

Perceived Neglect, Submissive Behavior and Psychological Distress among Orphans

Fareeha Jabeen^{1*}, Iram Ijaz²**Abstract**

This study aimed to explore the relationship between perceived neglect, submissive behavior, and psychological distress among orphans. The study also examines the gender difference in the terms of perceived neglect, submissive behavior and psychological distress. In this study, correlation method was used and a purposive sample strategy was used to choose 100 orphans from different orphanage. The results indicate a significant relationship between psychological distress, submissive behavior and perceived neglect, the findings suggesting that higher perceived neglect levels were associated with higher psychological distress and submissive behavior. Gender difference was also noted, boys reported higher levels of psychological distress and felt neglect than girls. To reduce the negative impact of neglect and psychological distress, the study recommends implementing and responding to the effects of trauma in a compassionate and supportive manner. By addressing the specific needs of orphans and acknowledging gender differences, the study emphasizes the necessity of tailored interventions to support orphans.

Keywords: Orphans, Perceived Neglect, Psychological Distress, Submissive Behavior

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Introduction

Orphaned children are a particularly vulnerable group worldwide, frequently facing challenges that can profoundly affect their mental health. Key issues influencing their well-being include feelings of neglect, the development of submissive behaviors, and the resulting psychological distress. Gaining insight into the interaction between these factors is crucial for creating interventions that build resilience and support

the mental health of orphaned youth. This article examines how perceived neglect, submissive behavior, and psychological distress are interconnected, using existing research to shed light on significant findings and their implications.

Perceived neglect is defined as a person's subjective feeling of receiving inadequate care or attention from their caregivers, covering emotional, physical, and educational aspects. Studies have shown that perceived neglect is common among orphaned children and correlates with negative developmental consequences. Submissive trait can be expressed in numerous ways, such as evading eye contact, not taking the initiative in conversations, withholding feelings of anger, and not standing up to criticism. Studies indicate that such submissive tendencies are associated with several mental health concerns (Gilbert, 2000).

In orphan's psychological distress can manifest as a lack of motivation, sleep issues such as difficulty falling or staying asleep, feelings of sadness or hopelessness about the

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future, emotional numbness, easily crying or feeling on the verge of tears, losing interest in activities, and suicidal thought (Decker, 1997). Psychological distress is a significant issue for young adults today, largely due to parental pressure to succeed and concerns about academic performance and competition. In conclusion, addressing perceived neglect and its impact on submissive behavior and psychological distress is vital for supporting the mental health of orphaned children.

Theoretical Framework

Attachment Theory

John Bowlby's attachment theory (1979) emphasizes the crucial role of early relationship with caregivers in shaping emotional and social development. When children experience neglect or inconsistent care, they often struggle to form secure attachments, leading to submissive behaviors, low self-esteem, and unhealthy coping mechanism. When children are neglected or receive inconsistent care, their attachment system is thrown off balance. Emotional neglect (a lack of love, care, and emotional support) or physical neglect (a lack of necessities like food, shelter, and safety) are two ways that neglect can appear. Usually associated with increased vulnerability in the emotional and social spheres, insecure attachment styles like avoidant or ambivalent attachment can arise as a result of this inconsistency or lack of stable attachment figures.

Long-term effects on mental health are also associated with insecure attachment. The development of psychological discomfort, such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress, and emotional dysregulation, is more likely to occur in children who are neglected or have an insecure attachment style. In addition to having trouble controlling their emotions and trusting others, these kids frequently suffer with stress management, which can result in internalized anxiety and

maladaptive behaviors. This lack of secure attachment increases vulnerability to anxiety, depression, and stress management difficulties. Moreover, it can hinder the ability to form healthy adult relationship, as issues like distrust and fear of intimacy persist, negatively impacting psychological well-being and the development of adaptive coping strategies.

Social learning theory: developed by Albert Bandura (1969), posits that children learn behaviors through observing and imitating others in their social environments. This theory highlights that behavior can be rewarded or ignored, leading them to adopt similar strategies for coping, additionally, they may imitate compliant behaviors that receive praise, reinforcing submissiveness. Children are likely to adopt similar behavior as coping mechanisms when they see submissive behaviors, like excessive cooperation, avoiding, conflict, or repressing one's own need, rewarded or ignored in a social setting. For instance, a youngster may start to regard submissiveness as a useful coping mechanism if they observe that being quiet, non-confrontational, or excessively obedient if they observe that being quiet, non-confrontational, or excessively obedient to authority people results in little to no punishment or even praise. Additionally, they can notice that autonomous or aggressive actions have unfavorable outcomes, which could encourage them to adapt more submissive habits. All things considered, the social learning theory emphasizes the significant influence that observational learning has on behavior development, particularly in settings where there are insufficient good role models or reinforcement for autonomous healthy behavior. Overall, this theory emphasizes the profound effect of observational learning, especially in environment lacking positive role models.

