



## Wellbeing in Trafficked Victims: An Intervention Study

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**ABSTRACT:** It is sad that India supplies receives and is the transit point for many forms of Human Trafficking. 'Adolescent girls' who constitute a large number of trafficked victims are gravely impacted physically, psychologically and socially on account of trafficking. These girls are in dire need of care and protection. They need to be given unconditional love and attention to surmount the trauma inflicted upon them. However, it is noted that there is great lack of requisite services, information and attitude in the support mechanism system which is a precondition for helping the victims develop a positive outlook towards life.

It is in this backdrop that an intervention study was conducted to assess the wellbeing of rescued girls admitted to the Government Children's Home. An attempt was made to develop and implement an intervention for the benefit of the rescued girls and assess its effectiveness. The study was conducted on a total of 15 girls aged between 12-18 years residing in the Girls Home, Bengaluru. Single group pre-post-test design was used for the Study. A standardized Wellbeing Scale was used for data collection. A multi-component intervention was developed based on the pre-test which consisted of 8 days intense interactive sessions on Physical wellbeing, Emotional wellbeing, Social Skills and General Orientation. A paired t-test was performed which revealed a significant change ( $P=.000$ ) in wellbeing scores after the intervention. It can thus be deduced that the multi-component intervention tailored for girls affected by sexual abuse proved to be effective in improving their wellbeing.

**Keywords:** Human Trafficking, Adolescent Girls, Wellbeing, Intervention



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### 1. INTRODUCTION

According to United Nations, Human Trafficking is defined as 'The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.' (United Nations,2000). India supplies receives and is the transit point for many forms of Human Trafficking. India is the destination point for trafficked people from countries like Nepal and Bangladesh, and it serves as transit point for people trafficked to the Middle East, Europe, America, etc. Men, women, boys, and girls are trafficked for various purposes that include involuntary servitude, bonded labor, sex trafficking, etc. (Kempadoo, Sanghera, & Pattanaik, 2015)

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But sex trafficking is predominately seen to involve girls and women in India. (Deshpande & Nour, 2013) The real number of victims of trafficking remains unknown and difficult to compute as researches cannot be carried out due to its clandestine nature. But a nationwide study (Nair & Sen, 2005). The growth of Tourism in the country has also increased sexual exploitation of children. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in its report, stated that 76 percent of the identified victims of human trafficking were women and minor girls. It also stated that the percentage of the trafficked minor girls increased from 13 to 17 percent from 2006 to 2009. (UNODC, 2012). Trafficking of girls under the age of 18 has seen a surge of 14 times in last decade, and it has increased 65% in 2014 (NCRB, 2014).

### **1.1 Adolescence**

Adolescence is derived from a Latin word 'adolescere' which means to 'grow into adulthood.' It occurs after childhood and before adulthood. It is identified as the phase in human growth and development from 10 to 19 years of age, (WHO, 2009) Adolescence is a crucial phase of transitions in both physical and psychological being of an individual. The adolescents build their identity at this critical stage. (Martin & Fabes, 2008). Lack of necessary social support can alter the quality of wellbeing of any individual; it is more so in case of adolescents. Environmental influences are known to have an impact on adolescent psychological wellbeing and thus, external environment, as well as family, plays a key role in a smooth transition during this phase (Shek, 1997). During adolescence, appropriate socialization, healthy environment at home cause healthy impact in mind, body and being of the child whereas lack of these can impact their psychosocial wellbeing. (Siddiqui, 1997).

### **1.2 Adolescent Wellbeing**

The comprehensive construct of 'Adolescent well-being' involves the ability to attain skills, knowledge, experience, social relationships, and values, along with basic services, that will enable them to negotiate with multiple domains of life, participate in social affairs, earn livelihood, keep away from risky and harmful behavior, and be able to prosper in different circumstances. (UNICEF, 2009).

Wellbeing can be defined as the realization of children's rights, and the fulfillment of the opportunity for every child taking into consideration her/his abilities, potential and skills (Bradshaw et al., 2007) Wellbeing is not limited to being in a state of happiness or good health. It takes into account the subjective feelings, experiences and living conditions. (Ben-Arieh, Casas, Frønes, & Korbin, 2014)

### **1.3 The wellbeing of Trafficked Adolescent Girls**

Human Trafficking has a profound impact on the physical, psychological and social life of the victims. They are often physically abused and tortured, subjected to psychological trauma which results in PTSD, depression, anxiety, social isolation, etc. (Deshpande & Nour, 2013), Trafficked girls face numerous other challenges like economic vulnerability, low self-esteem, etc.(Abas et al., 2013). Lack of appropriate assistance after rescue further makes them even more vulnerable. All these factors prevent a smooth transition for these girls into womanhood. Appropriate supportive environment thus becomes crucial for the wellbeing of these trafficked victims. Intervention

program needs to have a holistic approach that includes trauma counseling, psychosocial intervention and health care (Nair & Sen, 2005) for the victims to mitigate their vulnerabilities thereby increasing their overall wellbeing.

