

RESEARCH PAPER

**Study on the factors influencing socio-emotional behaviour of rural orphans**

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**Abstract:** Study was conducted during 2016-2018 in Dharwad taluka of Karnataka state. A correlation research design was used. From Dharwad taluka, 5 percent of villages comprised as samples. Door to door survey was conducted and supplementary information was also gathered through schools and anganawadies. Out of 3504 children contacted 266 children found to be orphans in rural area which indicated 7.59 per cent of prevalence rate. Further 124 orphan children were randomly selected in the age range of 6-18 years to know the influence of personal and familial factors on their socio-emotional behaviour. The self structured questionnaire, child behaviour checklist and socio-economic status scales were used for data collection. Results revealed that, 49.2 per cent were paternal orphans, 61.3 per cent had low level of resilience and 55.6 per cent had high level of vulnerability. About 41.3 per cent of orphans experienced more than 5 years of orphanhood. More than half of the orphans (61.3 %) were in clinical range, 24.2 per cent of them were in normal category and only 14.5 per cent of them were in borderline category of socio-emotional behaviour. There was significant difference between boys and girls in externalizing and total behaviour problems. Boys expressed higher behaviour problems than girls. Regression model explained that vulnerability, conflict, resilience, period of orphanhood and age of the child together found to be influencing on socio-emotional behavior of orphans. Other variables such as, type of orphan, birth order, residential status, no of siblings, family size, caste and SES did not influence on socio-emotional behavior of orphans.

**Key words:** Orphans, Prevalence, Siblings, Socio-emotional behaviour

**Introduction**

Orphans exist in every age and in all civilizations. A child who is below 18 years of age and who has lost one or both parents may be defined as an orphan (George, 2011). Maternal orphan is referred to a child who has lost their mother and paternal orphan is referred to a child who has lost their father. Double orphans are those who lost their both parents. Social orphans are children who are living without parents because of abandonment or because their parents gave them up as a result of poverty, alcoholism or imprisonment, *etc* (Dillon, 2008).

The number of orphans in India stands at approximately 55 million children of age 0 to 12 years, which is about 47% of the overall population of 150 million orphans in the world (Anon., 2005). India is the world's largest democracy with a population of over a billion people, of which 400 million are children. Approximately 18 million of this number of children live or work on the streets of India, and majority of them are involved in crime, prostitution, gang related violence and drug trafficking; however, a large number of these children are orphans (Shrivastava, 2007). The children who have lost their parents are most vulnerable, because they do not have the emotional and physical maturity to address their psychological trauma associated with parental loss. In the society, orphan children can be considered to be at more risk than average children. Loss of parents introduces a major change in the life of a vulnerable child that includes moving from a middle or upper-class urban home to a poor rural relative's home, separation from siblings, which is often done arbitrarily when orphaned children are divided among relatives without due considerations of their needs, child's opportunity for education because of lack of school fees, those children who choose not

to move or who may not have any other relative to go to, may be forced to live on their own, constituting child-headed families. All these changes can easily affect not only the physical, but also the psychological well-being of vulnerable children. They can be very stressful as they pose new demands and constraints to children's life. Hence, the present study was undertaken to know the prevalence of orphans in rural area of Dharwad and to assess the influence of personal and familial factors on their socio-emotional behavior.

**Material and methods**

Study was conducted in the year 2016-2018 in Dharwad taluka, Karnataka state. A correlation research design was used to know the relationship between individual, familial factors with socio-emotional behaviour of orphans. Prevalence of orphans was assessed by selecting 5% villages of Dharwad taluka, Karnataka. Out of total orphans, 45-50% of the population (*i.e.* 124 orphans) from foster care families was selected for the assessment of socio-emotional behaviour.

Self structured questionnaire was used to collect personal information like age, gender, education, type of orphan, family size and number of siblings. The socio-economic status scale developed by Aggarwal *et al.*, 2005 was used. It consisted of 23 statements which assess caste, education, occupation and monthly per capita income from all sources, type of house and location, family possessions and possessions of earning members in the family, number of children and possessions of agriculture and non-agricultural land along with animals and social status of the family. Depending upon the total score, the socio economic status has been classified as upper high, high, upper middle, lower middle, poor middle and very poor.

Resilience and vulnerability was assessed using resiliency scale (Embury, 2007).

