

EMOTIONAL ABUSE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE AMONG REGISTERED ORPHANS IN BENUE STATE

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Abstract

The need for psychological resilience among orphans has garnered the attention of researchers in recent times. Orphans are exposed to life challenges that require high levels of resiliency to be able to cope better. This implies that emotional and social factors may be critical in building such resiliency. Therefore, this study examined emotional abuse and psychological resilience among registered orphans in Benue State. A total of 186 registered orphans consisting of 80 (43%) males and 106 (57%) females with ages ranging from 10-18 years with a mean age of 13.72years (SD=2.68) were used for the study. Emotional Abuse Scale and Psychological Resilience Scale were used for data collection. Statistical analysis involved the use of Simple Linear Regression. Findings showed that emotional abuse significantly influenced psychological resilience among registered orphans in Benue State. It was recommended that, caregivers in orphanage homes should ensure that registered orphans are not emotionally abused as found in this study so as to build psychological resilience among this category of people.

Key Words: Emotional abuse, Psychological resilience, Orphans

Introduction

The wellbeing of orphans is one of the most serious challenges affecting developing countries worldwide. Orphan-hood is frequently accompanied with multidimensional problems most commonly parental mortality or neglect (Mohammadzadeh et al., 2017). One of the common reactions of children to the death of their parents include; depression, loneliness, anger, confusion, helplessness and anxiety (Amani et al., 2017) which all characterize psychological distress and can further jeopardize these orphans' prospects. Perhaps, the ties between parents and children are closely interwoven that the death of a parent may cut across the very meaning of a child's

existence (Anhange & Awopetu, 2013).

Orphans who have good psychological resilience are able to recognize their own abilities, can handle normal stresses in life and are able to contribute to the community (World Health Organization, 2012). However, when psychological issues that contribute to mental problems are eminent among orphans that have faced the trauma of parental bereavement/neglect and associated distress of coexisting with the harsh conditions of extended families or orphanage, their psychological resilience is compromised (Mohammadzadeh et al., 2017; Chen et al., 2017; Aud et al., 2011). Research has shown that psychological

problems in children who are orphaned have increased and will continue to increase by 50% (Bayer et al., 2010). Many factors are implicated in the prediction of psychological resilience among orphans. One of these factors is emotional abuse.

One of the likely predictors of psychological resilience among orphans is emotional abuse. It is characterized by behaviours that ignore or harm a child's psychological or emotional needs, including acts of ignoring, terrorizing, exploiting, corrupting, neglecting or rejecting a child (Dodge-Reyome, 2010). In the case of orphans, it can also be seen as “verbal assaults on an orphan's sense of worth or well-being, or any humiliating, demeaning or threatening behaviour directed toward an orphan by an older person”. In Nigeria, Gesinde (2011) revealed that these orphans suffer the three forms of emotional abuse; emotional isolation, emotional degradation and emotional exploitation respectively. Child maltreatment is thus a strong determinant of poor physical and mental health outcomes (Afifi *et al.*, 2016; Barnes & Josefowitz, 2014).

Hildebrand et al. (2019) examined the process of resilience (social support and resources of the family environment) and the chance of mental health problems in orphaned adolescents (9–16 years) who have been victims of domestic violence, assisted in specialized services (Group 1 – G1) and in school services without reports of domestic violence (Group 2 – G2). Various semi-structured instruments were applied to the pairs. Domestic violence against children and adolescents was a risk factor for the development of mental disorders (SDQ/G). It

was recommended that there is need for research on aspects that predict resilience and investment in intervention strategies for this population, as a way to promote mental health.

Nearchou (2018) investigated the impact of emotional abuse by teachers on orphaned children's psychological functioning, and also tested the role of social support and self-confidence as protective factors associated with resilience. The results of the study revealed that exposure to emotional abuse by teachers predicted behavioural problems in school students suggesting a negative effect of these experiences on psychological functioning and resiliency. This study was however limited in scope to emotional abuses emanating from teachers while neglected those from caregivers and peers. It was also limited to Greek orphans.