Rationale

Among orphans, a population that experiences particular emotional and social difficulties, the current study aims to investigate the association between psychological discomfort, subservient conduct, and perceived neglect. The lack of secure, caring relationship makes orphans especially susceptible to emotional and psychological challenges. Secure attachments are disrupted by perceived neglect whether it be physical or emotional, which results in emotions of abandonment, low self-esteem, and increased distress. The development of a positive self-concept and challenges with emotional regulation can be exacerbated by irregular caregiving and emotional support (Barker et al., 2019). In order to protect themselves from possible criticism or unfavorable attention because of their family history, orphans may also exhibit social disengagement.

Children may learn to see submissiveness as a useful strategy for obtaining attention, avoiding conflict, or overcoming neglect in settings where it is either rewarded or ignored. Emotional distress can result from this conduct since it can reaffirm feelings of helplessness and impotence (Singh, 2018). Additionally, submissive attitudes can exacerbate orphan's emotional difficulties by preventing them from expressing their need or asking for assistance. This isolation can exacerbate psychological suffering by heightening emotions of fear and loneliness.

As a result, mental problems like anxiety and depression are more common in orphans (Cohen et al., 2000). Their capacity to integrate socially and their general well-being may be hampered by the stigma associated with orphan hood and the ensuing emotional strain (Masten & Narayan, 2012). Examining the ways in which psychological distress, submissive behavior, and perceived neglect interact to impact orphan's mental health is crucial given the close relationship between these three variables. A deeper comprehension of these relationship can provide important information for creating therapies meant to lessen psychological suffering, promote resilience, and improve social functioning among orphans. By analyzing the intricate interactions between these variables, this study aims to fill a research gap and provide guidance for the development of orphaned children.

Objectives

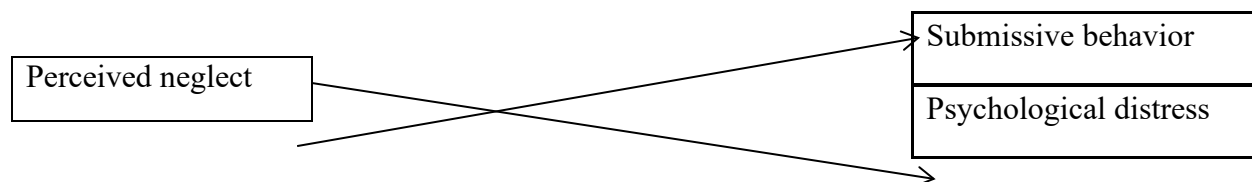
- Investigate the relationship between perceived neglect and submissive behavior in orphaned children.
- Examine how effect perceived neglect on psychological distress in orphaned children.

Hypotheses

- There are likely to be positively correlated perceived neglect, submissive behavior, and psychological distress in orphans.
- There are likely to be gender difference in perceived neglect, submissive behavior, and psychological distress among orphans.

Figure 1

Conceptual Model



Method

Research Design

This study used a quantitative approach, utilize a correlations research design gathering data from orphanages.

Participant and Sample

Data for the study collected using purposive sampling method, with a representative sample of 100 children ($n=50$ girls, $n=50$ boys). Orphaned children between the ages of 12 to 18 from various institutions were selected as participants for the study.

Measures

The Neglect Scale

The Neglect Scale was originally developed by Straus and Kantor in 2005, measures an individual's past experience of neglect. For this study, the 40-item scale was shortened to 12-items with four-point Likert scale with higher scores show greater level of neglect. The scale has demonstrated strong internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of .96.

The Adolescent Submissive Behavior Scale

The Adolescent Submissive Behavior Scale was developed by Allan and Gilbert (1997). This scale consists of 12-items adapted from the adult submissive behavior scale, where respondents rate their behavior frequency on a scale from 1 (never) to 5 (always). The scale has shown good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of .78. Scores range from 0 to 60, with higher scores indicating more submissive behavior.

