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Emotional and behavioural problems of orphan and non-orphan adolescents

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Abstract

Behavioural and Emotional problems of Orphan and Non-Orphan Adolescents were studied on a sample of 200 adolescents (100 orphans and 100 non-orphans) who were in the age range of 11 to 17 years. Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire developed by Goodman (1997) was used to study the behavioural and emotional problems perceived by adolescents and PY1-Parent Report Measure for Youth aged 11y-17y developed by Goodman (1997) was used to study the perception of Parent/caretaker on adolescent's behavioural and emotional problems. The study was conducted in the Vishakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh. Results revealed a significant difference between the number and type of emotional and behavioural problems perceived by orphan and non-orphan adolescents where orphans exhibited high total difficulty score than non-orphans. Perception of caretakers and parents differed significantly with the perceptions of orphans and non-orphans on emotional and behavioural problems. Period of stay in Orphanage was strongly correlated with emotional symptoms, conduct problems and peer problems in case of orphans.

Keywords: Emotional problems, behavioural problems, orphans, non-orphans and adolescents

Introduction

Adolescence is a multifaceted developmental period encompassing individuals aged 10 to 19 years old. This phase is characterized by substantial physical, cognitive, emotional, and social changes, serving as a pivotal bridge between childhood and adulthood. Physiologically, adolescents undergo rapid growth spurts, hormonal fluctuations and the maturation of their reproductive systems. Cognitively, adolescents experience profound transformations in abstract thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making processes. This cognitive restructuring facilitates the exploration and questioning of their environment, fostering curiosity and laying the groundwork for their future aspirations. Emotionally, adolescents navigate a complex array of sentiments, oscillating between newfound independence and the need for guidance. They grapple with the intricacies of friendships, romantic interests, familial relationships, and the formation of their individual identity. Socially, they navigate an ever-evolving landscape, seeking acceptance and belonging among peers while negotiating societal norms and expectations. The digital era has further reshaped their social interactions, introducing both opportunities for connectivity and the complexities of online presence.

Adolescence is not a uniform experience. It is influenced by various factors such as cultural backgrounds, socioeconomic status, family dynamics, and individual personalities. These factors contribute to a diverse mosaic of experiences, shaping each adolescent's journey uniquely. Understanding adolescents necessitates a nuanced exploration of their world with empathy. It involves acknowledging their

challenges, celebrating their successes and providing support as they navigate the intricate path toward adulthood. This developmental period, brimming with challenges and discoveries, holds immense promise and potential, reflecting the aspirations and fabric of our future society.

Orphan is an individual who is under the age of 18 years and lost both the parents due to death (ONE Track International, 2019) [5]. UNICEF has classified orphans into three types. Absence of father is known as Paternal orphan. Absence of mother is known as Maternal orphan. Absence of both the parents is known as double orphan. In India 30 million orphans are identified (Outlook, 2021) [6]. In Andhra Pradesh the orphan population has crossed 26,000 (The Hans India, 2018) [9]. Reasons for increase in orphans are death of parents, divorce, wars and conflicts, Natural disasters, epidemics, poverty and mass migration. The emotional and behavioural problems were observed in majority of orphan children. The orphan children were exposed to abuse, exploitation, neglect and lack of love. A non-orphan is a child who has both parents and living with parents or family.

According to Goodman (1997), behavioural problems encompass difficulties related to externalizing behaviours, such as conduct problems, hyperactivity, and peer relationship issues whereas emotional problems refer to internalizing behaviours including symptoms of anxiety, depression, and emotional distress. Adolescence is a time of intense change, and emotional and behavioral issues can often arise during this period. Some common problems adolescents faced were mood swings, anxiety and depression, substance abuse, eating disorders, behavioral

problems and self-harm and risky behavior. The available research on orphans provides evidence that the behaviour and emotional problems in orphans are due to their socioeconomic, cultural and environmental factors. In Andhra Pradesh there is minimal comparative research evidence on emotional and behavioural status of orphans and non-orphans.