Cheung et al. (2018) investigated the relationship between individual-level factors and overall mental health status among orphaned adolescents with and without a history of maltreatment in a representative sample. All types of child maltreatment were significantly associated with increased odds of having poor mental health. The individual-level factors significantly associated with increased odds of good mental health status included: being physically active in the winter; utilizing positive coping strategies; having positive self-esteem; and internal locus of control. Interventions targeted to adolescents with a history of child maltreatment may want to test for the efficacy of the factors identified above. Despite the contributions of this study to knowledge, the focus of the study was on

mental health and not psychological resilience.

Research Questions

- i. Will emotional abuse significantly influence psychological resilience among registered orphans in Benue State?

Hypothesis

- i. Emotional abuse will significantly influence psychological resilience among registered orphans in Benue State.

Design

The study employed cross-sectional survey design to investigate emotional abuse and psychological resilience among registered orphans in Benue State. This survey design offers the researchers the leniency of collecting, analysing, interpreting and generalizing research results at a specific point in time. The independent variable for this study was emotional abuse, while the dependent variable was psychological resilience.

Sampling Size Determination

For the purpose of this study, the Dillman (2000)' Formula for sample size determination was used to ascertain the sample size for the study. In Benue State, there are 14 registered orphanage homes. Thus, the population of orphans considered in this study was 345. Using the Dillman's Formula, the sample for this study is as calculated below:

$$n = \frac{[(N)(p)(1-p)]}{[(N-1)(B/C)^2 + (p)(1-p)]}$$

Where N=345

p=0.5 (proportion expected to answer in a certain way 50%)

B=.05 (acceptable level of sampling error)

C=1.96 (confidence interval)

Thus,

$$n = \frac{[(345)(0.5)(1-0.5)]}{[(345-1)(.05/1.96)^2 + (0.5)(1-0.5)]}$$

$$n = \frac{[(345)(0.5)(0.5)]}{[(344)(0.0255)^2 + (0.5)(0.5)]}$$

$$n = \frac{86.25}{[(344)(0.00065) + (0.25)]}$$

$$n = \frac{86.25}{0.214 + 0.25}$$

$$n = \frac{86.25}{0.464}$$

$$n = 185.88 \quad 186$$

Therefore, the sample for this study was 186 orphans.

Sampling

This study employed the use of Halleck's (2001) Proportionate Distribution Sampling Technique. This sampling method was used because the researchers represented each sampled orphanage home in the proportion of their individual populations. The orphanage homes were used because of their high populations and the sum of the above figures gives a sample of 186 orphans.

Participants

The participants for this study were one hundred and eighty-six (186) consisting of 80

(43%) male and 106 (57%) female orphans. Their ages ranged from 10-18 years with a mean age of 13.72 years ($SD=2.681$). As for their ethnic group, 106 (57%) were Tiv, 53 (28.5%) were Idoma while the remaining 27 (14.5%) were from other ethnic groups. Concerning their religion, 133 (71.5%) were Christians while the remaining 53 (28.5%) were Muslims. Still amongst them, 132 (71%) were in primary schools while the remaining 54 (29%) were in secondary schools.

Instruments

Socio-Demographic Variables: The demographic information collected from the respondents include; sex, age, ethnic group, religion and educational level.

