

Exploring the Mental Health Outcomes of Orphaned and Separated Children: Udayan Care

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Background Information

Orphans and Separated Children in India

- India has the largest population of orphaned and separated children in the world (~30 million)¹
- Childcare institutions in India continue to face structural challenges, shortage of funds, and inadequate aftercare infrastructure—many of which were accentuated due to the COVID-19 pandemic.²

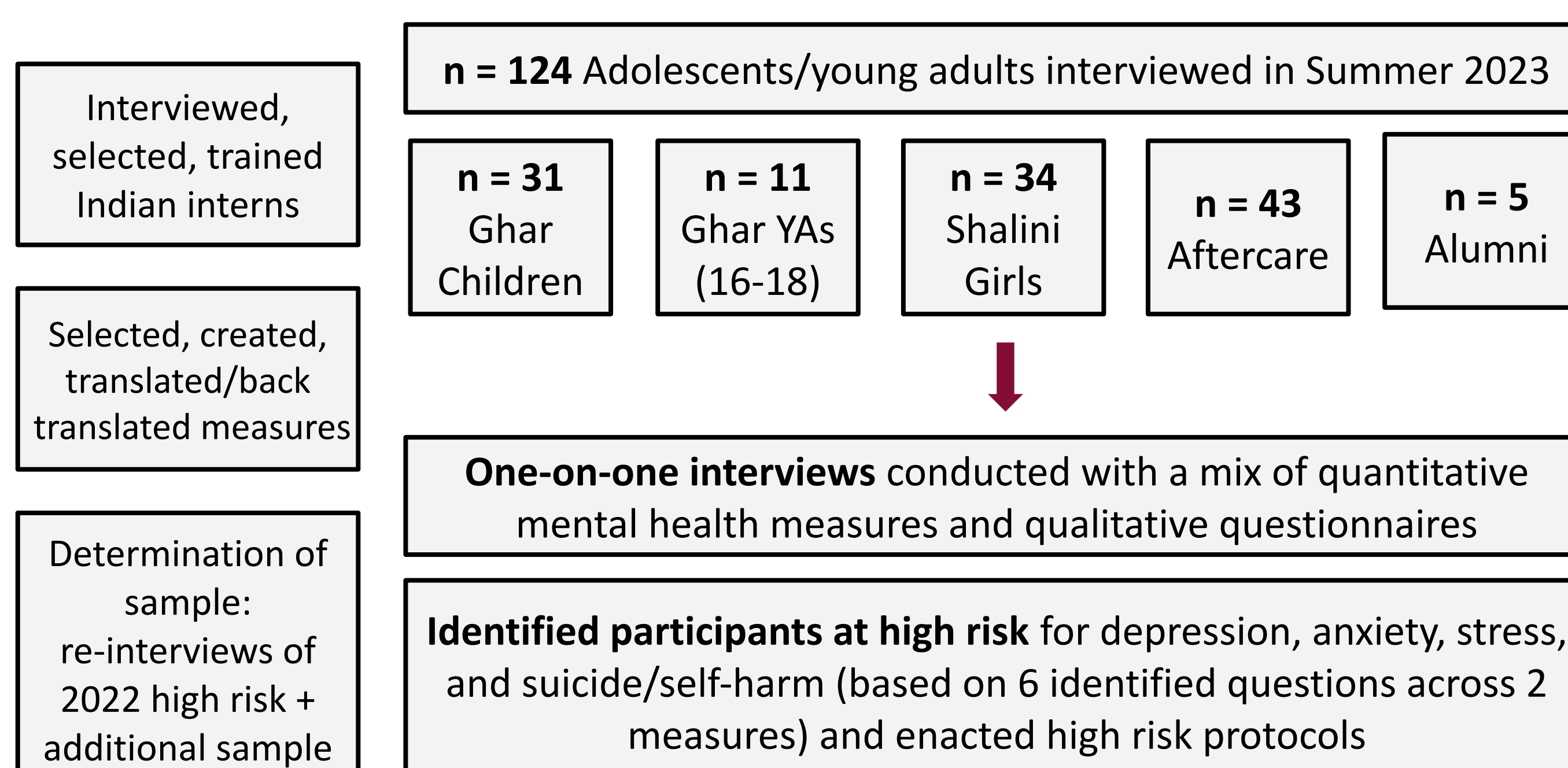
Community Partner: Udayan Care's Current Model

