

Well Being of Adolescents in Institutional Care at a Higher Secondary School in Tirunelveli District – A Mixed Methodological Perspective

S. Joyce Jeyarani¹, Dr A. Umesh Samuel Jebaseelan²

¹*Ph.d., Scholar, PG & Research Department of Social Work, Bishop Heber College, Trichy, India)*

²*(Associate Professor, PG & Research Department of Social Work, Bishop Heber College, Trichy, India.)*

Abstract: *Adolescence is a critical period for mental, social, and emotional well – being and development. Adolescence being a distinct and critical stage of development with its characteristic behavioral and emotional challenges, the institutionalized adolescents face unique challenges. The Well – being of Adolescents in institutional care at a Higher Secondary school at Tirunelveli district was studied with an objective to find the General well – being as well as identifying the adolescents with low Well – being and to conduct Focused Group Discussion (FGD) and case studies to find out the reasons for low well - being. A mixed methodology, sequential explanatory design was used. Data were collected from 105 higher secondary students using General Well – being scale. It was found that 61% of adolescents' well being are low. Focused Group Discussion and Case Studies were facilitated among adolescents with low well –being. FGD revealed divergent findings. The well – being is low for a group due to the stress they undergo prepare for their Board Exam, for another group of students their well –being is affected for they are away from their parents and home. Karl Pearson's correlation shows that there is significant correlation between well – being and family. Male and female do not differ in terms of their well – being. Case studies reveal the fact that the comments about the peers about their complexion and physical structure had affected their well – being.*

Keywords: *adolescent well –being, institutional care, mixed methodology*

I. Introduction

A boarding school is a residential private school. The word 'boarding' is used in the sense of "bed and board", i.e., lodging and meals. Many independent (private) schools are boarding schools. In residential school, parents leave their children under somebody's care who will be raising their children. In reality, parenting has great impact on a child's life. In residential school, she will miss her family and her things. Sooner, she will be off to college in a few years. Residential School has pros and cons. In the private residential school, students live in dormitories on the school campus. Being away from home and learning to cope gives a child confidence and independence. It offers everything in one neat package: the academics, the athletics, the social life and 24/7 supervision. That's huge plus for busy parents.

There is often a significant detachment from others, and relationship difficulties are common. There is often diminished interest and participation in aboriginal cultural activities and markedly deficient knowledge of traditional culture and skills. Often there is markedly increased arousal including sleep difficulties, anger management difficulties, and impaired concentration. [1] Multivariate models developed separately for girls and boys repeatedly demonstrated the protective function of caring and connectedness in the lives of youth, particularly a sense of connectedness to family and to school. A sense of spirituality, as well as low family stress also functioned as protective factors. Caring and connectedness acts as protective factors against high risk behaviors.[2] The general well being of the higher secondary students in institutional care is the main highlight in the paper. In this particular school, most of the students were observed to be in institutional care right from their Primary school of education due to their parental occupation. So, the general well being of students were scientifically studied. Students with low general well being were further studied through Focused Group Discussions and Case Studies.

II. Research Methodology

2.1 Objectives

1. To describe the Socio – demographic factors of the respondents
2. To study the general well-being of Higher secondary students at institutional care
3. To study the relationship between socio – demographic variables and general well – being of Higher Secondary students in Institutional Care

4. To explain the reasons for low level of general well being
5. To suggest intervention plans for keeping up well being of students in institutional care

2.2 Research Design

A mixed methodology, sequential, divergent, Explanatory research design was adopted by the researcher. The general well being of the Higher secondary students were studied by adopting a questionnaire on 'General Well being'. Respondents with low level of well -being was identified. Then, to find out the reason for low level well -being, Focused Group Discussion and Case Studies were conducted.

2.3 Selection of Study area

The study was carried out at a particular higher secondary school in Dhonavur at Tirunelveli District. Since the school requested for not to disclose their name, it is not mentioned by the researcher. All the school students are put up in institutional care right from their I std due to parental occupation. They go to their parents' domicile only during Annual Summer vacation. For other short vacations, they stay in school or in their relatives' house.