Materials and Methods

Comparative study was conducted to examine the emotional and behavioural problems of orphan and non-orphan adolescents. The present study was carried out in

Vizianagaram district of Andhra Pradesh with a sample of 200 respondents, 100 were orphans and 100 were non-orphans. The age range of respondents was 11-17 years. Purposive random sampling method was used to select the respondents. Exploratory research design was adopted for the study. General information schedule and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire by Goodman (1997) were used. Frequency, percentages and t- test were used for the analysis of the data.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Emotional and Behavioural problems of Orphan adolescents

S. No	SDQ Dimensions	Male (n=50)			Female (n=50)			Total N=100		
		Average	Slightly raised	High	Average	Slightly raised	High	Average	Slightly raised	High
		f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)
1	Emotional Symptoms	4 (8)	14 (28)	32 (64)	2 (4)	7 (14)	41 (82)	6 (6)	21 (21)	73 (73)
2	Conduct Problems	4 (8)	8 (16)	38 (76)	4 (8)	15 (30)	31 (62)	8 (8)	23 (23)	69 (69)
3	Hyperactivity	3 (6)	8 (16)	39 (78)	3 (6)	14 (28)	33 (66)	6 (6)	22 (22)	72 (72)
4	Peer Problems	2 (4)	12 (24)	36 (72)	5 (10)	13 (26)	32 (64)	7 (7)	25 (25)	68 (68)
		Average	Slightly low	Low	Average	Slightly low	Low	Average	Slightly low	Low
5	Prosocial Behavior	22 (44)	17 (34)	11 (22)	26 (52)	19 (38)	5 (10)	48 (48)	36 (36)	16 (16)

*Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages

The data pertaining to the emotional and behavioural problems of orphans revealed that orphan males scored high levels on conduct problems (76%), hyperactivity (78%) and peer problems (72%) while orphan females scored high levels on emotional symptoms (82%) and prosocial behaviour (52%). Overall majority of adolescents had high levels of emotional and behavioural problems as adolescents were lack of love, care, affection and family support. Akhter

et al., (2023) [1] also found that conduct problems were more prevalent among orphans followed by peer and emotional problems. Ginige *et al.*, (2020) [3] results showed that externalizing problems like rule-breaking and aggression were more common than internalizing problems and male adolescents exhibited more behavioral problems. Kaur *et al.*, (2018) [4] also found that orphans had low prosocial behaviour.

Table 2: Emotional and Behavioural problems of Non-orphan adolescents

S. No	SDQ Dimensions	Male (n=50)			Female (n=50)			Total N=100		
		Average	Slightly raised	High	Average	Slightly raised	High	Average	Slightly raised	High
		f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)
1	Emotional Symptoms	22 (44)	14 (28)	14 (28)	18 (36)	13 (26)	19 (38)	40 (40)	27 (27)	33 (33)
2	Conduct Problems	21 (42)	12 (24)	17 (34)	28 (56)	9 (18)	13 (26)	49 (49)	21 (21)	30 (30)
3	Hyperactivity	25 (50)	9 (18)	16 (32)	31 (62)	7 (14)	12 (24)	56 (56)	16 (16)	28 (28)
4	Peer Problems	24 (48)	11 (22)	15 (30)	27 (54)	11 (22)	12 (24)	51 (51)	22 (22)	27 (27)
		Average	Slightly low	Low	Average	Slightly low	Low	Average	Slightly low	Low
5	Prosocial Behavior	27 (54)	15 (30)	8 (16)	33 (66)	16 (32)	1 (2)	60 (60)	31 (31)	9 (9)

*Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages

Non-orphan males scored high levels on conduct problems (34%), hyperactivity (32%) and peer problems (30%) whereas non-orphan females scored high levels on emotional symptoms (38%) and prosocial behaviour (66%). Overall majority of adolescents had low levels of emotional

and behaviour problems. Shekhawat and Gopalan (2023) [7] revealed significant differences in emotion regulation and well-being between adolescents living in orphanages and adolescents living with their biological parents.

