



THE LEVEL OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AMONG ORPHANED SCHOOLCHILDREN IN THE CITY OF EL-AGHEBAT IN LIGHT OF SOME DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES SUCH AS GENDER, TYPE OF ORPHANHOOD, AND EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

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Abstract

The current study aimed to assess the level of psychological well-being among a sample of orphaned students in some primary and middle schools in the city of Laghouat (fourth and fifth grade of primary school and first year of middle school). Additionally, it aimed to determine differences in psychological well-being based on some demographic variables (gender, type of orphanhood - paternal or maternal, educational level - fourth and fifth grade of primary school or first year of middle school). The study employed a descriptive approach and used the Psychological Well-being Scale for Children and Adolescents developed by Aqeel bin Al-Sassi (2013). The sample consisted of 42 orphaned children aged between 10 and 12 years. The study's results revealed a moderate level of psychological well-being among the research sample. Furthermore, differences in psychological well-being were found based on the type of orphanhood and the educational level of the research sample. However, there were no gender differences in the psychological well-being of the study sample.

Keywords: psychological well-being, orphaned students, Laghouat, demographic variables, educational level

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Introduction:

Achieving a high level of psychological well-being necessitates fulfilling a set of important psychological needs, with the foremost of these being the sense of comfort, reassurance, and security. This is particularly crucial for young children and is only achieved when their family surrounds them, ensuring their care and providing everything necessary to create comfort and serenity for the child. For children, the family is a holistic support system, and the role of parents is vital in a child's life for their development. Parents work on instilling the values of the society in which they live and preparing the child to be an active participant in their environment.



Problem statement:

The research problem emphasizes childhood as a significant stage in human development. It is a stage marked by rapid cognitive, emotional, and physical growth, shaping the individual's personality as a whole. The need for parental care remains crucial for guidance, affection, compassion, a sense of security, and protection. Parents also play a role in providing an environment that fulfills all these needs collectively (Khodr Baron, 2005, p. 6). The family is a social system that influences the child from birth and even before. Within the family, the child learns the language, culture, customs, values, and attitudes of their society. It is the most important environment responsible for nurturing and caring for the child, addressing their material, psychological, and social needs, allowing them to feel secure, loved, and content. As a result, the child becomes more harmonious with themselves and others. Proper upbringing necessitates a child growing up in a healthy family environment, with the presence of both a mother and a father in an atmosphere filled with love, affection, and security. Having a complete family unit (mother, father, and child) is the foundation of psychological well-being for its members (Kamal Bilan, 2011, p. 179). It is important for a child to grow up between a natural mother and father to feel peace, security, and self-confidence. Different family dynamics can lead to differences in children's personality traits. Furthermore, positive family relationships have a positive impact on establishing a sense of security and developing a positive self-concept in children (Khodr Baron, *ibid.*, p. 9).

When a child's circumstances lead them to grow up without the nurturing care of a family, whether due to external factors such as the loss of one or both parents, it can profoundly affect their overall personality (Amal El Sayed, 2011, p. 3). The deprivation of parental care impacts all aspects of a child's development, with the emotional dimension being the most affected. Researchers suggest that a child's developmental journey is marked by experiences and situations that influence their physical, cognitive, emotional, and social growth. These experiences can swiftly affect their physical, cognitive, and social development, subsequently manifesting in their behavior and actions (I'timad Al-Hindi, 2011, p. 3). Orphaned children often perceive themselves as lacking or missing something, which sets them apart from their peers. An orphaned child may feel alone and excluded from the social environment in which they live, which can significantly impact their social adjustment (Khodr Baron, previous reference, p. 9).

Depriving a child of a family due to orphanhood can lead to a lack of psychological well-being (emotional security) and a profound sense of loneliness, even when surrounded by a group. This need is among the most essential, representing the root of social



security (Abdulrahman Al-Atas, 2013, p. 6). The need for psychological well-being is one of the most crucial psychological needs and a primary motivator of human behavior throughout life. This instinct requires individuals to continuously strive to maintain conditions that satisfy their physical and psychological needs, under the influence of the need to secure themselves, their belongings, and ensure stability and peace to pursue their lives and develop their potentials in a secure environment (Najah Al-Samiri, 2010, p. 278).