Sl. No.	Gender	XI std	XII std	Sample selected / Universe
1	Girls	23	26	49
2	Boys	29	27	56
Total (n)		52	53	105

Fig. 1 – Selection of samples

For the purpose of the study, the entire universe was considered, in order to get reliable and detailed information. The sample consisted of 52 students from XI std and 53 students from XII std. Totally, 105 samples were studied using census method.

2.4 Tool for Data collection

The main tool used for data collection was "P.G.I. General Well - being" scale. To measure subjective well-being (Positive mental health), PGI General well-being scale developed by S.K. Verma, A.C. Mondgil, Karlip Kaur, Madan Pal, B.L. Dubey, D. Gupta (1986) was used. It comprises of 20 items. There are two alternative choices in each item "Yes" and "No". The subject has to choose only one alternative. The marks are allotted as for Yes – 1 and No – 0. The reliability of the scale is found to be 0.7618. The researcher used median test to categorize the various dimensions scores into two categories namely low general well-being and high general well-being. Up to 14 – low level of general well-being, 15 and above - High level of general well-being.

III. Results

3.1 Socio Demographic Variables:

- Majority of the students (47.6%) were of 16 years of age. 29% of them were 15 years.
- Majority of the students (37.1%) were from Semi – urban, 32.4% were from urban area and only 30.5% were from rural area
- Majority of the students (90.5%) were from nuclear family and only 9.5% of students were from Joint families
- Majority of the students (88.6%) of students had siblings and only (11.4%) of the students were single child to their parents
- Majority of the students (63.8%) were first born child in their families
- For majority of the respondents (94.3%) both the parents are alive.
- Majority of the respondent's fathers (63.8%) were undergraduates and nearly half of the mothers (43.8%) were undergraduates.
- Majority of the fathers (76.2%) and majority of the mothers (68.6%) were missionaries serving at northern states of India
- Majority of the students (62.9%) were staying in hostel for 11 years
- Majority of the students (78.1%) were put up in hostel due to the parental occupation and remaining (21.9%) of the students are put up in hostel because were no proper schooling facilities in the place where their parents are working
- Majority of the students (95.2%) were contacting the family once a week and talk to their parents
- Though the students interact with their parents on weekly basis, nearly half of them (48.6%) maintain very cordial relationship with parents. 38.1% of respondents maintain cordial relationship with their families

3.2 General well being of the adolescents in Institutional care

The General well being of majority of the students (61%) who resided in institutional care was found to be low irrespective of the various programs and activities carried out by the institution for the wellness of the students. Parental care and love can't be substituted by any other means. Studies have shown that paternal involvement can protect against the low level of well being. Research studies have also proved that both father and mother involvement contribute significantly and independently to the offspring happiness. [3] The national prevalence studies of the mental health of looked after children in Great Britain provide sobering reading. Forty-five per cent of looked after children in England were found to have a diagnosable mental health disorder. In contrast, this is to one in 10 in the general population. It is estimated that mental health problems were even more widespread. Children with mental health disorders were also more likely to have education, health and social issues.[4]

3.3 Correlation between Socio Demographic variables and well being of adolescents in Institutional care

Pearson's correlation had shown that there is a significant correlation between the well being of the adolescents in the institutional care and the family at 0.05 level. There is no correlation between well being and other socio – demographic variables like age and duration of stay at the institution. Results of the studies on psychological wellbeing of adolescents conducted among local university students at Malaysia had shown that slightly more than half (52.9%) of the respondents scored low on the General well being indicating an unhealthy psychological state that is to have psychological distress, social and emotional dysfunctions and cognitive disorder.[5]

