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The Integration of Psychological and Educational Interventions in Empowering the Orphaned Schoolchild: A Descriptive-Analytical Study of Self-Construction Pathways and Academic Adjustment within an Inclusive School Environment

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Abstract

The orphaned child represents a vulnerable group within the educational system, facing psychological and social challenges resulting from the loss of family support. These challenges affect emotional stability, self-construction, self-esteem, and self-confidence. Their impact extends beyond the emotional dimension, hindering the child's positive interaction with the school environment, academic adjustment, and educational achievement. In light of contemporary educational trends, education has increasingly emphasized academic empowerment, encompassing cognitive, emotional, and social development. Within this framework, psychological and educational interventions play a pivotal role in supporting orphaned children. However, there remains a noticeable lack of integration between these interventions in educational practice. Furthermore, inclusive school environments continue to fall short in effectively implementing comprehensive support mechanisms, limiting their capacity to foster successful adjustment and academic achievement among this vulnerable population.

Keywords: Orphaned child; Psychological and educational interventions; Self-construction.

Introduction

The educational system has undergone significant transformation in its objectives, shifting beyond the traditional role of knowledge transmission to a broader mission of fostering learners' psychological, social, and cognitive development. This holistic educational approach is particularly important when addressing the needs of vulnerable groups, especially orphaned children, who often experience psychological and educational challenges arising from the loss of parental or family support. Such challenges may adversely affect their self-construction, emotional well-being, and academic adjustment within the school environment.

Within this context, psychological and educational interventions have become essential mechanisms for supporting orphaned children. However, their effectiveness largely depends on the extent to which they are integrated into educational practices. This is especially relevant in light of the growing emphasis on inclusive education, which seeks to ensure equal educational opportunities and comprehensive support for all learners, regardless of their social or personal circumstances.

Research Problem

How can the integration of psychological and educational interventions contribute to empowering orphaned children by promoting self-construction and enhancing their academic adjustment within an inclusive school environment?

Research Questions

Main Research Question

To what extent does the integration of psychological and educational interventions contribute to the academic empowerment of orphaned children within the school environment?

Sub-Questions

1. What are the major psychological and educational challenges faced by orphaned children within the school environment?
2. How do psychological interventions—including emotional support, psychological counseling, and self-esteem enhancement—contribute to the self-construction of orphaned children?
3. What role does the school environment play in supporting orphaned children and enhancing their motivation to learn?

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to:

- Analyze the situation of orphaned children within the school environment by identifying the psychological and educational challenges they encounter.
- Examine the role of psychological interventions in promoting self-construction, including self-confidence, emotional stability, and self-esteem.
- Determine the impact of educational interventions—such as academic support, remedial programs, and teachers' roles—on improving academic adjustment and educational achievement.
- Evaluate the role of the inclusive school environment in providing integrated psychological and educational support for orphaned children.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in the following aspects:

- Highlighting orphaned children as one of the most vulnerable groups within the educational system.
- Emphasizing the importance of integrating psychological and educational interventions to enhance academic adjustment.
- Contributing to the development of educational practices that address learners' psychological well-being alongside academic achievement.
- Supporting the effective implementation of inclusive education by promoting comprehensive support and meaningful inclusion for all learners.

4. Definition of the Study Concepts

4.1 Orphaned Child

A. Child

Linguistically, the term *child* refers to a young person or something tender and delicate. It also denotes the developmental stage of human life extending from birth until the onset of adolescence.

Conceptually, according to legal frameworks and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is defined as any individual under the age of eighteen years.

B. Orphan

Linguistically, the Arabic term *yatīm* (orphan) originates from the concept of solitude or being alone, referring to an individual who has lost support.

Conceptually, an orphan is traditionally defined as a child who has lost his or her father before reaching puberty. According to UNICEF, an orphan is any child who has lost one or both parents (Jawal, 2013, p. 55).

4.2 Psychological and Educational Interventions

A. Psychosocial Support

Meeting the psychological and social needs of orphaned children is a fundamental requirement for their healthy development, as it is for all children. Achieving this objective requires providing a supportive and nurturing environment. However, orphaned children often experience unique psychological circumstances resulting from the caregiving environments outside the school setting. These environments may either expose the child to harsh treatment and emotional deprivation or, conversely, to excessive indulgence and overprotection under the justification of orphanhood. Consequently, schools may encounter children who share the same experience of parental loss but differ considerably in their psychological and behavioral characteristics due to varying external influences. Both situations may increase the risk of poor academic adjustment, school dropout, or psychological and social development that deviates from accepted standards of mental and social well-being.