Throughout childhood, a child needs to feel secure, a feeling provided by parents. Even if a child faces crises during this phase of life, those around them should compensate for the loss of love, affection, and tenderness due to the absence of one or both parents for any reason. Deprivation of this need can lead to a child feeling unstable and fearful about the future, leading to ongoing psychological struggles (Suhair Kamel and Mohamed Shahata, 2007, p. 147). Therefore, psychological well-being is a fundamental requirement for a child's psychological life to be regular and for their social feelings to revolve around this primary nucleus formed within the family environment. Without this minimum, children fail to open up and thrive. Furthermore, they may develop specific personality traits that hinder healthy mental and psychological growth (Abdulbari Dawood, 2004, p. 49).

Frederic Berger adds that failing to satisfy the need for psychological well-being renders an individual incapable of achievement, creativity, and aesthetic appreciation. Consequently, society's development depends on satisfying individuals' psychological well-being, as it shapes civilization (Frederic Berger, 2008, p. 11). When circumstances prevent a child from satisfying their need for security, they will be driven to seek it compulsively in all situations and relationships they engage in. They will struggle to confront situations they perceive as threats or dangers, affecting their ability to respond appropriately to these situations due to their fears and insecurity (Maryam Al-Najm, 2011, p. 3).

From what has been discussed, it becomes clear that psychological well-being for an ordinary child, which is fulfilled by the presence of parents in their various roles of care, attention, and providing appropriate upbringing, is vital. On the other hand, the absence of one or both parents due to orphanhood and the extent to which this need is satisfied in orphaned children is the primary question addressed in this study:

- What is the level of psychological well-being among orphaned schoolchildren in the fourth and fifth grades of primary school and the first year of middle school

in some schools in the city of Ghardaia, in light of the variables of gender, type of orphanhood (maternal or paternal orphan), and the child's educational level (primary school students, middle school students)?

Study Hypotheses

- I expect the level of psychological well-being to be low among orphaned schoolchildren in some schools in the city of Ghardaia.
- There are differences in the level of psychological well-being between genders in the study sample.
- There are differences in the psychological well-being of the study sample based on the type of orphanhood (maternal or paternal orphan).
- There are differences in the psychological well-being of orphaned children based on their educational level (primary school, middle school).

Research Objectives

- To determine the level of psychological well-being among orphaned schoolchildren in the fourth and fifth grades of primary school and the first year of middle school in some schools in the city of Ghardaia.
- To identify gender differences in the psychological well-being of the study sample.
- To examine differences in the psychological well-being of orphans based on the type of orphanhood (maternal or paternal) in the study sample.
- To explore differences in the psychological well-being of orphaned children based on their educational level (primary school, middle school) in the study sample.

Study Significance

- The significance of this research lies in the uniqueness of the research sample (orphaned children), who represent an important segment of society. The experience of orphanhood has a profound impact on a child's psychological development, which continues throughout their life, especially regarding the satisfaction of a child's general needs to achieve a high level of psychological well-being. Failure to meet a child's needs can lead to various psychological, emotional, social, and behavioral disorders.
- Additionally, the significance of this research is in shedding light on the extent to which orphaned children enjoy psychological well-being, which represents a

crucial psychological need with lasting effects if left unsatisfied in later stages of life. This contributes to a better understanding of this group and its needs.

Study Terminology

- Psychological well-being, as defined by Maslow (1952), is the individual's sense of acceptance, belonging, affection, rarity of feeling threatened, and concern. Maslow envisions humanity as friendly, trusting towards others, tolerant, compassionate, optimistic, happy, emotionally stable, self-accepting, responsive to reality, and relatively free from gangster disorders (Maslow, 1972, p. 36).
- In this study, psychological well-being is defined as the feeling of security, comfort, and acceptance by those around the orphaned child. It is reflected through the score obtained by the child in the Child and Adolescent Psychological Well-being Scale developed by Ben Sassi (2013). Psychological well-being levels are classified based on the theoretical mean as follows: Moderate psychological well-being: Individual's score = 51; High psychological well-being: Individual's score < 51; Low psychological well-being: Individual's score > 51.
- An orphaned child is one who has lost either their father or mother before reaching adulthood (Abdullah Al-Saify, 2010, p. 2045).

