islamabad at-Shakeela_ibrahim@comsats.edu.pk
BS Psychology, COMSATS University Islamabad

Abstract

The study aims to identify the differences in emotional intelligence and attachment styles between orphan and non-orphan adolescents. A qualitative method has been used to analyze the data. The sample comprised a total of 60 adolescents, of which 30 orphans and 30 nonorphan adolescents aged 13 to 19, were selected from different orphanages and schools in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The unstructured interview was used to determine the differences in attachment styles and emotional intelligence of both groups of adolescents. The findings showed that there are differences in emotional intelligence and attachment styles among orphans and non-orphans, with orphans showing a low level of emotional intelligence and an insecure attachment style and non-orphans showing a high level of emotional intelligence and a secure attachment style when we compared both groups.

Introduction

In the field of psychology, researchers are genuinely interested in understanding how our early experiences shape our emotional development and our ability to understand and manage our feelings. Attachment theory, proposed by John Bowlby in 1969, is important for this investigation. This theory submits that the quality of the relationships we have with our caregivers during childhood significantly impacts how we perceive ourselves and others, affecting our emotional growth and how we interact with the world as we grow up. At the same time, there is another concept called emotional intelligence, established by Salovey and Mayer (1990), which refers to our capacity to identify, understand, control, and use our emotions in various situations.

Understanding emotional intelligence is important because it impacts how we manage relationships, solve problems, and handle life's challenges. Ainsworth and his colleague (1978) theorized that a child's early bond of emotional development with his parents leads to secure attachment in the future.

However, a lack of security can lead to an avoidant attachment or an anxious, hesitant attachment. However, although there is research on attachment styles and emotional intelligence independently, there is a gap in understanding how these two essential aspects, attachment styles and emotional intelligence, differ among specific groups of people. Understanding the relationship between attachment styles and emotional intelligence is essential to understanding human behavior and development. Recent research findings consistently highlight a significant correlation between attachment styles and emotional intelligence (Kafetsios, 2004). We are focusing on two distinct groups: orphans and non-orphans. Orphans often experience various caregiving environments or even lack caregivers altogether, while nonorphans grow up within stable family structures. By comparing these two groups, we aim to uncover how their experiences shape the way they deal with emotions and form connections with others. The primary goal is to understand the differences between orphans and non-orphans in terms of how they form emotional connections and manage their feelings. Through this study, we are delving deeply into how attachment styles and emotional intelligence manifest in the lives of orphans and non-orphans.

Literature Review:

Adolescence stands as a pivotal period of transition, marked by profound psychological and emotional development. This phase, poised between childhood and adulthood, presents a myriad of challenges and opportunities for self-discovery, social integration, and emotional growth. However, for orphaned adolescents, navigating this terrain can be particularly daunting, as they grapple with the absence of parental guidance and support, potentially exacerbating existing vulnerabilities (Kessler et al., 2007). This review shows personality development indicators which can be affected by environment.

Chakraborty, Dasgupta, and Sanyal (2015) conducted a comprehensive study comparing orphaned children with those raised in traditional two-parent households, shedding light on the psychological implications of parental loss. Their investigation, involving sixty orphaned children and 60 children from intact families, revealed intriguing findings. Orphaned children tended to externalize their emotions more openly, expressing anger outwardly, in contrast to their

counterparts in intact families. This suggests a nuanced relationship between parental loss and emotional expression, hinting at potential differences in coping mechanisms and attachment dynamics.

Cooper, Shaver, and Collins (1998) contributed valuable insights into the impact of attachment styles on adolescent well-being. Their study, encompassing a diverse sample of 2,000 individuals aged 13 to 19, explored the correlation between attachment styles and emotional experiences. Securely attached adolescents exhibited higher levels of overall adjustment, highlighting the protective role of secure attachment in buffering against psychological distress. Conversely, individuals with anxious attachment styles reported poorer self-concepts, heightened psychological distress, and a propensity for engaging in risky behaviors, underscoring the detrimental effects of insecure attachment on emotional well-being.

