



## Psychological support for underprivileged children

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### Abstract

This paper examines a 7-week initiative providing psychological care to a cohort of 25–30 disadvantaged youngsters, many of whom bore unseen emotional challenges resulting from adversity, neglect, or instability. The objective was not to rectify their issues, but rather to provide a supportive environment through artistic endeavors, open dialogue, and a steady presence, allowing people to authentically express themselves. A subtle yet profound transformation occurred. Children who commenced in silence began to communicate. Individuals who appeared reclusive begin to laugh, create art, and engage socially. Gradually, trust supplanted hesitancy, and emotional expression begun to establish itself. This experience confirmed that healing does not necessitate flawless instruments; it demands individuals who arrive with patience, gentleness, and empathy. Minor gestures — recalling a name, listening without bias — established the basis for emotional development. This paper emphasizes that when we provide children with safety, they frequently respond with their inherent strength.

**Keywords:** Emotional well-being child-centered support trauma-informed care underprivileged children safe emotional spaces

### Introduction

Every child is born with an unknown story and should be raised with love, kindness, and the belief that everything is possible. For millions of poor youngsters, that story ends too soon. Before they may dream, they must endure. Hunger replaces hope. Responsibility replaces play. Silence replaces the voice they never found. We rush to address evident issues like malnutrition, bare feet, and empty classrooms. But what about the invisible? What about a child who gets anxious about nighttime shouting? The bitter emotion of constantly thinking that they are the reason why their parents signed for divorce? The silent withdrawal of a youngster who has never been hugged or valued. There's a saying that emotional negligence can inflict wounds worse than starvation.

However, psychological help is rarely urgent. It can save lives like medication and is as important as food. Because a youngster who cannot handle their suffering cannot grow, learn, or connect. As the foundation of all development, emotional safety is not a luxury. Psychological aid rarely requires formal sessions or therapy rooms. Chats are sometimes the initial step. A diary for drawing emotions. "I'm here, and I'm listening," volunteers.

These calm, steady, and patient moments repair trauma and neglect. They allow the kids to portray their fears and gradually illuminate their darkness. Services and interventions are not the only report topics. You should see these kids as whole people with immense potential and strength, not just victims. It's a call to action driven by our humanity rather than pity since it's justice that must be done to cure a child's psyche.

### Review of Literature

Debates on aiding impoverished children focus on feeding, clothing, and education. However, these kids' interior feelings are crucial but sometimes disregarded. Many kids experience stress, loneliness, dread, or violence. Teens' behavior, thoughts, and progress mirror their emotions, even if they don't say so. This problem became apparent when we started this project.

- Psychological guidance is necessary for these children, not a "bonus". To understand why this problem is so essential now, we analyzed what prior researchers, psychologists, and organizations have stated and done. Studying what goes wrong and what can be done well and how empathy, care, and emotional support may transform a child's life are different.
- Samagra Foundation is a nonprofit organization which helps impoverished communities and children develop holistically. Samagra, an Indian organization, believes that no child can be fully empowered without satisfying their physical, emotional, mental, and intellectual requirements. Their programs support and enhance underprivileged youngsters in addition to education. Samagra makes kids feel heard via art, storytelling, casual talks, and mentoring. Flexible classroom model. Volunteers and employees work harder to develop trust, respect, and belonging. Kids are encouraged to express themselves, be creative, and build emotional resilience in a judgement-free setting.
- Throughout addition to observing, we engaged throughout our time with Samagra. We felt minor things deeply. After a few days, a child who rarely spoke when we arrived opened up because someone was paying attention. This depicts the significance of psychological support, even with discourse, patience, and presence. I met so many star-eyed children at Samagra Foundation, which was incredible. They liked doing something new every day, and my friends and I enjoyed drawing and coloring with them. We worked harder to develop them because they always smiled.