- Udayan Care is an NGO CCI that employs the “ghar” model for OSCs:
 - Udayan operates small 'family-style' homes in the Delhi region.
 - Key goals include providing an excellent education, a close-knit home environment, and prioritization of mental health from a young age³
- Beneficiaries are categorized into groups, some of which include:
 - Ghar Residents**—Those under 18 that reside in the small group homes
 - Aftercare Young Adults**—Former ghar residents (18+) and are transitioning into independent life

Research Questions

- What is the current status of mental health (depression, anxiety, trauma), among Udayan ghar children and young adults?
- Which children and young adults are **at high risk** for depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation? *Action: refer them emergent mental health support.*
- How effective are skill training workshops in building self confidence in the transition process for *aftercare* participants?

Methodology



Results and Findings

Mental Health Status

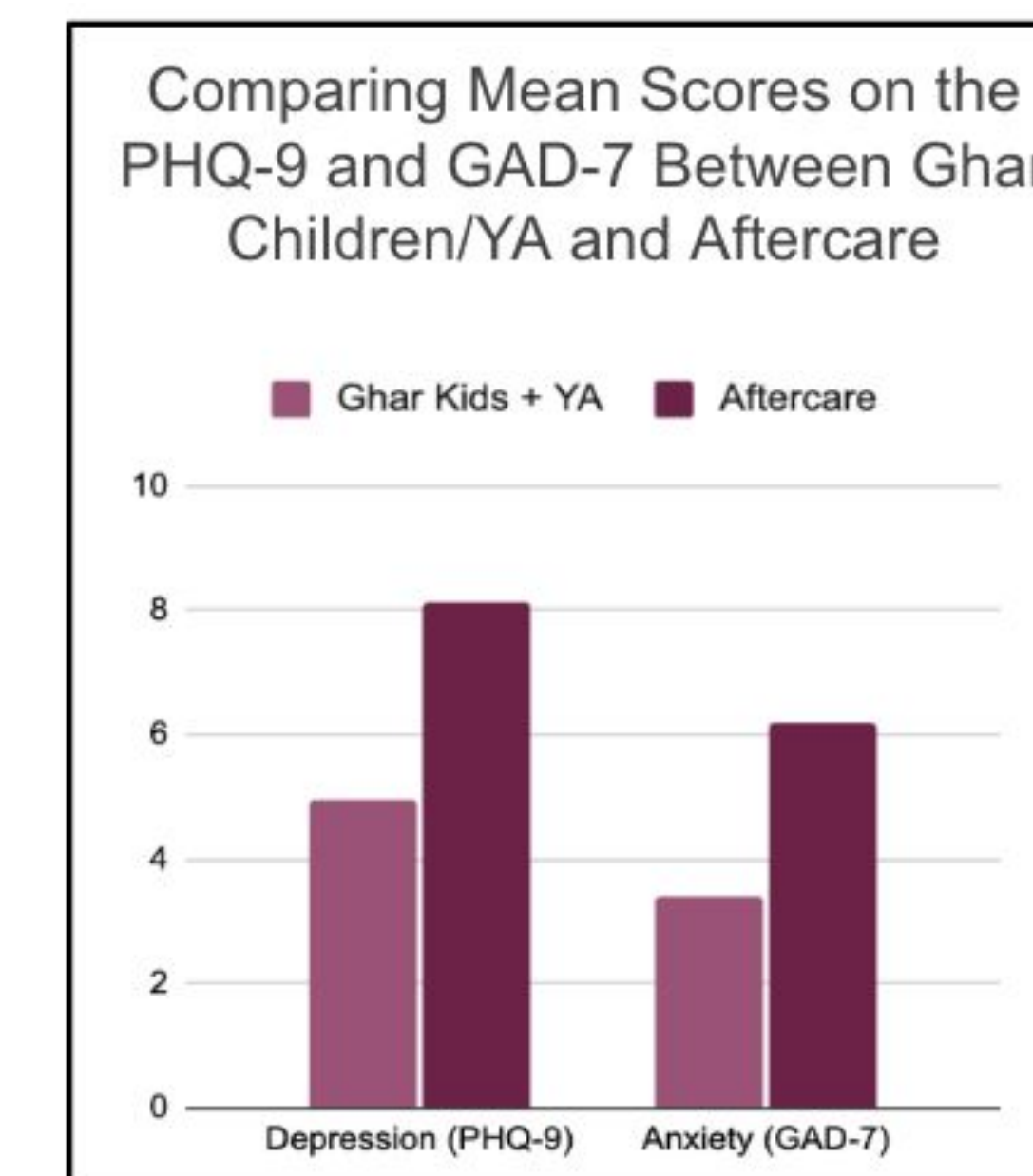
→ Comparing Proportion of High Risk Participants Among Populations