In this research, orphans are defined as children who have lost one of their parents (mother or father) due to death and are enrolled in the fourth and fifth grades of primary school as well as the first year of middle school in a group of schools in the city of Laghouat (both primary and middle schools).

Literature review

The studies on the psychological security of orphans

Several previous studies have examined the psychological security of orphans. In a study by Abdurrahman Al-Atas (2013), titled "The Sense of Security and Psychological Loneliness Among Orphans Residing in Care Homes and Those Residing with Their Families (A Comparative Study)," the research aimed to assess the levels of security and psychological loneliness among orphans. Using a comparative descriptive approach, the study included a sample of 54 orphans and utilized measurement scales for both variables. The results showed that orphans residing in care homes experienced higher emotional insecurity compared to those living with their families.

In another study conducted by Anwar Al-Munaimi (2013), titled "The Effectiveness of a Cognitive-Behavioral Program in Enhancing Psychological Security Among Adolescents with Special Circumstances," the research aimed to investigate the effectiveness of a proposed program in developing psychological security among adolescents without parental care. The study included a sample of 30 students from middle and high school levels and utilized the Fahad Al-Dalim et al. psychological security scale. The results revealed significant differences favoring the post-intervention measurements in the psychological security of the study's sample.

Furthermore, a study by Hussam Kafi (2012) titled "Psychological Security and Its Relationship with Success and Failure Expectations Among Orphans in Mecca" aimed to explore the relationship between psychological security and success and failure expectations among orphans in Mecca. The study also sought to determine the levels of psychological security among the participants and examine gender, nature of orphanhood, age, and educational level differences in their psychological security. The study utilized the Dalim's Psychological Security Scale and Monna Bliss's Success and Failure Expectations Scale on a sample of 218 male and female orphans in Mecca. The findings indicated a high level of psychological security among orphans both inside and outside of care homes. Gender, nature of orphanhood, and educational level were found to be significant factors affecting psychological security, with males and those with higher educational levels exhibiting higher levels of psychological security.

Lastly, in a study by Abdullah Al-Sahli (2003) titled "Psychological Security and Its Relationship with Academic Achievement Among Orphans Under Care in Riyadh," the research aimed to examine psychological security and its relationship with academic achievement among orphans in care homes in Riyadh. The study included 95 orphan students aged 13 to 23 and employed the Dalim et al. Psychological Security Scale. The study's results revealed a high level of psychological security among the study's sample (Abdullah Al-Sahli, 2003).

The studies on the orphans

Kamal Blan's study (2011) titled "Behavioral and Emotional Disorders in Children Residing in Orphanages from the Perspective of their Supervisors" aimed to assess the prevalence and severity of behavioral and emotional disorders in children residing in orphanages, considering variables such as gender, age, duration of stay, and the loss of one or both parents from the perspective of their supervisors. The study included a sample of 270 children from various provinces in Syria. The research utilized a scale for assessing behavioral and emotional disorders in children. The results indicated a high prevalence of such disorders among children in orphanages, with significant gender

differences favoring females and variations based on the loss of one or both parents (Kamal Blan, 2011, p. 178).

Kendra's study (2000) investigated the impact of maternal orphanhood on various aspects of psychological and social adaptation in children residing in shelters compared to regular children. The hypothesis suggested that maternal orphanhood has an impact on psychological and social adaptation. The sample included children who had either lost their mothers or remained with them. Results showed that children who had lost their mothers due to death exhibited lower self-efficacy, reduced social flexibility, and difficulty forming social relationships when compared to children who had not experienced maternal separation.

Rashdi Haneen's study in Algeria (2010) examined the emotional growth and emotional state of adolescents who lost their mothers during childhood. The sample consisted of 20 adolescents from Biskra, Algeria, aged between 17 and 19, who had lost their mothers between the ages of 6 and 11. The study used the Rorschach test, TAT, and clinical interviews. The results indicated that adolescents experienced feelings of despair, depression, frequent nightmares, a lack of independence, dependence on their fathers, anxiety, pessimism, rebellion, and disobedience, coupled with hopes of their deceased mothers' return (Mohammed Daoudi, 2010, pp. 234-235).