Psychological Distress

This scale developed by Kessler in 1994, the K6 scale comprises six questions that assess how often respondent felt certain emotions over the past 30 days. Each question offers five response options: 'never' a little of the time, 'some of the time,' 'most of the time,' and 'all of the time.' Responses are scored from 0 ('never') to 4 ('all of the time'), resulting in total score range of 0 to 24. The K6 has demonstrated strong internal

consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha .89 (Kessler et al., 2002).

Procedure

Data were gathered from orphans residing in various orphanages. Approval was obtained from the respective authorities of these orphanages, and participants were thoroughly briefed on the research prior to data collection. Clear instructions were provided before administering the questionnaires, and participants were assured of the privacy and confidentiality of their responses. Each participant was approached individually in a comfortable setting and asked to carefully select responses that best described their experiences. Data were scored using provided keys and analyzed using SPSS, with results reported APA format.

Ethical Considerations

In order to ensure that the participants and their legal guardians are fully aware of the study's goal, procedure, and potential dangers, ethical consideration for this study include getting their informed permission. The study maintained the privacy and anonymity of participants, guaranteeing the security of personal information. Psychological wellbeing received particular consideration, with measure attempted to reduce any discomfort during involvement and assistance provided when required. The study also complied with ethical guidelines for working with children and at-risk groups, guaranteeing equitable treatment and avoiding the exploitation of those who were already at danger.

Results

The study examined perceived neglect, submissive behavior, and psychological distress among orphans, along with influence of demographic factors. Table 1 shows descriptive statistics, frequency, percentage, and standard deviation, mean, minimum and maximum values of the study.

Table 1*Descriptive Statistics (n=100)*

Variable	<i>f</i> (%)	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age		12.00	15.00	13.64	1.12
Gender		1.00	2.00	1.50	.50
Male	50(50)				
Female	50(50)				
Education		1.00	6.00	3.40	1.65
4 th	19(19)				
5 th	14(14)				
6 th	19(19)				
7 th	13(13)				
8 th	26(26)				
9 th	9(9)				
Duration of stay		1.00	6.00	4.47	1.21
2 Years	2(2)				
3 Years	4(4)				
4 Years	13(13)				
5 Years	31(31)				
6 Years	26(26)				
7 Years	24(24)				

Note: *F*=frequencies, %=percentages**Table 2***Reliability Analysis of Study Variable (n=100)*

Variable	<i>k</i>	α	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Potential	Actual
Neglect Scale	12	.70	27.20(5.28)	12-48	17-39
Adolescent Submissive Behavior Scale	12	.65	38.65(6.25)	12-60	25-48
Kessler Psychological Distress Scale	6	.66	18.19(4.02)	06-30	06-30

Note: *k*=no. of items; *M*= Mean; *SD*= Standard deviation; α = Alpha coefficient;

The researcher conducted a Cronbach Alpha reliability analysis to assess the internal consistency of the items within each scale. As noted by Blumberg et al. (2005), reliable

scales yield consistent results over time. The alpha reliability coefficients for the scaled utilized in this study are presented in Table 2.

Table 3*Correlation among Study Variables (n=100)*

Variables	1	2	3	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Neglect scale	-	.34**	.39**	27.20	5.28
Adolescent submissive behavior scale		-	.35**	40.34	5.07
Kessler psychological distress			-	18.34	4.04

Note: *M*= mean, *SD*= standard deviation

The Table 3 show that if increase perceived neglect level, then increase submissive behavior and distress among orphans. There

is a significant positive relationship between research variables.

Table 4

Independent t-test (n=100)

Variables	Boys		Girls		<i>t</i> (100)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
NS	30.54	3.75	23.86	4.41	8.14	.000	1.63
ASBS	39.06	4.60	41.62	5.24	-2.59	.011	0.51
KPDS	41.62	5.24	19.28	4.47	2.13	.035	4.58

Note: NS Neglect scale; ASBS= Adolescent submissive behavior scale; KPDS= Kessler psychological distress scale; Mean; SD= Standard deviation

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the neglect scale between boys ($M=30.54$, $SD = 3.75$) girls ($M=23.86$, $SD= 4.41$), submissive behavior boys ($M= 39.06$, $SD= 4.06$) girls ($M=41.62$, $SD=5.24$), psychological distress boys ($M= 41.62$, $SD= 5.24$), girls ($M=19.28$, $SD= 4.47$) groups. the t-test results showed that assuming equal variances, there was a significant difference in perceived neglect between girls and boys t

(100)= 8.14, $p = .000$, submissive behavior t (100)= -2.59, $p= .011$, psychological distress, $t(100)= 2.13$, $p= .035$. Therefore, accept the null hypothesis, indicating that there is a significant differs between boys and girls. In the term of perceived neglect highly significantly difference exist between gender rather than submissive behavior and psychological distress.