B. Educational (Pedagogical) Support

Education and the teaching process constitute a highly sensitive professional practice that requires awareness, specialized training, and appropriate pedagogical competence. Accordingly, carefully designed educational interventions are essential within the school environment to ensure effective support for orphaned children. Such interventions should facilitate their adaptation to their unique psychological and social circumstances while acknowledging their feelings of loss without

reinforcing either neglect or excessive sympathy. Instead, educational practices should adopt a balanced and empathetic approach that respects the children's emotional needs, promotes positive engagement in learning, and guides them toward developing a healthy, balanced personality capable of successful academic and social adjustment (Hayaq, 2017, p. 309).

4.3 Self

The concept of self refers to an organized and learned cognitive structure comprising an individual's conscious perceptions, beliefs, evaluations, and representations of oneself. It serves as the framework through which individuals interpret their personal characteristics, experiences, and behaviors, thereby playing a central role in personality formation and psychological development (Zahran, 1978, pp. 155–194).

Previous Studies

1. Study by Houhou and Salem (2020)

This study aimed to investigate aggressive behavior among orphaned children, focusing on this developmental stage because it plays a critical role in shaping personality traits and behavioral patterns. The researchers employed a clinical case study approach, using interviews and psychological assessment tools to examine the case of a girl who had lost her father and was living with her mother in the province of Biskra, Algeria.

The findings revealed that the child exhibited several aggressive tendencies and behaviors toward others. These behaviors were interpreted as defensive coping mechanisms developed in response to the psychological trauma associated with her father's death.

2. Study by Hayaq (2017)

This study examined the reality of psychological and social support provided to orphaned children within schools. It sought to determine whether educational institutions meet the standards required for adequately supporting orphaned students. The study emphasized that many cases of orphanhood remain unrecognized because children are often cared for by a surviving parent or relatives, leaving teachers and school administrators unaware of their social and psychological circumstances. Consequently, these children are frequently treated as ordinary students without receiving the specialized support they require.

3. Study by Kadri and Safi (2017)

The purpose of this study was to identify aggressive behavior among children and to propose an intervention program aimed at modifying such behavior. The researchers adopted a descriptive-analytical approach involving eight primary school teachers from two schools in the province of Oran. Data were collected through an open-ended questionnaire and analyzed using frequencies and percentages.

The findings indicated that teachers were aware of aggressive behaviors exhibited by children, including physical aggression, unexplained anger, and theft of others' belongings.

4. Study by Allawi (2017)

This study investigated the psychological well-being of orphaned children in relation to family disintegration using a descriptive-exploratory research design. The study sample consisted of 30 orphaned boys and girls aged between 9 and 11 years who were enrolled in seven primary schools.

The results demonstrated high levels of depressive symptoms among orphaned children, including anxiety, physical exhaustion, pessimism, and multidimensional social distress resulting from family fragmentation. Based on these findings, the researcher recommended strengthening the role of social support services through relevant institutions and establishing effective monitoring and care mechanisms for orphaned children.

5. Study by El Eid and Khan (2017)

This study explored the phenomenon of psychological and social alienation among orphaned children and examined the psychological and social consequences of losing one or both parents. The researchers employed a clinical methodology based on case studies, utilizing clinical interviews, semi-structured interviews, and content analysis.

The findings indicated that psychological and social alienation manifested primarily through social isolation, feelings of helplessness, and normlessness in three of the four cases studied. The fourth case exhibited only feelings of helplessness, which the researchers attributed to the presence of a supportive family environment characterized by understanding, dialogue, and acceptance. This environment enhanced the child's motivation for adaptation and facilitated acceptance of the orphanhood experience. The study concluded that manifestations of psychological and social alienation vary considerably among orphaned children and should not be generalized, as they are influenced by individual circumstances and environmental conditions. Furthermore, the absence of alienation symptoms at one developmental stage does not necessarily imply that they will not emerge later, since such manifestations often depend on changes in the child's social environment.

6. Study by Ben Lembarek and Boukhnoufa (2017)

This study examined the psychological consequences of parental loss, arguing that the death of one parent disrupts the functioning of the entire family and has profound effects on children's psychological well-being and behavior. Sudden parental loss often leads to emotional deprivation, which may result in behavioral problems and psychological disorders, including social withdrawal, poor self-image, aggressive behavior, enuresis, and other developmental difficulties that hinder healthy child development.

