

# Perceived Social Support and Locus of Control among Children in Child Care Institutions

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** Children in child care institutions are one of the most vulnerable groups in society. In many countries, they are living in orphanages or children's home for reasons, such as parent's death, abandonment, neglect, born with some medical conditions, poverty. Many nations are facing a struggle to care for these vulnerable group. Child care institutions provide children's home aid programmes, foster care, adoption and family reunification programmes. Research work related to children in child care institutions shed light into their wellbeing.

**Aim:** This study aimed to know the level of perceived social support and locus of control among children in child care institutions and relations of independent variables (age, gender etc.) on perceived social support and locus of control. This study was a survey design in nature. Census method was used for the study. 222 children between the age group of 10-18, from 5 children homes run by the Kerala government was selected for the study. Kerala. **Result:** This study reveals that there is no significant relationship between perceived social support and locus of control. Perceived social support is high among the children those who have an internal locus of control. It is seen that 53% of children have an internal locus of control and 47% of children have an external locus of control. **Conclusion:** It can be concluded that the children in child care institutions show average level of perceived social support and there is no relationship between locus of control. Internal locus of control in children is higher than external locus of control. The caretakers, parents and relatives need to support the children in a better way so that they feel cared and loved. It is important to train the children to have internal locus of control so that they take responsibility for the outcome of their lives.

**Key words:** Children, Child care institutions, Locus of control, Perceived social support.

## Introduction

Children are one of the most important part the world. They are inclusive of joy, energy and curiosity. They constantly explore all around them and in the course learn numerous things. The exploration and learning new things are very crucial to the development of the child. Individuals and peers, family, school. And community have a great influence on childhood development. Parents

and society have to provide a healthy environment for the better growth and development of children. They are more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse than adults to the conditions.

Child care institution is the residency of children where they get institutional care in an organized manner. These care homes are keeping the best interests and protection of the child. And providing physical, psychological, emotional. moral, social, ethical and spiritual needs of children. Children ages between 10-18 are in the adolescence stage. It is a period of transitional when the individual changes physically and psychologically from a child to an adult. This transition involves psychological, emotional, social and intellectual changes. The period of transition leaves its mark on the individual's behaviour as they unsure of themselves and

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insecure in their status and hence naturally sometimes become aggressive self-conscious and withdrawn.

Social support has an important role in the development of children. It can help them to cope with stressful life events. Social support is the availability of people who are supportive, caring and loving. Perceived social support reflects an individual's perception of social support. Children from children's home are separated from the home environment which leads to loss of social support. Saron & Pierce<sup>1</sup> in their perceived social support refers to an individual's belief that social support is available, which is generally considered positive or negative and provides what is considered needed by that individual. Low perceived social support affects children's mental health.<sup>1</sup> Ebru Ikiza and Firdevs Savi Cakar<sup>2</sup> Studies reveal that perceived social support and self-esteem are the major factors that correlate with various forms of regressive behaviour and adjustment of adolescents. Many works of literature say that low level of perceived social support causes emotional, behavioural problems and increased risk of mental health problems among children.<sup>2</sup> Allgower, Wardle & Steptoe<sup>3</sup> states that a lack of social support and lower perceived adequacy of social support have been linked to poorer mental and physical health. Thus, care providers have an important role to provide support to children, Social support influences adolescent's mental health, perceptions of stress and wellbeing. Better perceived social support enhances the mental health of children in child care institutions.

Locus of control is the personal belief system about the causes of his or her experiences. The concept of locus of control is proposed by Julian B. Rotter (1954).<sup>4</sup> It is the degree to which respondents believe that they have the control (Internal) over the outcome of events in their lives, as opposed to external forces beyond their control<sup>4</sup>. There are two types of locus of control, internal and external.<sup>5</sup> People with an internal locus of control believe that they are in control of their lives and people with an external locus of control believe that they are not in control of their lives<sup>5</sup>. Locus of control is often viewed as an inborn personality component. It is shaped by childhood experiences. James Sengendo and Janet Nambi<sup>6</sup> used the concept of the locus of control in their studies to show the relationship between the environment and individuals' assessment of their ability to deal with it and to adjust behaviour. Most orphans become vulnerable and predisposed to physical and psychological risks.<sup>6</sup>

## Methodology

This research work aimed to study the perceived social support and locus of control among children in child care institutions. The **objectives** of the study were to assess the level of perceived social support of the respondents, to assess the type of locus of control of the respondents, to identify the relationship between selected variables in the socio-demographic profile (age, gender etc.) with perceived social support and locus of control of respondents and to find out the relationship between the key variables. The **research design** was survey design and an interview schedule were used to collect data from the respondents. **Piolet study** was done during July 2018. The researcher visited Government Children's home, Vellimaadukunnu, Calicut-Kerala and Government Children's Home, Trivandrum Kerala, for the study and found the possibilities of conducting the present study. Through interaction with inmates, the researcher understood that many of these children had to face many problems. **The pre-test** was conducted among 10 respondents of children's home inmates of Vellimadukunnu, Calicut, Kerala. It was done in September 2018. Through this study, the researcher moulded the questions to get responses correctly. The **universe** of this study consists of children staying in Government children's homes of Kerala State. The **sampling technique** used was the Census method. All 222 children between the age group of 10-18, from 5 children's homes run by the Kerala government was taken for the study (Calicut, Trissur, Ernakulam and Trivandrum). The data was collected during the period between September 2019 to October 2019 as per the permission granted by the Government of Kerala.