#### **1.4 The significance of Institutions for Care and Protection**

"Children's Home" is established or maintained, in every district or group of districts, either by the State Government or through a non-governmental/voluntary organization and is registered as such for the purposes specified in section 50 as per the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection Of Children) Act, 2015. Different policies and schemes have been implemented for rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration of victims. Comprehensive Schemes like Ujjwala, Santwana, etc. are working for trafficked victims. There is a provision for providing counseling, economic support, safe shelter, psychosocial support, legal aid, medical care, vocational training activities, etc. for the trafficked victims. (Ministry of Women and Child Development, n.d.).

### **2. Methodology**

The overall aim of the study was to develop, implement and assess the effectiveness of intervention program designed for the well-being of trafficked adolescent girls in a Government Girls Home at Bengaluru. The specific objectives were set as follows:

- To assess the wellbeing of the girls in the Government Girls Home for trafficked adolescent girls
- To develop and implement an intervention program based on the assessment of the wellbeing of the trafficked adolescent girls
- To assess the effectiveness of the intervention program implemented for the well-being of trafficked adolescent girls in Government Girls Home for trafficked adolescent girls in Bengaluru

Data was collected using the Birlleson's 'Adolescent- Wellbeing Scale'. It is an eighteen-item scale developed by Birlleson in 1980 where each question is scored 0, 1 or 2 was used. A score of 13 or more in this scale indicates that there is a high possibility of a depressive disorder (Birlleson, 1981). Single group pre-post-test design without a control group was used in the study. A total of 15 girls aged between 12-18 years residing in Government Children's Home, Bengaluru were taken for the study

### **3. Discussion**

The multi-component intervention consisted of intense interactive sessions of 8 days duration for two hours each covering aspects of Physical and Emotional Wellbeing, Social Skills, and General Orientation. A paired t-test was performed between the scores of pre and post the intervention which revealed a significant change in wellbeing scores after the intervention. SPSS (Statistical Package of Social Science) was used for data analysis.

**Table 1: Wellbeing of Trafficked Adolescent Girls (N=15)**

Age	Number of Participants	Pre-test	Post-test
12 - 14 Years	4	15.5	12
14 - 16 Years	6	15.83	10.5
16 - 18 Years	5	15.8	13

According to Birleson,(1980) a cut-off score of 13 or more in the Birleson's Adolescent wellbeing indicates that the adolescents are not in their normal range of wellbeing and have a low sense of wellbeing. The pre-test revealed a score of 13 or more in the Birleson's 'Adolescent - Wellbeing scale 'which indicated that all the participants have a nonsatisfactory score on their wellbeing and have a tendency to feel regret and disappointment. Girls in the age bracket of 14-16 showed the lowest score on wellbeing. However, the same age bracket, that is, the middle adolescents also showed the maximum improvement post the intervention. The studies supporting this result show that higher trafficking abuse relates to worse physical and mental health. (Le, 2014). These results highlight the need for having effective interventions; programs and psycho-social support to enable these girls to lead a quality life. The study result also supports a previous study which reveals that trafficked victims are subjected to physical and psychological trauma which results in PTSD, depression, anxiety, social isolation, etc. This study supports the need for planning, developing and implementing holistic interventions for the trafficked girl victims.

**Table 2: Effectiveness of the Intervention Program Designed for the Well-Being of Trafficked Adolescent Girls in Bengaluru**

	Pretest	Posttest	T	Df	P value
Mean	15.73	11.73	5.797	14	.000
SD	2.05	2.25			

From the table, since the results of the paired t-test are  $t(14) = 5.797, p < .05$ , the hypothesis is accepted. There is a significant difference between the wellbeing of trafficked adolescent girls before ( $M = 15.73, SD = 2.05$ ) and after intervention ( $M = 11.73, SD = 2.25$ ).

Based on the pre-test score, a multi-component intervention consisting of 8 days interactive sessions on Physical wellbeing, Emotional wellbeing, Social Skills and General Orientation was developed and carried out. A paired t-test was performed which revealed a significant change ( $P = 0.000046$ ) in wellbeing scores after the intervention. It can thus be deduced that the multi-component intervention tailored for trafficked adolescent girls proved to be effective in improving their wellbeing.