Child behavior checklist developed by Achenbach (2001), The checklist consists of 113 statements about the child's behavior with three point likert scale ranging from not true to very true or often true. There are eight syndromes namely anxious/depressed, withdrawn/depressed, somatic complaints, social problems, thought problems, attention problems, rule breaking behavior and aggressive behavior. Three syndromes, withdrawn, somatic complaints and anxious/depressed recognized as internalizing problems. The delinquent behavior and aggressive behavior are grouped as externalizing problems but total behavior problem is included all the 113 statements. For each syndrome, scaled scores have given and based on total scaled scores socio-emotional behavior is categorized as normal, borderline or clinical behavior. The reliability of the scale is found to be 0.87 (0.93 Alpha) by the pilot study.

**Results and discussion**

The study was conducted in 5 villages of Dharwad Taluka to know the prevalence and supplementary information was collected through schools and anganawadies. Out of 3504 children, it was recorded that 266 orphan children are residing in rural areas. Hence, the prevalence rate has found to be 7.59 per cent in rural area (Table1). Among these, the prevalence of paternal orphans (74.81%) was higher than maternal (15.79%) and double orphans (9.40%). The causes for orphanhood found to be accidental death of father, suicide and sickness/disease. Shimamura and Carter (2015) revealed that regardless of age and gender, the proportion of paternal orphans is higher than that of maternal and double orphans. Similar results were found in study conducted by Skinner (2013) and Smily *et al.* (2015).

In the study, 55.6 per cent of girls and 44.4 per cent of boys are included. With regard to age, 43.5 per cent of orphans are in the age range of 10-15 years. Nearly half of them (49.2 %) are paternal orphans, 33.9 per cent are maternal orphan and only 16.9 per cent are double orphans. With respect to birth order, 44.4 per cent of them are last born, 37.9 per cent of them are first born and remaining are middle born. In case of resiliency, majority (61.3 %) of the children were in the low level of resilience while 12.9 per cent of the children were in below average as well as average level of resilience. With regard to vulnerability, 55.6 per cent of the children were in high category of vulnerability and 16.9 per cent of them were in average category of vulnerability (Table 2).

Table 1. The prevalence of orphans in rural area of Dharwad taluk

Type of orphan	Rural(n=3504)
Non orphans	3238(92.41)
Orphans	266(7.59)
Distribution of orphans according to different types N=266	
Paternal Orphan (PO)	199(74.81)
Maternal Orphan (MO)	42(15.79)
Double Orphan (DO)	25(9.40)
Total (orphans)	266(100.0)

Figures in parenthesis indicates percentages.

Table 2. Personal characteristics of rural orphans N=124

Variables		Frequency	Percentages
Gender	Male	55	44.4
	Female	69	55.6
Age (yrs)	6-9	32	25.8
	10-15	54	43.5
	16-17	38	30.6
Type of Orphan	Paternal orphan	61	49.2
	Maternal orphan	42	33.9
	Double orphan	21	16.9
Birth order	First	47	37.9
	Middle	22	17.7
	Last	55	44.4
Resilience	High	10	8.1
	Above average	6	4.8
	Average	16	12.9
	Below average	16	12.9
	Low	76	61.3
Vulnerability	High	69	55.6
	Above average	13	10.5
	Average	21	16.9
	Below average	10	8.1
Period of orphanhood (yrs)	Low	11	8.9
	0-4	74	59.7
	5-8	37	29.8
Residential status	>9	13	10.5
	Father	15	12.1
	Mother	61	49.2
No. of siblings	Grand parents	23	18.5
	Uncle/aunt	25	20.2
	None	16	12.9
	One	51	41.1
	2-3	57	46.0

More than half (59.7 %) of children experienced up to 4 years of orphanhood while 41.3 per cent of them experienced more than 5 years of orphanhood experience. More than half of the children (53.3 %) are residing with one of the parent and remaining are residing with care takers. Surprisingly 87.1 per cent of the orphan children had one or more than one sibling and only 12.9 per cent of them were devoid of siblings.

About 57.4 per cent of the paternal orphan children belonged to small family size and remaining children were from medium and large size family. In case of maternal orphans, 45.2 per cent of the orphans belonged to medium sized family followed by small and large size family (38.1 % and 16.7 % respectively). Among double orphans, 42.9 per cent of the subjects belonged to small family size followed by medium and large size family (38.1 % and 19.0 %, respectively) (Table 3).