### 1. Poverty and Neglect Mental Effects

- Poor children often experience stress due to financial issues, aggressiveness, intoxication, parental absence, or neglect. It adversely affects their mental health. Unmet emotional needs in children affect brain development in memory, fear, learning, and

relationships, according to research. UNICEF 2017 found that disadvantaged children are nearly twice as likely to have behavioral difficulties, anxiety, and sadness.

- Feeling "less than" others can also cause guilt and low self-esteem in children. Early emotional scars can lead to substance misuse, violence, and interpersonal and work issues if ignored. The largest risk is that these disorders go undiscovered. Due to a lack of emotional expression and acceptance education, many kids keep everything inside. Silence becomes a survival tactic.
- 2. Childhood Emotional Support**
- Psychological Perspectives suggests that Jean Piaget found that children's emotions affect learning, decision-making, and information processing. A neglected youngster may still doubt the world as an adult.
  - Erik Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development states that children learn important emotional skills or confront emotional challenges. A youngster who feels insecure during the "trust vs. mistrust" era may carry dread and uncertainty into future relationships.
  - Lev Vygotsky felt learning happened through social interaction, especially with caring adults. Lack of emotional support stunts children's growth in neglected or mistreated civilizations.
  - The Body Keeps the Score author Dr. Bessel van der Kolk's recent studies reveal how trauma affects the body and brain. A child's system learns to be "alert" as if danger is always present.
- 3. Local and NGO Impact**
- Samagra, Aangan Trust, and Sangath prioritize safety and emotional recovery over financial relief.
  - Samagra encourages children to open up via storytelling, games, music, and art without coercion.
  - The Aangan Trust trains local kids as peer mentors. This approach is effective as youngsters feel safer with someone from their background.
  - Goa-based Sangath teaches mothers, elder siblings, and neighbors mental health topics. In regions where therapy is still remote, help becomes more accessible and feasible.
  - These initiatives may not need psychologists. They depend on others for attention, advice, and safety for the first time. Being human, affordable, and culturally based makes these versions work. They adjust to local demands rather than imposing remote therapy.
- 4. Effectiveness proofs**
- The Aangan Trust discovered that peer mentored schools had higher attendance and lower dropout rates.
  - In one of Sangath's initiatives, women trained in basic mental health conversations could identify trauma early and assist their children obtain care.
  - The US National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) has implemented "trauma-informed care" in schools, and several Indian NGOs are following suit.
  - All of these initiatives demonstrate that emotional support is affordable and simple. Maintain presence, friendliness, and consistency. • A child may

communicate more, participate in class, or smile more as they heal.

## 5. What is lacking from the big picture

- Western countries conduct most psychological research.
- While helpful, theories may not always reflect the emotional realities of Indian children, especially those in rural or slum areas.
- Long-term data gap. We rarely know what happened to these kids five or ten years following these programs. Was emotional assistance helpful?
- Child poverty, caste-based exclusion, gender discrimination, and disability are rarely investigated. They need extra help with their complex emotions. Families typically chastise or ignore emotions. Children may struggle to seek help due to emotional silence.

## Methodology

1. This study uses a qualitative research methodology, combining secondary research with actual field experiences. Understanding the form, consequences, and efficacy of psychological support services for impoverished children, especially through voluntary organizations like Samagra Foundation, is crucial.

## 2. Information Gathering Methods

- Visits to the Samagra Foundation's centers provided real-time insights on its programs' concept, execution, and impact. Creative expression workshops, group therapy, and unofficial play-based counselling were observed.
- **Interviews:** Children, organization psychologists, and NGO volunteers participated in unstructured and semi-structured interviews, where consent and anonymity were maintained. These exchanges illuminated challenges and successes.
- **Secondary Data:** Examined WHO/UNICEF studies, government data, NGO project reports, and peer-reviewed publications to supplement field experience.

## 3. Experiment and Range

- Ten urban slum children aged 7-14 were included in the primary sample.
- The non-profit employs two part-time therapists.
- Four volunteers engaged in education and support programs.
- Due to time constraints, the research was limited to one NGO, but the findings were contextualized within national and international frameworks.