Adeeb Al-Hindi's study (2010) examined the impact of parental deprivation, whether from one or both parents, on various psychological variables (aspects of growth, gender roles, and emotional disorders) during early childhood. The study aimed to identify differences between children deprived of parental care and those who were not in terms of the mentioned variables. The sample consisted of young children aged 3 to 6 from Riyadh and state care institutions in Saudi Arabia. Various assessment tools were used. The results revealed statistically significant differences between children deprived of parental care and those who were not, favoring regular children in terms of growth aspects. Additionally, there were gender-based differences in growth and emotional disorders, favoring females (Adeeb Al-Hindi, 2010).

Majda Al-Ali's study (2009) explored future anxiety in orphaned children living in state-run homes in Iraq. The study aimed to identify differences in levels of future anxiety among the study sample based on gender and age group (middle childhood and late childhood). The sample was selected purposively and included all orphaned children in state-run homes in Iraq aged 6 to 13, totaling 43 children. The results indicated that

these children experienced higher levels of future anxiety and emotional disturbance than expected (Majda Al-Ali, 2008, pp. 380-44).

Discussion about the previous studies

In terms of objectives, it is evident that studies addressing the psychological well-being and its relationship with various variables among orphans generally aimed to measure the level of psychological well-being among them. However, Hassam Kafi's study in 2012 stood out by examining gender differences in psychological well-being. Regarding measurement tools, these studies commonly employed Maslow's psychological well-being scale, which was translated and adapted for the Arab context by Fahd Al-Dalim and others. Concerning the research samples, all the studies focused on late childhood, adolescence, and even young adulthood, and they unanimously examined orphans living in orphanages. Notably, no study specifically investigated the psychological well-being of orphans with respect to either the mother or the father alone. Regarding results, these studies produced varying findings concerning the level of psychological well-being among orphans, with some, like Kafi's study in 2013, reporting higher levels, while others, like Al-Athas's study in 2012, found lower levels. As for studies addressing orphanhood, they generally concurred that orphanhood has a clear impact on the personal characteristics of orphans, particularly in terms of psychological adaptation and overall growth, especially when the mother is the deceased parent. Furthermore, these studies primarily focused on children from early childhood to adolescence.

Field Procedures of the Study

The appropriate methodology chosen to achieve the study's objectives is the descriptive approach, which is utilized to describe the phenomenon under investigation, reveal relationships between variables to assess the extent of their correlation, and express them quantitatively.

Spatial and temporal boundaries of the study encompassed the application of Aqeel Bin Sassi's (2013) psychological well-being scale to a sample of orphaned students attending primary and middle schools in the city of Laghouat, Algeria, during the period from March 12, 2022, to April 6, 2022.

Sample Selection

The study employed purposive sampling to select sample members based on the criterion of orphanhood. The study's sample consisted of 42 children, and the following table illustrates the characteristics of the sample by gender and educational level.

School	Number of Students	Male	Female
Khemili Ali Elementary	5	3	2
Ben Al-Tayeb Ibrahim Elementary	9	5	4
Mohammed Bouamer Elementary	4	1	3
Al-Musalaha Middle School	12	8	4
Kweisi Al-Mabrouk Middle School	7	2	5
Al-Safari Middle School	5	4	1
Total	42	23	19

The following table illustrates the sample characteristics based on gender and the type of orphanhood

Gender	Mother Orphan	Father Orphan
Male	12	11
Female	10	9
Total	22	20

Study Tools:

In this study, the Psychological Security Scale by Aqeel Bin Al-Sassi (2013) was used. The scale's reliability and validity were established through expert judgment, discriminant validity, and internal consistency reliability analysis. The scale consists of twenty-seven (27) items aimed at assessing individuals' level of psychological security. Respondents are provided with three response options: "Always," "Sometimes," and "Never" after filling in personal data such as gender, age, and educational level. Due to the nature of the sample (orphans), some items in the scale were modified to better suit this population. The word "parents" in items (10, 14, 20, 22) was replaced with "family."

Psychometric Properties of the Study Tool:

The scale was administered to the entire study sample (survey study) due to its small size. After replacing the word "parents" with "family" in the survey sample, the test's reliability and consistency were re-evaluated.