Emotional Abuse Scale: Emotional abuse was measured using the Emotional Abuse Scale developed by Malik and Shah (2007). The 14-item scale was measured using a 4-point format of 0 (never) to 3 (Always). High scores on this scale indicate more emotional abuse and vice versa. The scale has an alpha coefficient of .90. The present study obtained a Cronbach's alpha of .95 which was adequate for use in the study. Sample of items include; "my relative/caregiver uses abusive language with me", "my relative/caregiver expresses their aggression on me"

Resilience Scale: Psychological Resilience was measured using the Resilience Scale developed by Wagnild and Young (1990). The 25-item scale is measured on 7-point Likert format of 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree). The subscales are Equanimity (items 1-7), Autonomy (items 8-11),

Perseverance (items 12-14), Resistance (items 15-20) and Self-Reliance (items 21-25). The author reported a Cronbach's alpha of .77 and a Split-half value of .72. The present study obtained alpha coefficients as follows; Equanimity ($\alpha=.77$), Autonomy ($\alpha=.87$), Perseverance ($\alpha=.64$), Resistance ($\alpha=.85$), and Self Reliance ($\alpha=.94$). High scores indicate more of the subscale measured and vice versa. Sample of items include; "I can usually look at a situation in a number of ways", "When I am in a difficult situation, I can usually find my way out of it".

Procedure

This study was conducted among registered orphans in Benue State. The consent of the orphans was sought using local language and in the presence of their caregivers. Their consent was obtained before the administration of questionnaire was carried out. All ethical issues were taken into consideration in data collection process. A research assistant was adopted in each orphanage home visited. Then, secret balloting was used to draw the samples for the study, the drawn sample was then exposed to the questionnaire copies. After administration, those copies that were returned and found useful were considered for statistical analysis.

Data Analysis

Data for this study were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The researchers used descriptive statistics including frequencies and simple percentages, mean and standard deviation to summarize data on the demographic characteristics of respondents. On the other hand, Simple Linear Regression was used to

test the influence of emotional abuse on psychological resilience.

showing the influence of Emotional abuse on Psychological Resilience among Registered Orphans in Benue State.

Results

Table 1: Simple Linear Regression Analysis

Predictors	R	R ²	F	df	β	t	p
Constant	.238	.056	11.000	1,184		20.035	.000
Emotional Abuse					.238	3.317	.001

The result presented in table 1 above shows that there is a significant influence of emotional abuse on psychological resilience among orphans $R=.238$, $R^2=.056$, $F(1,184)=11$, $p<.001$. Although, this result indicates that emotional abuse explained as little as 5.6% of the variance in psychological resilience among orphans. This means that emotionally abused orphans are likely to develop resiliency, however, the likelihood is very small. Thus, hypothesis one as tested in this study was supported.

Discussion

Hypothesis one was tested to find out if emotional abuse significantly influences psychological resilience among registered orphans in Benue State. Findings indicated that there was a significant influence of emotional abuse on psychological resilience among orphans. Emotional abuse is characterised by exploitative behaviours that threatens one's psychological wellbeing. This means that orphans who are emotionally abused are more likely to develop psychological resiliency to cope with their predicaments. By implication, emotionally abused orphans may strive to cope with their state of orphan-hood by developing resiliency. The study agrees with Nearchou (2018) who revealed that exposure to emotional abuse predicted behavioural

problems in school students suggesting a negative effect of these experiences on psychological functioning and resiliency. Another consonant study by Cheung et al. (2018) revealed that all types of child maltreatment are significantly associated with increased odds of having poor mental health. This finding is instrumental to the society because in order to build psychological resilience among registered orphans, caregivers and significant others with caring minds for registered orphans should abuse them emotionally, for it is believed that if registered orphans are not well handled, they won't be able to adapt well in the face of adversity.

Conclusion

Based on the finding of this study, it is inferred that emotional abuse is a weak determinant of psychological resilience among registered orphans.

Recommendations

Based on the findings obtained from this study, the researchers have made the following recommendation:

- i. It was recommended that, the management of orphanage homes in Benue state should create an organizational culture that ensures that the rights of orphans are protected,

- they are not yelled at, humiliated or undermined in any way and that they are treated with all forms of respects and dignity.
- ii. The ministry of women affairs should create a department of quality assurance which will be saddled with the responsibility and mandate of ensuring that all orphanage homes adhere to child protect guidelines and that the climate of orphanage homes is conducive for raising productive and resilient orphans.

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