The findings demonstrated that parental deprivation contributes significantly to aggressive behavior by undermining children's sense of security and emotional stability.

Review of Previous Studies

Similarities with Previous Studies

The present study shares several common findings with previous research. Collectively, the literature confirms that orphaned children experience substantial psychological difficulties, including anxiety, anger, emotional instability, and diminished emotional well-being. These psychological challenges negatively affect children's behavior, school adjustment, and academic achievement. Previous studies also consistently demonstrate that inadequate psychological support exacerbates these problems, whereas psychological interventions contribute to improving emotional balance, strengthening self-construction, and promoting psychological resilience. Moreover, the reviewed studies highlight shortcomings in the capacity of schools to provide comprehensive and effective support for orphaned children within educational settings.

Differences from Previous Studies

Despite these similarities, the present study differs from previous research in both its scope and conceptual perspective. Earlier studies primarily focused on isolated aspects of orphanhood, such as aggressive behavior, psychological well-being, or psychosocial care, examining these issues independently. In contrast, the current study adopts a comprehensive framework based on the integration of psychological and educational interventions.

Furthermore, rather than merely describing the problems experienced by orphaned children, this study seeks to explain the relationships among multiple variables, including self-construction, academic adjustment, and learning motivation, while proposing an integrated model for promoting academic empowerment within inclusive school environments. Finally, the present study adopts a descriptive-analytical perspective that extends beyond the predominantly descriptive field-based approaches employed in much of the existing literature.

Interpretation of the Study Findings

1. Interpretation of the First Research Question

What are the major psychological and educational challenges faced by orphaned children within the school environment?

The findings of previous studies indicate that orphaned children encounter a wide range of psychological challenges, including emotional deprivation, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and difficulties in psychological and social adjustment. These challenges are often accompanied by aggressive and withdrawn behaviors, as reported by Houhou and Salem (2020). Similarly, El Eid and Khan (2017) and Ben Lembarek and Boukhnoufa (2017) demonstrated that the severity of these difficulties varies according to the quality of the child's surrounding environment. Supportive and understanding environments help reduce feelings of alienation and social isolation, whereas unsupportive settings intensify psychological distress. Consequently, these psychological and educational challenges directly influence the child's integration into the school environment, academic achievement, and relationships with teachers and peers.

2. Interpretation of the Second Research Question

What is the impact of psychological interventions (emotional support, psychological counseling, and self-esteem enhancement) on the self-construction of orphaned children?

The reviewed literature consistently suggests that psychological interventions constitute a fundamental pillar in promoting the self-construction of orphaned children. Such interventions mitigate the psychological consequences associated with parental loss while fostering psychological security, self-confidence, and positive self-esteem. This conclusion is supported by Hayaq (2017), who emphasized the importance of providing psychological and psychosocial support within schools. Likewise, Ben Lembarek and Boukhnoufa (2017) found that the absence of adequate psychological support contributes to disturbances in self-image, whereas counseling and emotional support enhance psychological adjustment and resilience. Furthermore, Houhou and Salem (2020) demonstrated that aggressive behavior among orphaned children may represent a defensive response to psychological trauma. Effective psychological interventions can therefore reduce these maladaptive behaviors by helping children develop a more positive self-concept and adapt more successfully to their personal circumstances.

3. Interpretation of the Third Research Question

What role does the school environment play in supporting orphaned children and enhancing their motivation to learn?

Previous research consistently highlights the central role of the school environment in supporting orphaned children, particularly when it provides a climate characterized by acceptance, inclusion, and collaboration among teachers, school counselors, psychologists, and administrators. Hayaq (2017) concluded that many schools continue to experience shortcomings in delivering comprehensive support services for orphaned children, underscoring the need to strengthen both psychological and educational support mechanisms.

Similarly, El Eid and Khan (2017) found that supportive school environments reduce feelings of social isolation and psychological alienation while enhancing children's capacity for adaptation. In addition, Kadri and Safi (2017) emphasized the critical role of teachers in identifying behavioral difficulties and implementing appropriate interventions. Such efforts contribute positively to children's motivation to learn, strengthen their sense of school belonging, and improve their academic achievement and overall educational adjustment.

Interpretation of the Main Research Question

To what extent does the integration of psychological and educational interventions contribute to the academic empowerment of orphaned children within the school environment?

