

Empathy and Interpersonal Relationship among Institutionalized Children

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Abstract

Background: The arena of child vulnerability is taking complex shapes in the new socio-cultural situations. Institution children are those who deserve special care and attention in order to fulfil their basic and secondary needs both with equal importance, which later on make an impact if it's not satisfied. As humans are called as social being there are some expected qualities which makes us to be connected with each other in appositive way both in family and society. Empathy thus makes the people to be connected which further leads to form an interpersonal relationship.

Aim: The aim of the study was to assess the level of empathy among the participants and to assess the level of interpersonal relationship also the correlation between empathy and interpersonal relationship among institutionalised children,

Materials and Methods: A total of 214 subjects aged 12-18 years were selected for study based on lottery method of Simple random sampling. The study was based on the Questions pertaining to socio-demographic profile of age, gender, mother tongue, good friendship in the institution, educational qualification, situation before being in the institution, interest in education and time period for being in the institution. The data collection was done in an interview schedule. The standardised tool used in the study was, the Self-esteem scale developed Life Skills Assessment Scale (LSAS) by A.Radhakrishnan Nair, R.Subasree & Sunitha Rajan.

Results: The result shows that there is significant difference between the variable, having good friendship in the institution and Empathy also there is a positive correlation between Empathy and Interpersonal relationship. **Conclusion:** The result led to a conclusion that both empathy and interpersonal relationship has a common feature as both has difference in level of measurement among children by analysing its level through different socio demographic variables also there is a correlation between Empathy and Interpersonal relationship.

Key words: Empathy, Interpersonal relationship, Institutionalized children.

Introduction

A study with focus on child institutionalization deserves higher research attention due to the fact that there are a growing number of children who are being seeking this service. The arena of child vulnerability is

taking complex shapes in the new socio-cultural situations. Institution children are those who deserve special care and attention in order to fulfil their basic and secondary needs both with equal importance, which later on make an impact if it's not satisfied. Interpersonal relationship is a process which grow and develop throughout our life which forms its basement during the first few years of child's life and later enrich in different stages of developments. Interpersonal relationship is a process which extends in wide range which has to start from ones very close circle such as family, dears and nears, and extends to society. As humans are called as social being there are some expected qualities which makes

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us to be connected with each other in appositive way both in family and society. Empathy and interpersonal relationship can be called as the basic element among them .Empathy always helps to be connected with others and as a result the tendency of caring will also be developed¹.Empathy thus makes the people to be connected which further leads to form an interpersonal relationship.

Materials and Method

This is a descriptive research conducted among 214 children from different Institutions for Children at Kannur district ,Kerala ,India. The samples selected for the study were under the age group of 12-18 years. The sampling technique adopted for the selection of the respondent subjects was by lottery method under Simple random sampling method.

The tool of data collection used for the study was an interview schedule that included questions pertaining to socio-demographic profile and standardised Life Skill Assessment scale developed by A.Radhakrishnan Nair, R.Subasree & Sunitha Rajan². Among the 10 components of life skill the components empathy and interpersonal relationship was assessed, the component empathy and interpersonal relationships have 11 items each.

Statistical Analysis

ANOVA Test for Comparing Empathy and interpersonal relationship score is based on educational qualification, situation before being in the institution, interest in education and time period for being in the institution. The independent sample T-test was used to compare Empathy and Interpersonal relationship with age, gender, mother tongue and about good friendship in the institution. Chi-Square Test was used to test the correlation between Empathy and Interpersonal relationship.

Result

The Empathy score was compared by with educational qualification, situation before being in the

institution, interest in education, and time period for being in the institution by using ANOVA (Table-1). The independent sample T-test was used to compare Empathy with age, gender, mother tongue and about good friendship(Table-2).The empathy score was high among male children ,children who are 12-15 years old , children who are in secondary schools, whose mother tongue is Malayalam ,those who were studying before being in the institution and those who are interested in studies, also among the children those who are being in the institution for1-5 years and the children those who are having good friendship in the institution. There is a significant difference between the variables having good friendship in the institution and Empathy

Interpersonal relationship was compared with educational qualification, situation before being in the institution, interest in education and time period for being in the institution by using ANOVA (Table-3). The independent sample T-test was used to compare Interpersonal relationship with age, gender, mother tongue and about good friendship in the institution (Table-4). There is no significant difference between any of the variables and interpersonal relationship. But the interpersonal relationship score was high among children under the age group12-15, among boys, those who are in secondary school, children whose mother tongue is Malayalam, those who were studying before being in the institution and those who are in interested in studies, also the interpersonal relationship is high among the children those who are being in the institution for1-5 years and the children those who are having good friendship in the institution.