Validity

Discriminant Validity:

After entering the data, we arranged the obtained scores in descending order. Then, we selected 27% from the top and an equal percentage from the bottom to calculate discriminant validity for the scale items using the "t-test" for two independent samples.

After calculation using SPSS 19.0, it was found that the scale items measure psychological security. The following table illustrates this.

Statistical Significance	Df	T	S	X
N Significant at 0.01	Comparison Groups	Variable		
	26	12.78	13.26	43.14
	Upper Group	Psychological Security		
	6.30	70.3		
	Lower Group			

Stability:

It is calculated the scale's stability using Cronbach's Alpha, and its value was $\alpha=0.713$, indicating that the scale is stable.

Findings:

Main Hypothesis:

The hypothesis states, "We expect the level of psychological security among orphan students in the fourth, fifth primary, and first intermediate grades to be low."

To verify the hypothesis, we calculated the frequencies and percentages of psychological security levels, as shown in the following table.

Levels of Psychological Security	Number	Percentage
High Level	8	19.04%
Medium Level	20	47.61%
Low Level	14	33.33%

From the table, I can notice that orphaned children with high psychological security are 8 children, which is 19.04%. Meanwhile, the number of children suffering from low psychological security is 14 children, approximately 33.33%. As for the number of children with medium psychological security, it reached 20 children, accounting for 47.61%. Therefore, I reject the hypothesis that suggested the presence of low psychological security among the students and accept the alternative hypothesis, which indicates that the level of psychological security in the study sample is moderate. These

results contradict the findings of previous studies, such as Al-Suhaili's and Kafi's studies (2013), which found that psychological security among residents in care homes is high. However, Al-Atas' study (2013) found that the level of psychological security is low among orphans in this research. I can interpret this result as the orphaned child's feeling of moderate psychological security is mainly due to the nature of the Algerian society, where values of solidarity and compassion are still prevalent in the Algiers environment. Orphans receive care from their relatives when they lose one of their parents, but changes occurring in the Algerian family and society hinder the orphan from achieving what is necessary or what they need. Thus, the care provided does not meet the required level of satisfaction, which explains the percentage of those who feel a low level of psychological security. This means that the level of psychological security among these children varies between low and moderate.

The second hypothesis:

The hypothesis text states, "There are differences between genders in the level of psychological security in the study sample."

To verify the validity of this hypothesis, we calculated the arithmetic means and standard deviations for both genders. We also utilized the "t-test" to indicate any differences, and the results are presented in the following table.

Statistical Data	Gender	Count	Mean	Standard Deviation	Calculated t	Tabulated t	Degrees of Freedom	Level of Significance
	Females	19	57.28	6.23	0.73	1.24	40	Not Significant
	Males	23	60.33	4.54				

From the table, it becomes evident that the calculated t-value is smaller than the tabulated t-value at 40 degrees of freedom, indicating non-significance. Therefore, I reject the research hypothesis and accept the null hypothesis, which suggests no gender differences in the level of psychological security. This result does not align with the findings of Kafi's study (2012), which examined the relationship between psychological security and success and failure expectations among a sample of orphans in care homes. Kafi's study found gender differences in psychological security, favoring males. The variance in results can be attributed to the cultural differences between the Saudi and Algerian societies. I interpret this result as, during this stage of adolescence, parental care and attention for both genders are at similar levels. Educational trends brought about by globalization have promoted gender equality in rights and responsibilities,



making it necessary to teach girls to rely on themselves and achieve independence. Consequently, gender differences in psychological traits have become minimal.

The Third Hypothesis

The hypothesis states, "There are differences in the level of psychological security based on the type of orphanhood (maternal orphanhood - paternal orphanhood) in the study sample."

To test the validity of this hypothesis, I calculated the mean scores and standard deviations for both groups (maternal orphanhood and paternal orphanhood) and used the t-test to determine differences. The following table illustrates the results.