Thakkar et al. (2015) emphasized the importance of social connections and mentorship in the lives of orphaned adolescents. Their study underscored the significance of peer relationships in mitigating feelings of loneliness and alienation, with individuals forming special bonds with mentor figures exhibiting greater emotional connectedness. Attachment theory, pioneered by Bowlby (1950s), offers a theoretical lens through which to understand the intricate interplay between early caregiver interactions and subsequent interpersonal relationships. Fraley and Shaver (2021) delineated between secure and insecure attachment styles, highlighting their profound impact on emotional regulation, coping strategies, and relational dynamics.

Stevens (2014) further elucidated the intricate relationship between attachment patterns and emotional regulation, revealing the challenges faced by individuals with avoidant attachment styles in identifying and addressing their emotions, while those with anxious attachment styles grappled with regulating their responses, often leading to impulsivity and maladaptive behaviors. Kumar and Singh (Year) examined the emotional intelligence of orphaned adolescents compared to their non-orphaned counterparts, revealing nuanced differences in emotional intelligence between the two groups. Kafetsios (2004) delved into the intricate interplay between interpersonal attachment patterns and emotional regulation, highlighting the link between secure relationships and effective emotion management. Despite valuable insights, gaps persist in understanding emotional intelligence and attachment among vulnerable youth. Further research is needed to inform interventions promoting resilience and emotional well-being among orphaned adolescents.

Objectives

- To observe the difference of attachment styles between orphans and non-orphans
- To observe the difference of emotional intelligence between orphans and non-orphans.

Research Questions

- What is the difference between attachment styles of orphans and non-orphans?

Methodology

This study consists of a qualitative approach, choosing unstructured interviews to explore attachment styles and emotional intelligence among orphans and non-orphans' adolescents aged 13 to 19 in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. In contrast to previous research, our method concentrated on gaining a thoughtful understanding of emotions. Our goal was to explore into these adolescent's inner lives and experiences to learn more about their emotional connections. We genuinely wanted to comprehend their experiences and learn about their social interactions and coping mechanisms.

Inclusion Criteria:

Participants were chosen based on the following criteria:

- Age Range: Adolescents aged 13 to 19.
- Orphan Participants: Adolescents categorized as orphans, having lost both parents.
- Non-Orphan Participants: Adolescents living with both biological parents.

Exclusion Criteria:

- Participants outside the specified age range.
- Orphan participants who had one surviving parent or were living with extended family members.
- Orphans/non-orphans with any physical disability and diagnosed with psychological disorders were excluded.

Measures/Instruments:

The research used qualitative approach. The researcher used 'unstructured interviewed questions' as a mean of research instrument. A list of questions made and asked one-by-one to each participant.

Results

Table 1: Attachment Styles and Themes in Orphans vs. Non-Orphans

Attachment style	Themes	Orphans' frequency n= 30	Non-orphans' frequency n= 30
Secure	Secure relationship	10	18
	Feel comfortable around caregiver	10	21
	Seeking support	10	23
	Positive emotional experience	15	29
Anxious	Anxiety when apart	17	3
	Seeking comfort from caregiver	19	22
	Desire for Attention and Reassurance	22	10
	Fear of Caregiver's Absence	10	11
Avoidant	Comfort with Dependency	10	22
	Problem-Solving Independence	18	12
	Emotional Sharing	10	16
	Need for Caregiver's Presence	11	24
	Preference for Time with Caregiver	11	27
Disorganized	Confusion and Uncertainty	16	8
	Coping with Inconsistency	9	18
	Contradiction Towards Closeness	22	5

	Act normal around caregiver	8	21
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Table 2: Emotional Intelligence Themes in Orphans vs. Non-Orphans

Themes	Orphans n= 30	Non-orphans n= 30
Self-emotions clarity	10	25
Emotion Recognition in Others	15	25
Handling stress effectively	18	19
Emotional sharing	13	17
Emotional regulation and self-control.	13	26
Empathy for others	30	30
Conflicts/Problems Resolution	11	18
Interpersonal/social skills	24	17
Resilience and determination	19	26

