

Assessment of Mental Health Status of Abandoned Children

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Abstract

The present study attempted to assess the mental health status of abandoned children. Thirty abandoned children in and around Salem city at public places like Railway Station, Bus Stand and temples were covered. Majority of these children were male in the age group 8-10 years and educated upto Class IV or V. Majority of them were found to have mild impairment. Appropriate rehabilitative measures are required to be undertaken by health care personnel.

Worldwide 150 million children are abandoned, which may grow to 250 million in the year 2012. Of these, some hundred million children are believed to live atleast part of the time on the street and remaining fifty million children are those who have been abandoned by their parents. In India, about 50,000 children are abandoned every year and about 11 million children live on the streets (UNICEF, 2004).

The incidence of mental health problems among abandoned children is estimated, from area to area, between 30 and 85 percent, the common problems being emotional disturbances, development disabilities, mental retardation, cerebral palsy and learning disabilities (CWLA, 2000).

Early identification of the mental health problems will prevent further deviations and complications and nurse plays a vital role in assessing and planning therapeutic care among abandoned children. The nurse caring the abandoned children has to assess the mental health status and provide essential therapies to such children.

In the modern electronic world, care of children is essential to develop them as asset to Nation. Abandoned children need more care because they constitute the more vulnerable and more neglected groups in the society. Abandoned children are much prone to mental health problems as they have easy exposure to abuses. If their mental health status is assessed and identified early, we can prevent further complications. Hence the investigator felt the need to assess the prevalence of mental health among abandoned children.

Objectives

The main objectives of the study were to :

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- ♦ Assess the mental health status among abandoned children.
- ♦ Compare the mental health status of children with demographic variables.
- ♦ Find the association between the mental health status and demographic variables

Assumptions

It was assumed that abandoned children may have some mental health problems, and that mental health status varies from individual to individual.

Methodology

A non-experimental, descriptive research design with cross sectional survey approach was used. Abandoned children in and around Salem city near railway station, bus stand and adjoining the temples were the population for the study. Non-probability, convenient sampling technique was utilised for selecting the samples.

The abandoned children were selected according to the inclusion criteria The data was collected from 30 abandoned children by using structured interview schedule which consists of socio demographic data (7 items) and mental health status items (30 items).

The collected data was organised and analysed according to the objectives of study by using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results

- ♦ Highest percentage (53%) of children was in the

Distribution of abandoned children's mental health status

Mental Health Status	No. of Children	Percentage
Normal	3	10%
Mild impairment	20	66.7%
Moderate impairment	7	22.3%

age group of 8-10 years.

- ♦ Majority (67%) were males.
- ♦ Majority of them (60%) studied up to 4 - 5th standard.
- ♦ Highest percentage (40%) of them were staying outside the family due to poverty, whereas 33.3 percent were staying outside in the absence of parents.
- ♦ Highest percentage (37%) of them were staying outside since 5-8 months, and 14 percent of them were staying for 8-12 months.
- ♦ Highest percentage (53%) consisted of rag pickers and 47 percent were beggars.

Distribution of abandoned children according to their mental health status shows that majority (66.7%) of them had mild impairment whereas 22.3 percent of them had moderate impairment and lowest percentage (10%) of them were normal.

Comparison of mental health status with demographic variables

- ♦ Moderate impairment was found 29 percent in the age group 11-14 years and 19 percent for 8-10 years. However, mild impairment was found highest in both the age group 8-10 years (69%) and 11-14 years (64%).
- ♦ Majority (75%) of male children had mild impairment, 40 percent of female children had moderate impairment.
- ♦ The majority (75%) of them had mild impairment were literate and 61 percent were illiterate with mild impairment.
- ♦ In relation to accommodation outside the family, it was seen that highest percentage 67 percent of them had impairment and 23 percent of them had moderate impairment.
- ♦ In relation to duration of stay, it was found that all (100%) of them were staying for 8-12 months, had mild impairment and 50 percent of them had

moderate impairment in the duration of above one year.

- ♦ Mild impairment was found highest (73.33%) among rag pickers as compared to children involved in begging.
- ♦ No significant association was found between mental health status of children with their demographic variables.

Conclusion

From the present study it can be concluded that majority of the abandoned children were having mental impairment. From a health care professional's viewpoint, the emphasis has to be more on preventing mental health problems among abandoned children and providing rehabilitative services.

Recommendations

- ♦ Similar study can be undertaken for larger sample to generalise the findings.
- ♦ Comparative study can be carried out to find out the mental health status among abandoned children in the street and school going children.
- ♦ A study to assess the psychosocial problems among abandoned children should be undertaken.
- ♦ Comparative study can be conducted among abandoned children in urban and rural community.

References

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Election Results: TNAI Meghalaya State Branch - 2011

The elections of TNAI Meghalaya State Branch were held Election were held on October 8, 2011 at U Soso Tham Auditorium Hall, Shillong. The following Office Bearers were declared elected:

President: Ms JF Balieh, Principal Tutor, FHW Training School, Rongkhon, Tura. **Vice President:** Smt Christilian Synrem, Nursing Sister, Civil Hospital, Shillong. **Secretary:** Smt Sara Mary Jyrwa, Sister Tutor, TTC School of Nursing, Ganesh Das Hospital, Shillong. **Asst. Secretary:** Smt Dawanmon Dkhar, Staff Nurse, Civil Hospital, Shillong. **Treasurer:** Smt Sitimai Khongwieng, Asst. Matron, Civil Hospital, Shillong. **SNA Advisor:** Smt Erbatemon Pyngrope, Sister Tutor, College of Nursing, NEIGRIHMS. **Chairperson Nursing Education:** Smt Cecilia Thangkhiew, Asst. Nursing Superintendent, Nazareth Hospital, Shillong. **Chairperson Public Health Nursing Section:** Mrs Wadjingstad Kharkongor, Vice Principal, Dr H Gordon Robert Hospital, Shillong. **News Letter Editor:** Smt Bajanaimon Nongkynrih, Nursing Sister, Civil Hospital, Shillong. **Representative LHV:** Smt Itis Muktieh, LHV Byrnihat, PHC Ri-Bhoi Distt. **ANM Representative:** Smt Shaina Lamare, ANM, Dr Norman Tunnel Hospital, Jowai.

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