Orphan Type	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	Calculated t	Scheduled t	Degrees of Freedom	Significance Level
Fatherless	20	60.33	5.98	10.32	2.55	40	Significant at 0.01
Motherless	22	52.28	4.23				

Through the table, it becomes clear that the calculated t is greater than the scheduled t at 40 degrees of freedom and is significant at a 0.01 significance level. Additionally, the mean of the scores for fatherless orphans is greater than the mean of the scores for motherless orphans on the psychological security scale. Therefore, there are significant differences between the two groups, and we can conclude that the research hypothesis has been confirmed. This result is consistent with the findings of a previous study by Kafi (2012), which also indicated differences between motherless and fatherless orphans in terms of psychological security. It aligns with the conclusions of other studies, such as Kamal Bilan (2011), which found that motherless children experience anxiety. The results of Kendra's study (2000) on the impact of maternal death on social adjustment also showed reduced self-efficacy, decreased social flexibility, weakened social relationships, and increased anxiety. Rashdi Hanin's study on the effects of maternal death on a child's inability to be independent and feelings of sadness, despair, submission to the parent, and continuous anxiety also support these findings. Majda Al-Ali's study (2008) on the future anxiety of orphaned children found that they experience high levels of future anxiety and psychological disorders. This is reflected in the average scores of children in psychological security, where they were low. The presence of the mother in a child's life provides a form of satisfaction and compensation. Mothers often choose to stay to raise and care for their children rather than remarry, and they put in a

lot of effort to meet their urgent needs during this period. In contrast, fathers tend to remarry for various reasons.

The Fourth Hypothesis:

The hypothesis statement: "There are statistically significant differences in the level of psychological security based on the educational level (fourth and fifth grade of elementary, and first grade of middle school) in the study sample."

To test the validity of the hypothesis, we calculated the means and standard deviations for the educational levels, and we used the t-test to assess the significance of the differences. The results are presented in the following table.

Educationa l Level	Num ber	Mean	Standa rd Deviati on	Calculat e d t	Schedule d t	Degrees of Freedo m	Significanc e Level
Elementary Level	18	67.48	6.98	8.90	2.27	40	Significant at 0.01
Middle School Level	24	58.14	5.24				

From the table, it is evident that the calculated t-value is lower than the tabled t-value at 40 degrees of freedom, and it is significant at a 0.01 significance level. Additionally, the arithmetic mean for the elementary level is greater than the mean for the middle school level, indicating statistically significant differences in students' scores on the psychological security scale based on their educational level, in favor of elementary school students.

This result can be explained by the fact that as individuals transition from one age stage to another, the scope of their growth requirements expands, and their needs increase. A child's perception of psychological security changes from one stage to another. In the elementary stage, the indicators of a child's psychological security are limited to a set of satisfactions that can be met by the family, especially since this stage (10-11 years) is characterized by tranquility in the child's personality.

When a child moves into early adolescence around the age of twelve, along with the rapid developmental changes, their needs evolve, surpassing simple needs to more specific ones related to the identity, presence, and independence of the adolescent. Consequently, anxiety becomes a recurring feature in the daily life of adolescents, hindering the attainment of their psychological security, particularly in the absence of one of the parents, whose presence is crucial during this sensitive stage.



Conclusion

Based on the study's results, it is evident that the level of psychological security for orphaned children fluctuates between low and moderate. If anything, this underscores the importance of having both parents for achieving a sense of psychological security. Psychological security is a significant need that comes immediately after physiological needs, and its non-fulfillment remains an obstacle to growth, affecting the child's personality and subsequent achievements. Secure children can navigate successfully to achieve other milestones. The study's results also demonstrated statistically significant differences in psychological security based on the type of orphanhood, favoring paternal orphans, and differences based on educational level favoring educated orphans in elementary school. However, there were no gender-based differences in the psychological security level within the study sample.

Recommendations for future studies

In light of the results of this study, we emphasize the importance of ensuring orphaned children's psychological security due to its significance in their healthy development. We propose several recommendations, including:

- Designing programs to enhance the psychological security of orphaned children and adolescents.
- Conducting awareness campaigns about the importance of meeting the psychological needs of orphaned children.
- Developing programs for mothers and fathers of orphaned children to acquire skills in dealing with orphans.
- Designing therapeutic programs to alleviate the trauma experienced by orphaned children due to loss.
- Conducting further studies on the personality traits of orphans.

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