Majority of the paternal, maternal and double orphans belonged to other backward class, followed by upper caste, ST and SC. Three fourth of all types of orphans belonged to lower middle SES category and one fourth of the orphans belonged to upper middle SES and none of them belonged to high and poor category of socio-economic status.

Table 4 indicates the distribution of socio-emotional behaviour of rural orphan children. It was noted that 70-75 per cent of the orphans indicated more than borderline category of internalizing,

Socio-emotional behaviour of rural orphans

Table 3. Familial characteristics of rural orphans N=124

Variables	PO	MO	DO	
Family size	Small ( $\leq 4$ )	35(57.4)	16(38.1)	9(42.9)
	Medium (5 - 8)	20(32.8)	19(45.2)	8(38.1)
	Large ( $\geq 8$ )	6(9.8)	7(16.7)	4(19.0)
Caste	Upper caste	19(31.1)	10(23.8)	5(23.8)
	OBC	32(52.5)	20(47.6)	15(71.4)
	SC	6(9.8)	5(11.9)	0(0.0)
	ST	4(6.6)	7(16.7)	1(4.8)
Socio-economic status	Upper Middle	2(3.3)	13(31.0)	3(14.3)
	Lower Middle	59(96.7)	29(69.0)	18(85.7)

Figures in parenthesis indicates percentages  
 PO-paternal orphans, MO-maternal orphans, DO-Double orphans

Table 4. Distribution of rural orphans by socio-emotional behaviour N=124

Socio-emotional behaviour	Normal	Borderline	Clinical
Internalizing behaviour problems	37(29.8)	20(16.1)	67(54.1)
Externalizing behaviour problems	37(29.8)	46(37.1)	41(33.1)
Total behaviour problems	30(24.2)	18(14.5)	76(61.3)

Figure in the parenthesis indicates percentage

externalizing and total behavior problems but only 25-30 per cent of them indicated normal category of socio-emotional behaviour. Poor socio-emotional behaviour among orphans is due to trauma associated with parental loss and poverty or lower socio-economic status. As parental loss introduces major changes in the life of an orphan hence the behaviour of children deviates from normal. Some children will become extravert and some children will become introvert. Extravert children express their emotions or problems by being aggressive, abusive and physical attackers. Introvert children will internalize their problem and becomes non-complaint, depressed, moody, withdrawn *etc.* The results were in line with the study conducted

Table 5a. Distribution of socio-emotional behaviour of rural orphans by gender N=124

Gender	Normal	Borderline	Clinical	Total	X <sup>2</sup>
Internalizing behaviour problems					
Boys	19(34.5)	7(12.7)	29(52.7)	55(100.0)	1.47 <sup>NS</sup>
Girls	18(26.1)	13(18.8)	38(55.1)	69(100.0)	
Externalizing behaviour problems					
Boys	14(25.2)	18(32.7)	23(41.8)	55(100.0)	3.43 <sup>NS</sup>
Girls	23(33.3)	28(40.6)	18(26.1)	69(100.0)	
Total behaviour problems					
Boys	12(21.8)	7(12.7)	36(65.5)	55 (100.0)	0.72 <sup>NS</sup>
Girls	18(26.1)	11(15.9)	40(58.0)	69 (100.0)	

Figure in the parenthesis indicates percentage

by Wisma *et al.* (2012) which revealed that 40.35 per cent of behavioral and emotional disorders were found among orphan children. Sandyarani and Usha (2016) showed that there was high rates of emotional and behaviour problems among institutionalized female orphans. Michael *et al.* (2014) found high level of clinical range of social problems observed among orphan children.

The distribution and comparison of socio-emotional behaviour of rural orphan children by gender is presented in

Table 5b. Comparison of socio-emotional behaviour of rural orphans by gender

Socio-emotional behaviour	Boys	Girls	t value
Internalizing behaviour problems			
problems	63.82 ± 8.10	63.06 ± 9.07	0.48 <sup>NS</sup>
Externalizing behaviour problems			
problems	64.11 ± 7.98	59.36 ± 9.26	3.01 <sup>**</sup>
Total behaviour problems	66.40 ± 8.03	62.96 ± 10.645	1.98 <sup>*</sup>