We found that over 1/3 of participants in both the ghar and aftercare group were at high risk for suicidality/self harm.

	High Risk for Depression (PHQ-9/A)*	High Risk for Anxiety (GAD-7)*	High Risk for Suicidality/Self Harm
Ghar + YA n = 42	11.9% (n = 5)	28.6% (n = 12)	33.33% (n = 14)
Aftercare n = 43	32.56% (n = 14)	53.49% (n = 23)	37.21% (n = 16)

*data collected through the PHQ-9 and GAD-7 show congruency with another measure that was used—DASS-21.

→ **Differences in Population:** Two-tailed, unequal variance t-tests revealed Aftercare participants' mean depression and anxiety scores were significantly higher than ghar children/YA.



	Mean Score	SD	p-value (α = .05)	
Depression	Aftercare	8.12	5.58	0.0018
	Ghar	4.95	3.03	
Anxiety	Aftercare	6.19	5.20	0.0044
	Ghar	3.4	3.34	

Pilot Workshop Curriculum

This pilot program was implemented based on **recommendations from 2022** for a subset of aftercare participants with each workshop focusing on mental health or life skill building.

Workshop content was well received, and participants reported using workshop knowledge in their everyday lives in a **final workshop debrief**.

Qualitative feedback gained also highlighted the desire for **more interactive activities** like the workshops, which will be taken into consideration when developing future activities.

Workshop	Mean Score
Social Skills	2.46
Coping Mechanisms	2.18
Resume/interview	2.29
Financial Planning	2.46
Dating Etiquette	2.38

Likert Scale—0: not helpful, 1: somewhat helpful, 2: helpful, 3: extremely helpful

→ "I used the **FEAR journaling technique** when I was stressed about my studies."

→ "I wanted to work as an air hostess but I was nervous to do [an] interview. **Workshops helped [me] prepare.**"

→ "I really like the way everything was explained in simple words. I liked the interactive manner."

Discussion

Higher levels of depression and anxiety among the Aftercare were supported by qualitative findings from interviews where individuals expressed:

- **Struggles transitioning out of Udayan residential accommodations**
- **Feeling a lack of confidence in their abilities**
- **Feeling like they lacked mental health support and counseling**

Aftercare individuals, who are at a point of vulnerability due to the transition to independency, need additional support. Depression and anxiety can be **comorbid with other negative health outcomes** like suicidality.

Results from the pilot workshop curriculum demonstrate a desire to gain life skills to become more **self sufficient and emotionally resilient**. Direct interventions targeting this population, and others, can **break a cycle of poor mental health outcomes**, and improve the quality of life among OSCs, and future projects will take this into account.



Working with Udayan: Next Steps



¹Keenan, David. March 13, 2023. The Situation of Orphans. The Borgan Project. <https://borgenproject.org/orphans-in-india/>
²Evergreat Wanglar, Child care institutions in India: Investigating issues and challenges in children's rehabilitation and social integration, Children and Youth Services Review, Volume 122, 2021, 105915, ISSN 0190-7409, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.105915>.
³Udayan Care. "Udayan Care - About us" <https://www.udayancare.org/about-us>