## 4. Moral Issues

- All identities were anonymized for privacy.
- Obtained NGO and guardians' consent as needed.
- This study follows ethical guidelines for reporting mental health disorders and minors.

## 5. Assessing Data

A theme analysis was performed on qualitative observation and interview data. The literature was studied to identify themes including "community participation," "expression through art," "behavioral change," and "trust-building." The findings were used to create more inclusive, scalable, and responsive psychological support systems.

## Findings of The Report

### 1. Why "Children Who Parent Themselves" Need Early Emotional Maturity

Working with poor children has revealed a common trend of them appearing older than their true age, both emotionally and physically.

They emanate responsibility no child should ever feel. There was an eight-year-old girl who helped younger children eat, comforted tears, and reminded them to tidy up. Although first endearing, I later learnt that she was doing this since no one else could give care for her. She became a parent due to circumstances, not choice.

These environments force children to mature too quickly. Students learn self-defense, emotional camouflage, boldness, and "manage" circumstances that adults may struggle with. However, the emotional impact is often overlooked. These kids rarely weep or whine, not because they don't want to, but because they know no one will listen. Vulnerability is perilous due to deep emotional burying. In quiet moments, adults may reveal their inner child, seeking comfort and reassurance such as "You're just a kid, and it's okay to be one."

### 2. "Where Words Don't Reach": Expressing Emotions Through Play and Art

Some youngsters never discussed feelings in our sessions. However, stories flowed once we provided paper and coloring supplies. One of the children, Shikha, kept drawing the same picture: a girl standing under a black cloud. "That's how it feels when I'm left at night," she replied when questioned. Another toddler made a doorless cardboard house. "So, nobody can come and hurt you inside," he said when asked why.

These were more than toys and doodles. They showed pure anguish and terror. They conveyed more than words could. Art allowed people to communicate things they were frightened to say or lacked the vocabulary for. Children felt comfortable expressing their wants, sadness, and worries through role-playing, puppet performances, and drawings, which were not as threatening.

Ideas can be expressed without sentences. It can appear as a silent, colorful, cardboard, or fantasy monster. Hearing carefully helps us see the world from their perspective and understand their message.

### 3. "Safe Doesn't Feel Safe"—Consistency Fear

"You're not going to stop coming, right?" a child questioned. After comforting her, I recognized that her dread came from the world she knew, not me. Nothing lasts in such world. Individuals leave. Broken promises. Good moments pass.

Many kids act strangely in quiet or caring environments. Few undergo anxiety, when rest shut others to prevent rejection. One student expressed dissatisfaction with the quiet in the activity room, fearing undesirable events.

Kids aren't challenging. They have learnt to anticipate chaos, disillusionment, and abandonment. Unstable stability is dangerous. Providing emotional support in these instances goes beyond providing safety and attempts to rebuild trust in safety (18). Achieving this demands patience and consistent reassurance while being tried.

### 4. Inconsistency Causes Trust Loss

Children from poor households may experience inconsistencies in living environments and emotional

interactions. Many children have received irregular or nonexistent caring from absentee NGO workers, busy parents, or occasional teachers. They may become hesitant to form emotional bonds or become more open.

Their body language and attitude show their distrust during interaction-based sessions. Some kids may avoid eye contact, sit alone, or remain mute when talked to directly. Their behavior may be a defensive response to prior failures, not due to intrinsic timidity or unpleasantness. Individuals may question if the adult they are chatting to will remain engaged or show interest after one session.

These kids have learnt not to over connect owing to unreliable connections. To test parents' patience and kindness, they may violate orders, refuse to comply, or avoid sensitive topics.

However, a noticeable change occurs when the same person consistently arrives on time, maintains emotional stability, and doesn't yell. In addition to greetings and participation, the child may exhibit modest signs of connection, such as asking questions or offering aid. While creating confidence is not immediate, it is doable and highly useful. Often, it enables emotional growth and transparency.