The correlation test also agrees that there is a positive correlation between empathy and interpersonal relationship.The children who have low level of empathy are also having low level of interpersonal relationship. Those who are having moderate level empathy shows moderate level of interpersonal relationship and children having high level of empathy shows high level of interpersonal relationship, which is significant at 1% (Table-5).

Table 1: ANOVA Test for Comparing Empathy Score Based On educational qualification,situation before being in the institution,interest in education and time period for being in the institution

Variables	Groups	N	Empathy score		F-vale	P-value	
			Mean	Std. Deviation			
Educational qualification	Primary	33	31.33	5.15	2.435	3.039	Not significant
	Secondary	115	33.25	4.81			
	Higher secondary	66	32.23	4.49			
Situation before being in the institution	Studying	181	32.86	4.60	1.846	3.039	Not significant
	Working	4	34.00	5.48			
	Wandering	29	31.10	5.73			
Interest in education	Interested in studies	160	32.51	4.62	1.255	3.039	Not significant
	Not interested	6	35.67	4.23			
	Get training in any type of vocation	48	32.69	5.39			
Time period foe being in the institution	1-5 years	137	32.40	4.96	.482	3.039	Not significant
	6-10 years	38	32.97	4.22			
	Above 10 years	39	33.15	4.81			
							Not significant

Table-2: Significance Test (T-test) For Comparing Empathy with age,gender, mother tongue and about good friendship

Variables	Groups	N	Empathy score		t-value	P-value		
			Mean	S.D				
Age	12-15	151	32.64	4.73	10.010	1.971		Not significant
	16-18	63	32.63	4.99				
Gender	Male	117	151	4.73	0.010	1.971		Not significant
	Female	97	63	4.99				
Mother tongue	Hindi	7	31.86	4.41	0.438	1.971	Not significant	
	Malayalam	207	32.67	4.82				
Good friendship	Yes	209	32.52	4.77	2.364	1.971	Significant	
	No	5	37.60	3.13				

Table 3: ANOVA Test for Comparing Interpersonal relationship Score Based On educational qualification, situation before being in the institution, interest in education and time period for being in the institution

Variables	Groups	N	Interpersonal relationship score		F-vale	P-value		
			Mean	Std. Deviation				
Educational qualification	Primary	33	32.48	5.37	1.668	3.039		Not significant
	Secondary	115	33.31	4.10				
	Higher secondary	66	34.11	3.99				
Situation before being in the institution	Studying	181	35.00	5.89	.504	3.039		Not significant
	Working	4	33.38	4.24				
	Wandering	29	33.43	4.30				

Cont... Table 3: ANOVA Test for Comparing Interpersonal relationship Score Based On educational qualification, situation before being in the institution, interest in education and time period for being in the institution

Interest in education	Interested in studies	160	33.29	4.34	.499	3.039	Not significant
	Not interested	6	32.83	4.22			
	Get training in any type of vocation	48	33.96	4.20			
Time period for being in the institution	1-5 years	137	33.39	4.27	.806	3.039	Not significant
	6-10 years	38	32.87	4.55			
	Above 10 years	39	34.10	4.16			

Table-4: Significance Test (T-test) For Comparing Interpersonal relationship with gender, mother tongue and about good friendship

Variables	Groups	N	Interpersonal relationship score		t-value	P-value	
			Mean	S.D			
Age	12-15	151	33.15	4.08	1.467	1.971	Not significant
	16-18	63	34.10	4.74			
Gender	Male	117	33.67	4.36	0.885	1.971	Not significant
	Female	97	33.14	4.23			
Mother tongue	Hindi	7	33.00	5.89	0.983	1.971	Not significant
	Malayalam	207	33.38	4.24			
Good friendship	Yes	209	33.35	4.24	1.676	1.971	Significant
	No	5	36.60	6.02			

Table-5: Correlation between empathy and interpersonal relationship

Chi-Square Test

	Interpersonal Relationship						Total		
	Low (<= 30)		Moderate (31 - 36)		High (>=37)		No.	%	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%			
Empathy	Low (<= 29)	17	31.5	30	55.6	7	13.0	54	100.0
	Moderate (30 - 35)	25	24.8	59	58.4	17	16.8	101	100.0
	High (>=36)	10	16.9	30	50.8	19	32.2	59	100.0
total		52	24.3	119	55.6	43	20.1	214	100.0

Discussion

Mathies Allemand et al in their study states that during adolescent years there is a tendency of increase in empathy ,the present study shows that there is no significant difference between empathy and age even though among 1-18 years old children who are 29% among total respondents and other children who are below that also having same level of empathy³.