Discussion

In the present study found a significant positive correlation between perceived neglect, submissive behavior, and psychological distress among orphans. Reliability analysis was conducted to obtain descriptive statistics and internal consistency for these variables' scales. The results confirmed that these scaled demonstrated satisfactory psychometric properties. The negative consequences of neglect, which interferes with the development of stables bonds and frequently results in feelings of desertion, low self-esteem, and emotional pain, are especially severe for orphans. This is consistent with earlier studies showing that physical and emotional abuse hinders children's capacity to control their emotions and develop healthy self-concepts. The study's results underscore the importance of

addressing perceived neglect to mitigate psychological distress among orphans.

The central hypothesis of the study proposed that perceived neglect, submissive behavior, and psychological distress would be positively related in orphans. The correlation analysis supported the first hypothesis, indicating that orphans living in orphanages experience perceived neglect, which in turn contributes to psychological distress. Several studies that the link between neglect and depression is stronger when orphans report high levels of perceived stigmatization. Aligning with our hypothesis and previous findings (Atwine et al., 2005; Puffer et al., 2012), orphans reported higher levels of depression symptoms, PTSD symptoms, and aggressive behavior compared to non-orphans, with medium effect sized observed. However, these results differ from earlier studies (Doku, 2009).

The second hypothesis proposed that there would likely be gender differences in perceived neglect, submissive behavior, and psychological distress. The finding of this study proved this hypothesis. Results show that boys have higher level of perceived neglects and psychological distress rather than girls. In the term of submissive behavior girls have high level as compare boys. Various study revealed that boys score higher on physical abuse than girls. Other study says gender difference was evident, with male students showing higher involvement in bullying and displaying more submissive behavior compared to female (Akin, 2009). A study highlights that men experience greater psychological distress linked to psychosocial work exposures than women (Vermeulen & Mustard 2000). The generalizability of the finding may be limited, however similar results have been observed in other settings (Cluver & Gardner, 2007). The orphan group was diverse, with varying reasons for parental loss and different care arrangements. Additionally, while our measure of perceived neglect has been validated, the findings should be interpreted with caution. We assessed children's general perception of neglect due to their orphan status, which may have led to an underestimation of the true effect on their psychological distress. Furthermore, potential biases, such as social desirability, cannot be entirely excluded from self-report measures.

Limitation and Suggestions

One limitation of the study is the reliance on a purposive sampling method, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to the broader population. The sample size was limited, reducing the study's statistical power. Additionally, the study is cross-sectional in nature, meaning it only captures data at one point in time, making it difficult to assess changes or causality over time. The reliance on self-reported measures may also introduce bias, as participants' Finally,

cultural and contextual factors specific to the orphan population were not deeply explored, which might affect the interpretation of the findings.

Conclusion

The study established a clear framework regarding perceived neglect, submissive behavior, and psychological distress in orphans. It was hypothesized that these factors would be positively correlated. The findings confirmed a significant positive relationship between perceived neglect, submissive behavior and psychological distress in orphans, with perceived neglect predicting submissive behavior and psychological distress. Additionally, the results revealed gender differences between boys and girls in terms of these variables. The outcome aligns with existing theoretical framework.

Implications

This study highlights the need of early intervention and trauma-informed care in addressing orphans' psychological distress, subservient behavior, and neglect. It emphasizes the value of educating mental health specialists and caregivers, as well as putting in place initiatives that support self-advocacy and emotional control. Interventions that are gender-sensitive are particularly essential since the effects of neglect on boys and girls varies, emotional growth and well-being the study promotes policy changes to enhance orphan care and access to mental health services.

Contribution of Author

Fareeha Jabeen: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft, Iram Ijaz: Methodology, Writing - Reviewing & Editing, Supervision

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest declared by the author.

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The author declared no source of funding.

Data Availability Statement

The datasets of the current study are not available publicly due to ethical reasons but are available from the corresponding author [F.J.] upon the reasonable request.

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