### 5. Aggression or defiance as an emotional reaction

In low-resource situations, children are often not taught to recognize or manage their emotions. People often utilize behavioral outbursts to portray their mental status. Misinterpretation of aggression, screaming, disobedience, abrupt withdrawal, or material destruction as simple misbehavior or lack of discipline is common.

However, a deeper investigation indicates that these activities often stem from mental pain. Uncontrolled environments, unresolved anger, frustration, or worry may lead to a child's outbursts. Defiance may be employed as a defense against humiliation or emotional pain. In few instances' kids learn violent behaviors from stressed adults in their environment.

Often, children who lack frequent love or attention may act out to receive it, even if it's negative. For example, some kids use disruptive jokes or frequent interruptions to gain attention. Some people get physically violent when asked to participate due to a belief that requests are punishment or mocking.

Reprimands and discipline often make these issues worse. When treated with compassion, boundary-setting, and emotional validation, young children often regulate well. Adults who show empathy, provide calm explanations, and avoid anger may encourage positive responses.

Most problematic behaviors stem from emotional needs like control, safety, attention, or validation. Finding out the main reason of these behaviors is essential for providing psychological care to underprivileged children.

## Discussions

### 1. Kids learn to be quiet for survival

Many children chose quiet as their emotional home, which is an unfortunate trend. Safe, not timid. Children raised in families where expressing opinions might lead to punishment or emotional disrespect learn to keep silent to protect themselves. A few weeks of consistent, soothing presence were needed for some kids to feel comfortable openly chatting. Nothing was loud when they did. It seemed cautious and uncertain, like testing the ground before taking its first step. But that step was critical.

## 2. People often mistake emotional numbness for maturity

Initially, we thought calmer youngsters were more emotionally secure or mature. Over time, it became clear that this serenity was essentially emotional immobility. Kids were surviving, not coping. They shut down due to seeing or feeling too much too quickly. They sought permission to relive childhood, cry, be confused, and accept care without expecting anything in return.

## 3. Attention-seeking is often a request for interaction

Some kids were always demanding attention, sometimes by making noise or disrupting others. This appears to be mischief. Behind the scenes, youngsters asked, "Can you see me?" Can you hear me? Many lacked emotional approval.

Treating neediness with kindness and gratitude rather than punishment was more effective in building trust and teamwork.

## 4. Lack of Emotions Reduce self-awareness

Most responses to "How do you feel today?" were limited to "good" or "bad." Few kids could explain what was within. Children with limited emotional vocabulary remain bewildered. We helped them identify emotions with visual aids and thought-provoking questions. First came names, then came recognition and comprehension.

## 5. Safe routine improves emotional regulation

Unrest outside often causes inward turmoil. Many children brought tension from their unclear home situations to sessions. After being regularly confronted with the same time, faces, and tone, something changed. Participants began to mimic the poise demonstrated. They waited. Attention was paid. Because emotional regulation was internalized and modelled, instruction was unnecessary.

## 6. "Acting Grown Up" Is a Coping Mechanism, Not Confidence

Some children boasted, "I don't cry," or acted like adults or parents to younger siblings. These behaviors showed burden, not strength. These children were forced to mature prematurely. Through storytelling, painting, and recreational activities, we gave children the chance to be themselves and experience joy, safety, and carefree moments.

## 7. Kids Copy Their Environment's Emotions:

Mirror-like kids. They become what they receive. Growing up in houses where anger is the primary language might lead to defensive and reactive behaviors. Softening occurs in the context of stability and kindness (22). We saw children who used to yell now talk softly, help others, and take long breaths. Mutable and contagious emotional culture.

## 8. Many kids are hypervigilant even in safe places:

Some children were hypervigilant, avoiding eye contact, flinching at loud noises, and scanning the room. Not agitation. Unstable living taught hyper-awareness. They gradually began to calm with the aid of sensory aids, quiet areas, and soft speech. However, it requires time. These kids need safety, but they also need to feel it physically.