The present study shows that female children are empathetic than male children, which comes only 45% among total respondent ,Loren Toussaint and Jon R. Weeb In their study among 127 respondents states that females are more empathetic than males⁴.

Suk Chun Fung in his study states that education is a significant factor of humans empathy same as this in the present study also the respondents having empathy are secondary school children (53%) comparing with primary school children⁵.

The present study shows that the empathy is comparatively less among the children who were wandering(13%) before being in the institution than those who were working(2%) and studying (84%) ,this result shows that the children who are not getting proper parental care ,love and attention without fulfilling their basic needs are lacking empathy as emphasised in the study of Paulina Akpan-Idiok and Aniebietabasi in their study which states that family type , good parenting and home atmosphere influences child’s social adjustment⁶ .

Ravneet Kaur et al in their study states that the children who were being in the institutionalised for 1-5 years have more empathy but in the present study the children who are having empathy are those who are institutionalised for above 10 years, the respondents who are being in the institution more than 10 years are only 18% among total respondents⁷.

Aarti Thakkar et al in their study states that compared to the attachment of institutionalised children between their inmates, care givers and mentors, it shows that the

children are more attached and have understanding with their inmates as like in the present study the children those who don't have good friendship in the institution have empathy than those who have good friendship in the institution, that's only 2% among total respondents⁸.

According to the present study all the children are having moderate level of Interpersonal relationship, which can be supported by the study of Kim Maclean et al which states that even though less optimal development which includes intellectual, physical, behavioural and social development, which is one of the risk factor of institutionalisation, it may not lead a child to psychopathology during their process of development⁹.

The present study shows that both male(55%) and female(45%) children have, interpersonal relationship ,Rebecca A .Colman and Cathy Spatz Widom in their study states that that during adulthood both males and females are incapable to form a healthy interpersonal relationship as they were exposed to physical abuse or neglect during their childhood¹⁰.

The present study shows the result , higher secondary school students (30% of the respondent)have interpersonal relationship than secondary and primary school students ,which can be supported by the study result of R.Steve Mc Callum and Bruce A,Bracken which states that there is a increased risk of dropping out of school ,criminality and even marital maladjustment among children who are having poor interpersonal relationship which means once the interpersonal relationship is developed the rate of adjustment problems also decrease thus they continue the education¹¹.

The present study says that the children who were wandering and working before coming to the institution have interpersonal relationship than the children (84%) who were studying before being institutionalised have interpersonal relationship but in the study of S.N .Madu et al which states that as the street children have lower purpose in life the quality of interpersonal relationship is also low than non-street and part –time non street children¹².

David Zandvliet et al in their studies concluded that the self-interest of the students in learning is promoted by among students once they feel they are connected with their teachers which makes them to believe that they are

competed and experience and thus they experience a substantial support of autonomy from their teachers, in the present study also as mentioned in the above study majority the children who are interested in studies or to get training in any type of vocation have interpersonal relationship than those who are not interested in studies¹³.

Robert Winston and Rebecca Chicot in their study reported that if children have insecurity feeling about their attachment to their primary caregivers which effects the child to form and maintain healthy relationship throughout life ,in the present study it states that for children who are being in the intuition for 1-5(64% of respondents) years and 6-10(18%) years have low level of interpersonal relationship as it is said in the above study as they are comparatively younger than others¹⁴. The present study states that even if the children don't have good friendship in the institution the interpersonal relationship is high among them (2% of the respondents), but on the other hand in the study of Kwame S.Sakyiand et al in their study they concluded that the psychological difficulties in later stage of development is associated with childhood friendship such as those who are having at least one good friend may reduce the psychological difficulties in young adulthood¹⁵.

The present study shows that there is a positive correlation between empathy and interpersonal relationship, also the study of Ruiying Li,Tao Jiang et al states that selfless concern about others is the outcome of good interpersonal relationship¹⁶.

Conclusion

The research states that many of the socio demographic variables have influence on both empathy and interpersonal relationship among institutionalised children even though it's very slight. The study also reveals that there is relationship between empathy and interpersonal relationship.

Ethical Clearence: Ethical clearence was obtained before commencing the study.

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