Tools of data collection was an interview schedule which included the socio-demographic profile and 2 standardized scales. The Perceived social support scale developed by Simet and Farley (1998).<sup>7</sup> This is a 14 items scale. It is a 6 point scale and all these 14 statements are positive statements; the scoring is 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. The maximum possible score is 84 and the minimum possible score is 14. Higher the score, higher the perceived social support. 14- 28= Poor perceived social support. 29- 56= Average perceived social support. 57-84= Good perceived social support. Locus of control scale was formulated by Rotter<sup>8</sup>. He divided individuals in two personality classifications. Internal and external based on their perception of locus of control. J.B. Rotter's Internal External Locus of Control Scale is a measure of personal belief.<sup>8</sup> It consists of 29 items. Six filler

items are:1,8,14,19,24 and 27. A high score (17-21) = External Locus of Control and a low score (6-16) = Internal Locus of Control.

### Major Findings and Discussion

It is seen that 41% of the respondents are between the age group of 13-15 yrs. Majority (55%) of them are female and 69% of them are of Hindu religion It is seen that 20% of respondents are studying in eight standards. Nearly half (48%) of children are non-orphan and 42% of respondents birth order is that of the middle child. It is seen that 55% of respondents are from the rural area. It is found that 45% of respondents are staying in the institution between 1-3yrs. It is inferred that 47% of respondents came to the institution because of family problems.

It is inferred that 39% of the respondents have an average level of perceived social support. It is seen that 53% of respondents have an internal locus of control and 47% have an external locus of control. Higher Internal Locus of control (53%) means that the children

believe that they are in control of their lives than the external factors. Socio-demographic variables such as class which respondents are studying and domiciliary have no significant difference with perceived social support. There is a significant difference between the year of staying in child care institutions and reason for institutionalisation with perceived social support. There is a significant association between domiciliary and years of staying in child care institutions with Locus of control. All the other socio-demographic variables have no significant association with Locus of control. There is no significant relationship between perceived social support and locus of control.

Richmond, Ross & Egeland <sup>9</sup> in their study states that Social support functions as a buffer to reduce distress and resilience for people in stressful events. Children who have lost their parents to other causes and other orphaned children reported similar levels of social support.<sup>9</sup> The present study shows that perceived social support is high among the children those who have internal locus control. This may be since children take responsibility for their lives and are happy with the social support given by caregivers.

**Table No:1: Perceived social support and its influencing factors.**

S.NO	Variables	‘t’/ANOVA	Significant or Not
1	Age	ANOVA	NS
2	Gender	“t”	**
3	Religion	ANOVA	NS
4	Class studying	ANOVA	NS
5	Parental status	ANOVA	NS
6	Domicillary	ANOVA	**
7	Order of birth	ANOVA	NS
8	Year of staying in institution	ANOVA	**
9	Reason for institutionalisation	ANOVA	*

NS=Not significant\*=Significant at 5% level, \*\*=Significant at 1% level

**Table No:2: CHI square test results on Locus of control and its influencing factors.**

S.NO	Variables	Significant or Not
1	Age	NS
2	Gender	**
3	Religion	NS
4	Class studying	NS
5	Parental status	NS
6	Domiciliary	*
7	Order of birth	NS
8	Year of staying in institution	**
9	Reason for institutionalisation	NS

NS=Not significant\*=Significant at 5% level, \*\*=Significant at 1% level

**Table No:3: Correlation between perceived social support and locus of control**

	Perceived Social Support	Locus of Control
Perceived Social Support	---	.025
Locus of Control	.	---

\*\* - Significant at 1% level

### Conclusion

The researcher conducted this study for understanding the perceived social support and locus of control of children in child care institutions. The result showed that the majority of respondents have an average level of perceived social support. There is a need for more social support should be provided to them. Internal locus of control in children is higher than the external locus of control. It can be concluded that there is no significant relationship between perceived social support and locus of control. Thus, it is inferred that the caretakers, parents and relatives need to support the children so that they feel cared and loved. There is a need to train the children to have an internal locus of control so that they take responsibility for the outcome of their lives. The awareness and insight about the problems of children in child care institutions can help the authorities

to formulate innovative projects and schemes for the wellbeing of children.

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