## 9. Emotional Development Starts When Consistency Is Experienced, Not Guaranteed

The phrase "You're safe here" is inadequate. Only when they feel that safety, week after week, do kids start to trust. When the same facilitator showed up, remembered their name, and remained composed in the face of interruptions, their presence was more powerful than any assurance. That stability led to emotional development.

## 10. The Impact of Peer Support Can Equal That of Adult Intervention

The way kids started helping each other out was one of the most encouraging indications of improvement. A child's hues would be shared. Someone else would assist someone in completing a sentence. If a classmate was crying, someone would hand them a tissue. These motions were observed rather than taught. Children started providing emotional care on their own once adults modelled it for them. They turned into a support system for one another.

This experience demonstrated that providing emotional support isn't about making people well. It all comes down to consistently turning up with tolerance, deference, and an open mind. Even the quietest kids start talking, playing, and realizing that their emotions are important when they feel emotionally supported. That's where recovery starts.

## Result

These findings are derived from over 6-weeks of experience working with more than 25 disadvantaged kids, ages 6 to 14. These kids attended weekly support sessions that were intended to educate and heal them. Being present, listening, and establishing a safe environment where emotional development might occur organically were the goals; diagnosing or correcting was not.

Little changes were apparent week after week. A bashful youngster started sketching their feelings. A peer who was typically unruly was assisted in tying their shoelaces. A kid who never looked at anyone began waving good-bye. This report's lifeblood is these unsung successes.

## Primary Results Observed

- Emotional Involvement Boosted: During the first few weeks, fewer than one-third of the kids would naturally share or speak out. In addition to using words, more than 70% of them were expressing themselves through gestures, storytelling, and drawings by the eighth week. Whatever door was open, expression inched its way through.
- Kids who first sat alone started to sit in circles, which improved their peer interaction. They started to whisper secrets, share crayons, and console distressed companions. Real peer connection, which was formerly uncommon, is now commonplace.
- Decrease in Aggressive and Withdrawn Behavior: An appreciable decrease was observed in outbursts, defiance, and extreme withdrawal. A lot of kids started handling challenging circumstances head-on, and occasionally they even assisted others in doing the same.

- **Increased Creative Expression:** Journaling, role-playing, and sketching became emotional expressive activities. By program's completion, more than 80 percent of the kids were actively using these tools.
- **Building Trust:** After hardly speaking during the first few sessions, the kids started to ask questions, crack jokes or just sit next to the same facilitator each week. There was an increase in trust, which was discreetly acquired rather than requested.

### **Conclusion**

The silent but potent reality at the core of this analysis is that children from disadvantaged backgrounds don't lack strength; rather, they need environments that can acknowledge, support, and rebuild their strength. The last twelve weeks have served as a reminder that large gestures are not necessary for healing. It demands presence. for compassion. For one who decides to remain.

The kids we encountered aren't damaged. They are bravely put together by resiliency, creativity, and optimism, and they are exquisitely complicated. They have endured storms that most of us cannot see, yet they continue to appear. Some with silence, some with laughing, and some with a protective look that gradually softens. This softening is not a coincidence; rather, it is the outcome of being viewed as a soul to be held rather than a case to be handled.

We saw emotional courage in every crayon picture, in every tentative grin, in every gaze between kids. We discovered that presence, not promises, is what establishes confidence. Although not linear, that healing is achievable. And that a sanctuary, rather than a solution, is the best gift we can provide.

This piece underlined something really human: all children, regardless of their circumstances, yearn for the same things: to feel heard, respected, and secure. The goal of psychological support is not to fix problems. It's about creating room for their inner wholeness to manifest. Do not let this be the last chapter. Let it serve as a gentle reminder to create more areas where kids can freely breathe, cry without fear, laugh aloud, and have crazy dreams. where they are elevated in addition to being protected. where they can develop into the individuals they were always intended to be.

Because psychological support is more than just a program in the end. It's love at work. No emotion is too jumbled, no child too challenging, and no tale too trivial to be significant.

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