

Mental Health Problems among Orphanage Children in Jaffna

Prevalence and Selected Correlates

P. Arumaithurai

Counselling Division, Ministry Of Social Services, Sri Lanka.

Parumaithurai@Yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This study focused on mental health problems of orphanage children, Jaffna district in Sri Lanka. Most of the orphanage children have experienced emotional problem and witnessed traumatic life events. Many children live in orphanage because of at least one or two reasons such as death of parents been a victim of abuse, families involved with alcohol, domestic violence and parents living separately. According to the Department of Probation and Child Care Services in Sri Lanka. 223 children's homes were registered in Jaffna. Literature indicates that the mental health problems among children and adolescents were highly prevalent in war stricken environments. A Sri Lanka study showed that many orphanage children had past psychological problems such as trauma, depression, emotional and behavioural problems. This is a cross-sectional and comparative study carried out among 14 and 15 year-old Tamil speaking orphanage children in the Jaffna district. A simple random sampling method was used. The study group was randomly selected from 208 boys and girls in Jaffna. Two study instruments were used for the collection of data.

The results showed that 40.4% of orphanage children have mental health problems. 46.2% of 14 years and 34.6% of 15 years children have mental health problems. 41.3% of boys and 39.4% of girls have mental health problems. Emotional problems (25.9%), conduct problems (39%), hyperactivity (18.8%), peer problems (31.7%), abnormal prosocial behavior (97%). Mental health problems among orphanage children is significantly higher than the other studies. 14 years had significantly higher mental health problem than 15 years (46.2% vs 34.6%). Boys had significantly higher mental health problems than girls (41.3% vs.39.4%). The study also found a difference in the correlates of mental health problems among the two age groups in orphanage children.

Keywords: Orphanage, Mental health, Correlates,
Prevalence