NS- non significant, \*Significant at 0.05 level, \*\*Significant at 0.01 level

Table 5a and b. More than half (52 % - 65 %) of boys and girls were in clinical category of internalizing and total behaviour problems followed by normal category (21 %-34%) only 12-18 per cent of boys and girls were in borderline category of internalizing and total behavior problems. There was no significant association between gender and internalizing and total behaviour problems but there was significant difference found between boys and girls in total behaviour problems. As per mean values boys showed higher total behaviour problems than girls. Regarding externalizing behaviour problems, 41.8 per cent of boys were found in clinical followed by borderline and normal category (32.7 % and 25.5 %, respectively). In case of girls, majority (40.6 %) of them were in borderline category followed by 33.3 per cent in normal category and 26.1 per cent of them were in clinical category of externalizing behavior problems. There was significant difference between boys and girls in externalizing behaviour problems. According to mean scores boys exhibited higher externalizing problems than girls. The results were on par with study conducted by Fawzy and Amira (2010). They explained that, there was high rate of emotional and developmental disorders among orphans and boys showed higher behaviour problems than girls.

Table 6 represents the predictor variables (step wise regression) of socio-emotional behaviour problems of rural

orphan children. The selected demographic variables have been included in different models to know the impact of variables on total behaviour problems of orphan children. In the first model of personal characteristics, gender was found to be the significant predictor of total behaviour problems and explained about 11.1 per cent of variation in the dependent variable. In second model, familial and primary caregiver characteristics along with personal characteristics of orphan children were considered. In that gender and age together found to be

Table 6. Predictor variables (step wise regression) of socio-emotional behaviour of orphans

N=124

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	T	Sig.	F	Sig
		B	Std. Error	Co-efficients Beta				
1	(Constant)	69.843	2.828		24.696	.000	3.957	.049 <sup>a</sup>
	Gender	-3.443	1.731	-.177	-1.989	.049		
2	(Constant)	78.329	4.217		18.575	.000	5.619	.005 <sup>b</sup>
	Gender	-4.800	1.765	-.247	-2.720	.007		
	Age	-3.112	1.169	-.242	-2.661	.009		
3	(Constant)	18.061	12.081		1.495	.138	8.658	.000 <sup>c</sup>
	vulnerability	0.611	0.149	.759	4.106	.000		
	Resilience	0.269	0.107	.464	2.516	.013		
	Period of orphanhood	0.595	0.268	.186	2.216	.029		
	Age	-2.596	1.059	-0.202	-2.452	0.016		
4	(Constant)	23.303	12.028		1.937	.055	8.268	.000 <sup>d</sup>
	Vulnerability	0.600	0.143	0.745	4.191	.000		
	Conflict	-0.321	0.135	-0.194	-2.382	.019		
	Resilience	0.272	0.103	0.469	2.642	.009		
	Orphanhood	0.726	0.262	0.227	2.775	.006		
	Age	-2.221	1.050	-0.173	-2.115	.037		

a. Predictors: (Constant), gender

b. Predictors: (Constant), gender, age

c. Predictors: (Constant), vulnerability, resilience, period of orphanhood, age

d. Predictors: (Constant), vulnerability, conflict, resilience, period of orphanhood, age

e. Dependent Variable: socio-emotional behaviour of rural orphans

Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.333 <sup>a</sup>	0.111	0.104	9.17423
2	0.389 <sup>b</sup>	0.151	0.137	9.00159
3	0.474 <sup>c</sup>	0.225	0.199	8.67280
4	0.503 <sup>d</sup>	0.253	0.222	8.54901

impacting on total behaviour problems and explained about 15.1 per cent of variation in the dependent variable. In third model, in addition to the second model resilience and vulnerability were taken up. In that vulnerability, resilience, period of orphanhood and age of the child together found to be impacting on total behaviour problems and explained about 22.5 per cent of variation in the dependent variable. In the fourth model, along with third model variable, depression and family environment were inserted. In fourth model, vulnerability, conflict, resilience, period of orphanhood and age together found to be impacting on total behaviour problems and explained about 25.3 per cent of variation in the socio-emotional behavior. Other variables such as, type of orphan, birth order, residential status, no of siblings, family size, caste and SES did not

contribute in explaining the variation in the socio-emotional behavior of orphans.

**Conclusion**

From the study it was concluded that majority of the respondents were paternal orphans. Majority of the rural orphans showed low level of resiliency and high level of vulnerability even though they experienced more than five years of orphanhood. Three fourth of the orphans expressed more than borderline category and only one fourth of them showed normal category of socio-emotional behavior. There was significant difference between boys and girls in externalizing and total behaviour problems however boys expressed higher behaviour problems than girls. It was concluded that

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*Socio-emotional behaviour of rural orphans*

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