The study results highlight the importance of early intervention programs in the rehabilitation settings as the infrastructure for rehabilitation for these victims is inadequate. (Nair & Sen, 2005). It is now a recognized fact that these intervention programs need to be well-structured, based on the needs of the victims and continued over a longer time duration. Studies also illustrate that physical, psychological and social wellbeing can be brought about through various group activities as it provides a platform to share experiences, help as well as learn from one another. The results of conducting a need-based intervention in this study were indeed encouraging as the present study showed higher wellbeing among the participants after implementing a systematic need-based intervention program which can be implemented in other parts of the state as well. It is strongly felt that these girls need to be given psychological support in addition to providing basic needs. Evidence-based programs need to be implemented according to institutional capacity. In this study, intense activity-based interventions were seen to improve the physical, emotional, social and attitudinal wellbeing of the trafficked girl victims subjected to physical and mental abuse. The researchers strongly believe that applying various principles and techniques of social group work, case work and counseling can be instrumental in enhancing the psycho social well-being of this population.

#### **4. Major Findings**

##### **The wellbeing of Trafficked Adolescent Girls**

The result of the wellbeing of trafficked adolescent girls in the Government Girls Home Bengaluru shows that 100 percent of the participants have low wellbeing score and have a tendency to feel regret and disappointment. Girls in the age bracket of 14-16 showed the lowest score on wellbeing. However, the same age bracket, that is, the middle adolescents also showed the maximum improvement post the intervention.

##### **The effectiveness of the intervention program designed for the well-being of trafficked adolescent girls**

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Administration of Birlison's Adolescent- Wellbeing Scale reveals that the sample of the study had a very low sense of wellbeing. The results also indicated towards the high likelihood of depressive disorder amongst these victims of sexual abuse. The results of the study are in line with other studies highlighting the fact that higher trafficking abuse relates to worse physical and mental health. (Le, 2014). These studies support the need for planning, developing and implementing holistic interventions for the trafficked adolescent girls.

This can only be addressed through early intervention programs in the rehabilitation settings. However, the infrastructure for rehabilitation for these victims is inadequate. (Nair & Sen, 2005). It is now a recognized fact that these intervention programs need to be well-structured, based on the needs of the victims and continued over a longer time duration. Studies also

illustrate that physical, psychological and social wellbeing can be brought about through various group activities as it provides a platform to share experiences, help as well as learn from one another.

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### **5. Suggestions for future studies:**

- Further studies can be carried out to gauge the effectiveness of such intervention programs with large sample size.
- It is suggested that mixed as well as multi-component interventions are encouraged in institutions for the rehabilitation of rescued victims of trafficking.
- There is also a need to understand whether early interventions are more effective than the ones delivered in the middle or later stages.
- Some studies have concentrated on the wellbeing of trafficked victims in India, but they do not delve into intervention strategies for them.

### **6. Conclusion**

Adolescents are the future of our country. Hence the wellbeing of adolescents would mean wellbeing of our society at large. Social Work intervention programs can play a key role in bringing the gap and providing effective psychosocial intervention. Further studies can be carried out to gauge the effectiveness of such programs with large sample size. It is suggested that mixed as well as multi-component interventions are encouraged in institutions for the rehabilitation of rescued victims of trafficking. There is also a need to understand whether early interventions are more effective than the ones delivered in the middle or later stages. Some studies have concentrated on the wellbeing of trafficked victims in India, but they do not delve into intervention strategies for them. Social Work is essentially about helping people cope with the problems they find difficult to surmount. Social Work research in this area can play a key role in increasing the knowledge base of Social Work theories and practice thereby armoring the Social Work profession at large. Social Workers are ethically obligated to utilize the findings of different researches that act as evidence-based tools to enhance the wellbeing of these vulnerable and distressed girls.

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#### *How to cite this article:*

##### APA:

Dhoundiyal, A., & Karalam, S. R. (2018, April). Wellbeing in Trafficked Victims: An Intervention Study. (A. Paul, Ed.) *Journal of Social Work Education and Practice*, III(2), 50-56.

##### MLA:

Dhoundiyal, Ananya and Sheeja Remani B. Karalam. "Wellbeing in Trafficked Victims: An Intervention Study." *Journal of Social Work Education and Practice* III.2 (2018): 50-56.

##### Chicago:

Dhoundiyal, Ananya, and Sheeja Remani B. Karalam. 2018. "Wellbeing in Trafficked Victims: An Intervention Study." Edited by Arun Paul. *Journal of Social Work Education and Practice* III (2): 50-56.