3.4 Reasons for Low level of well being

3.4.1 Findings from Focused Group Discussion:

- The students were bored with their routine schedule in their hostels where they do not feel free to sleep at any time or to play as and when they want to play.
- They become home –sick during short holidays like quarterly and half- yearly exam holidays while they miss being with their parents at their own home. At times, they become anxious about the happenings at home or the health of the parents when they are sick. It affects their concentration on studies, their sleep and social functions.
- The students become more dependent on friends to share their day to day affairs. As they hurt or fight with one another, that trust and dependent relationship gets broken. They feel frustrated in such situations and it affects their well being
- They need to stay away from their comfort zone. At home, they will have access to have all they wish to have where in at hostel, they are given basic comforts to enjoy and survive like bed, library, and telephone facility. The students wish to have variety of dishes to eat. As students from many parts of India reside in the school, the menu followed in their hostel is not that likable to some residents.
- The anxiety to study and score high marks in the public board exam affects their well being in spite of various capacity building programs
- Parental pressure to score high marks in order to enter into professional colleges affects their well being. Students with average score were found to be disinterested in getting into professional colleges. They feel incapable in fulfilling the desire of the parents who stay at distance

3.4.2 Case studies

Case studies were conducted among five students of age 15 and 16 years, with very low level of general well being. All of them were found to be in the institutional care for more than a decade. Case studies revealed that the well being is affected due to the comments they have got from their class mates on their physical appearance which is not attractive, because of childhood experience, feeling like unloved by parents, unable to meet the high expectation of parents and resistance to adhere to the hostel routine schedule.

IV. Salient Findings

- With regard to the general well being of adolescents at institutional care, majority of the respondents (61%) have low level of wellbeing
- The care and connected to the family and parental involvement has significant impact on the general well being
- Unrealistic expectation and pressure of parents to have their mediocre children in professional colleges after schooling had fostered anxiety and depressive feelings among adolescents affecting their well being
- The routine hostel schedule all through the schooling life has created boredom and affected their well being

V. Suggestion

The study findings had created disturbances in the mind of the researcher. Hence the researcher suggests the following measure for residential schools

1. The care program by the childcare officer can be enhanced in order to reduce clinically significant problem. This is similar to the suggestion of Pugh. E (1968) in her study of working with child in residential care.[6]
2. Periodical Counseling sessions with children and faculty in residential school by the Psychiatric Social Worker can be advocated. Similar suggestion was given by Bhattacharya.S (2008) in his book 'Social Work: Intervention and Management'.[7]
3. It is suggested to appoint a counselor for children to share their grievance and take help that reduce the Psychological problem.
4. Access to appropriate and timely Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and evidence based approaches for emotional well being are important consideration
5. Professionals could develop and strengthen their consultative roles with front-line care givers at school. [8]

VI. Conclusion

The study was an eye opener about the well being of adolescents at institutional care to a great extent. The Focused Group Discussion and the case studies done with adolescents with low level of well being after identifying them through administration of the PGI general well being scale had enriched the understanding of the reasons for low level of well being. Thus, the sequential explanatory research design adopted by the researcher was of immense meaningful. As an added advantage, the institution provided accommodation to study the adolescents and allowed them to freely express their feelings. Mental Health services and programs can be incorporated in the school for improved well being.

References

- [1]. Bhargar .P and Chand .T. *Child Care* (New Delhi: Ajay Verma Publishing Company, 2005)
- [2]. M. D. Resnick, L.J. Harris, R.W.Blum. The impact of caring and connectedness on adolescent health and well being, *Journal of Paediatrics Child Health*, 29 (1), 1993, 53-59
- [3]. Eirini Flouri and Ann Buchanan, The role of father involvement and mother involvement in adolescents' Psychological well being, *British Journal of Social Work*, 33(3), 2003, 399-406
- [4]. Colette McAuley, Teresa Davis, Emotional well being and Mental Health of the Looked after children in England, *Child and Family Social Work Journal*, 14(2), 2009, 147-155
- [5]. Zulkefly, Nor Sheereen, Baharudin, Rozumah, Assess the Psychological Health of Malaysian College students, *Global Journal of Health Science*, 2 (1), 2010, 73-80
- [6]. Pugh E. 1968, *Social Work in Child Care* (NewYork: Gutledge and Keganpaul, 1968)
- [7]. Bhattacharya .S. *Social Work: Intervention and Management* (New Delhi: Deep & Deep publications, 2008)
- [8]. Nicky Stanley, Denise Riordan, Helen Alaszewski, The mental Health of Looked after children, *Health and Social Care in the Community*, 13(3), 2005, 239 – 248.