Discussion

To better understand the effects of various living circumstances on these important aspects of adolescent development, this study examined attachment styles and emotional intelligence in adolescents who were either orphans or not. The results showed notable differences between the two groups in terms of emotional intelligence and attachment styles. Orphan adolescents (33%) demonstrate a secure attachment style and mentioned that they feel safe, understood, and find support in orphanages from the caregiver. Despite feeling safe and secure, 56% mentioned their bond with the caregiver is different from the actual parent-child relationship, as they mentioned there is a lack of emotional connection and they desired a personal connection. They describe their relationship differently from how non-orphans describe their relationship with their parents. They also exhibited a higher frequency of anxious attachment styles that they get anxious about caregiver absence. Few individuals like to deal with problems independently, while others find it difficult to ask for help from others. Some of them also showed a frequency of disorganized style in their responses, saying that sometimes they want to be close to the caregiver and other times they avoid it. It seems like they are unsure or confused about their relationship with the caregiver.

They feel hesitant to ask for help from the caregivers. If we look at the emotional intelligence of orphans, they are moderately good at identifying the emotions others and they themselves are experiencing, and they also have different ways to handle stressful situations like non-orphans, but there's a lack of emotional regulation capacity. As we analyze the responses, they mentioned that they can't easily move on from the difficult situation. They also shared situations in which they prevented emotional reactions, which shows that in some aspects of emotional intelligence, they are higher or equal to non-orphans. As orphan adolescents mentioned that they have multiple caregivers in orphanages to look after, attachment disruptions may result from an individual having multiple caretakers on a regular basis. The individual may find it more difficult to build secure relationships, to trust others, and to ask for assistance because of this instability. Even with excellent care, the number of caregivers for children in group environments like orphanages may restrict the individual attention each child receives. This may affect a child's capacity to develop stable relationships and a sense of security. 60% of non-orphan adolescents displayed a higher level of secure attachment and mentioned that they have a healthy relationship with their parents, they trust them and can share everything, and they are like friends.

There are also some adolescents (13%) who mentioned that their relationship with their parents is complicated. But non-orphans, as compared to orphans, showed a very low frequency or small group of insecure attachment styles. They displayed a low frequency of anxious behaviors and used coping mechanisms when the parents were not there for them. 73% mentioned that whenever they need their parents, they are comfortable depending on them and asking for help, and they can easily share their thoughts and feelings with them. In a disorganized majority, 70% are sure and comfortable with how to act around parents because, according to them, they are their safe place. In terms of emotional intelligence, most non-orphans stated that they can easily identify the emotions of themselves and others. It is easy for them to regulate their emotions and resolve problems. They do not give up easily, which means they have resilience and determination towards their goals and tasks. Employees frequently perform the duty of caretakers in caregiving situations, especially in organizations like group homes or orphanages, without the innate emotional bond that parents naturally have with their children. Even though these people might offer necessities like food, housing, and care, their interactions with the children may not be as deep emotionally as those between parents and children.

Parents naturally place equal importance on their children's emotional and physical requirements because they are motivated by unconditional love and a strong emotional

attachment. Their bond nurtures a sense of safety, comprehension, and assistance that surpasses meeting fundamental needs. On the other hand, while they may be motivated by their work, workers who provide care may not have the same level of emotional or personal commitment as parents. Since an individual's capacity to build safe attachments and manage relationships is influenced by their emotional connection with caretakers, this distinction may influence a child's sense of trust, belonging, and emotional development. The lack of an emotional connection like that of parents may have an impact on the depth and quality of the relationship between the caretaker and the individual, even though these workers may give the greatest care possible. Orphans and non-orphans have a significant impact on their attachment styles and emotional intelligence due to their living environment. This demonstrates the importance of consistent caregiving and stable families in creating safe havens for adolescents and developing emotional intelligence.

Conclusion:

The results showed that there was a significant difference between the orphan and non-orphan attachment styles. The higher number of orphans exhibited insecure attachment styles, while non-orphans tended to exhibit secure attachment styles with their parents. However, in terms of emotional intelligence, orphans showed low emotional intelligence compared to non-orphans. However, in some aspects of emotional intelligence, orphans and non-orphans were the same.

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