

A PATH ANALYTIC STUDY OF THE DIRECT AND INDIRECT INFLUENCES OF SOCIAL SUPPORT, SELF-ESTEEM, AND SELF-EFFICACY, BEING MEDIATED BY COPING STYLE, ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF MYANMAR ADOLESCENT DOUBLE ORPHANS IN SHAN STATE

Naw Julia Than¹

Abstract: The present study examined the direct influences of social support, self-esteem, and self-efficacy on academic performance, as well as their indirect influences, being mediated by problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping among double orphans aged 11 to 15 years residing in orphanages in Shan State, Myanmar. A total of 277 middle school students recruited from 18 orphanages via systematic sampling participated in the study by voluntarily responding to the study's questionnaire. Path analysis indicated that for the double orphans in the study, only their reported level of self-efficacy were found to have a direct influence on their academic performance. The findings yielded no significant indirect influences, being mediated by the variables of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping style, for the three exogenous predictor variables of social support, self-esteem, and self-efficacy on the respondents' academic performance. The study's findings were discussed in terms of the implications they hold for how double orphans in Myanmar cope with stressors they encounter in their lives.

Keywords: Social Support, Self-Esteem, Self-Efficacy, Coping Styles, Academic Performance

Introduction

Quality of performance in academia demands physical well-being as well as social, emotional, spiritual, and psychological well-being. Education is viewed as a basic human need, an integral part of the quality of life, and an important factor that determines the future of the world. Academically successful students are the key to future challenges and opportunities in the future. However, not all students have equal capacity in achieving academic success. While many factors do predict academic success, such as intelligence and learning styles, there are others such as family structures and personality problems that can act as barriers (Zimmerman, 1995).

Jubber (1994) found that there is an association between school performance and parental structure in that children who live with both parents perform better

academically. Jubber concluded that "the single parent and any other type of parental structure affect school performance more negatively than does the two parental structures" (p. 139). This conclusion suggests that children and, in particular, orphans may be at risk academically. Losing one's parents is one of the most painful experiences for a child in his/her life. When a child becomes traumatized by the loss of his/her parents, development often become uneven or damaged over many areas of functioning (Farber & Egeland, 1987; Clay, Bond & Nyblade, 2005; Germann, 2004), often leading to psychological consequences such as sense of insecurity, helplessness, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, low self-efficacy, and academic difficulty (Luthar, 1991; Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). The combination of these psychological consequences may result in higher engagement of health risk behaviors such as dangerous alcohol use, drug use, suicidal ideation, or violent behavior (Wild, Flisher, Bhana, & Lombard, 2004). Engaging in such negative behaviors may further influence adversely their school attendance and academic performance (Kruger & Richter, 2003). The present research attempted to determine whether the poor academic performance evident among the targeted double orphans was due to their poor level of social support, low self-esteem, and low self-efficacy. Additionally, this study attempted to explore how these three variables may be related to the double orphans' academic performance indirectly being mediated by their coping style.

Social Support

Social support refers to the experience of being valued, respected, cared about, and loved by others who are present in one's life (Gurung, 2006). The loss of social and family support such as the lack of relationship with others, loss of emotional safety net, and lack of family components are probably the most important direct consequences of being an orphan. The experience of loss of family and social support for orphans could lead to internalized emotion (depression, anxiety, and poor self-esteem) and externalized emotion such as dysfunctional behavior (Makane et al., 2002). Children who reside in orphanages lack human warmth, care, and positive emotional contact from others. Family and peer support with emotional warmth and acceptance have been found to be associated with less psychological problems, less delinquency among students, higher grades, and better academic achievement (Silbereisen & Todt, 1994). Yasin and Dzulkifli (2011) examined the relationship between social support and academic achievement among

¹ M.S. Candidate in Counselling Psychology, Graduate School of Psychology, Assumption University, Thailand
julathan@gmail.com