The findings of the present study indicate that integrating psychological and educational interventions plays a substantial role in promoting the academic empowerment of orphaned children within inclusive school settings. This integration addresses both the psychological and educational needs of orphaned learners, thereby fostering their holistic development. Psychological support—including counseling services, emotional support, and self-esteem enhancement—helps children overcome the emotional consequences of parental loss by strengthening their psychological security, resilience, and self-concept.

At the same time, educational interventions—including the provision of an inclusive learning environment, teaching strategies that accommodate individual differences, and continuous teacher support—facilitate children's engagement in the educational process, increase their motivation to learn, and improve their academic adjustment and educational performance.

These findings are consistent with Hayaq (2017), who argued that psychological and social support within schools is a prerequisite for improving the well-being of orphaned children, while also noting deficiencies in the integration of support services within educational institutions. The results are further supported by Allawi (2017), who demonstrated that psychological disorders such as anxiety and depression negatively affect children's capacity for adaptation, emphasizing the importance of early psychological intervention.

Likewise, El Eid and Khan (2017) found that supportive educational environments enhance both psychological and social adjustment, whereas Ben Lembarek and Boukhnoufa (2017) concluded that strengthening children's sense of psychological security and positive self-image reduces behavioral and emotional difficulties. The findings also align with those of Kadri and Safi (2017) and Houhou and Salem (2020), both of whom highlighted the effectiveness of combined psychological and educational interventions in reducing aggressive behaviors and facilitating school integration among orphaned children.

Overall, the findings suggest that the integration of psychological and educational interventions constitutes a fundamental prerequisite for achieving academic empowerment among orphaned children. While psychological interventions primarily address emotional well-being by fostering self-confidence, resilience, and positive self-construction, educational interventions create inclusive learning environments that accommodate children's unique needs and encourage active participation in school life. Together, these complementary approaches enhance academic adjustment, increase learning motivation, strengthen children's sense of security and belonging, and ultimately improve their academic achievement and overall development.

Unlike previous studies, which tended to examine psychological or educational dimensions independently, the present study advances the literature by emphasizing the complementary relationship between these two forms of intervention within an inclusive school environment. This integrated perspective provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding how coordinated psychological and educational support can promote the holistic development and academic success of orphaned children.

Conclusion

This study highlights that orphaned children face multiple psychological and educational challenges that significantly influence their self-construction, psychological well-being, and academic adjustment within the school environment. The findings demonstrate that achieving academic empowerment for this vulnerable group cannot rely solely on psychological or educational interventions in isolation. Rather, it requires a comprehensive integration of both approaches through the provision of psychological support, counseling services, and self-esteem enhancement, alongside the creation of an inclusive school environment that recognizes children's individual needs and provides meaningful opportunities for learning and active participation.

The reviewed literature consistently indicates that the absence of such integration contributes to the persistence of psychological and behavioral problems, including aggression, psychological and social alienation, and poor psychological adjustment, all of which negatively affect academic performance and school engagement.

Accordingly, the study emphasizes the importance of adopting an integrated approach that brings together the efforts of teachers, school psychologists, social workers, school administrators, and families to establish a comprehensive support system for orphaned children. Such collaboration can facilitate the development of balanced personalities, strengthen self-confidence, enhance motivation to learn, and ultimately promote successful academic adjustment and meaningful participation within both the school and the wider community.

Furthermore, the present study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by examining the interconnected relationships among psychological interventions, educational interventions, self-construction, and academic adjustment within the framework of an inclusive school environment. This integrated perspective represents an important addition to the literature, as previous studies have generally addressed these dimensions separately rather than considering their complementary roles in promoting the academic empowerment of orphaned children.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed for future research and educational practice:

1. Conduct experimental field studies to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed integrated psychological–educational intervention model.
2. Develop school-based psychoeducational counseling programs specifically designed to address the needs of orphaned children.

3. Design professional development programs that equip teachers with practical strategies for integrating psychological support into classroom instruction and daily educational practices.
4. Extend future research to include other vulnerable groups of children, such as children with rare medical conditions, children affected by parental divorce, and children living in poverty.
5. Investigate the influence of educational policies on the implementation of inclusive schooling across different educational contexts, including rural versus urban settings and public versus private schools, through comparative studies.
6. Incorporate additional psychological and social variables into future research, including emotional intelligence, psychological resilience, and alternative family support, to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the academic empowerment of orphaned children.

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