Table 3: Gender differences in the Emotional and Behavioural problems of Orphan males and Non-orphan males

N=100

S. No	SDQ Dimensions	Orphan male (n=50)	Non-orphan male (n=50)	t-stat value	t-critical value
		Mean ± SD	Mean ± SD		
1	Emotional Symptom	6.66±0.77	4.62±2.43	5.65**	1.98
2	Conduct Problem	5.7±1.48	3.74±1.72	6.08**	1.98
3	Hyperactivity	7.24±1.00	5.3±1.81	6.63**	1.98
4	Peer Problem	5.94±1.23	3.38±2.1	7.45**	1.98
5	Prosocial Behaviour	5.14±0.97	5.66±1.12	2.51**	1.98

**Significant at the 0.01 level

Orphan males had high means when compared to non-orphan males in all dimensions of emotional and behavioural problems except for prosocial behaviour and highly significant difference was observed. Whereas prosocial behaviour was less significant. The data pertaining to the prosocial behaviour between orphan and non-orphan adolescents was found to be significant. However not much difference in the mean scores was observed. It was perceived that adolescents who were raised in a nuclear families, working families and addiction of adolescents to mobiles were the reasons of low prosocial behaviour. Orphans faced adverse childhood experiences such as

neglect, abuse and exposure to violence leads to emotional and behavioural problems. Loss of parents leads to psychological distress, such as depression or anxiety disorders. As non-orphans had role models contributed to healthy behaviours, communication skills and emotional regulation. Stable family environment, parenting practices and socioemotional support of the adolescents contributed to healthy social interactions and emotional development. Vinnakota and Kaur (2018) [4] also revealed that that depression among institutionalized males were significantly higher compared to adolescents living with their families.

Table 4: Gender differences in the Emotional and Behavioural problems of Orphan females and Non-orphan females

N=100

S. No	SDQ Dimensions	Orphan female (n=50)	Non-orphan female (n=50)	t-stat value	t-critical value
		Mean ± SD	Mean ± SD		
1	Emotional Symptom	7±0.73	5.38±2.07	5.21**	1.98
2	Conduct Problem	5.22±1.38	3.08±1.52	7.33**	1.98
3	Hyperactivity	6.77±0.82	4.84±1.78	6.91**	1.98
4	Peer Problem	5.44±1.23	3.02±2.09	7.04**	1.98
5	Prosocial Behaviour	5.48±0.76	6.06±0.99	3.26**	1.98

*Significant at the 0.01 level

High significant difference was observed between the emotional and behavioural problems of orphan females and non-orphan females and for prosocial behaviour less significant was observed. Orphan females had high mean scores in all dimensions when compared to non-orphan females except for prosocial behaviour. Orphans were lack in resources and trained personnel in promoting adequate emotional and psychological support to the adolescents. This scarcity hinder the development of coping mechanisms

of the adolescents and increasing emotional and behavioural challenges. For non-orphans, parents provide guidance, comfort and assistance in managing emotions and stress. Consistent care to the Adolescents foster emotional resilience and better coping mechanisms. Sushma *et al.*, (2016) [8] also found similar findings that orphan females reported higher levels of social interaction anxiety than non-orphan females.

Table 5: Mean difference in the Emotional and Behavioural problems of Orphans and Non- Orphans

N=200

S. No	SDQ Dimensions	Orphans	Non- Orphans	t -stat Value	t-critical value
		Mean ± SD	Mean ± SD		
1	Emotional Symptom	6.83±0.76	5±2.28	7.59**	1.972
2	Conduct Problem	5.46±1.45	3.41±1.65	9.25**	1.972
3	Hyperactivity	6.99±0.95	5.07±1.79	9.44**	1.972
4	Peer Problem	5.69±1.25	3.2±2.08	10.22**	1.972
5	Prosocial Behaviour	5.31±0.87	5.86±1.07	3.97**	1.972

*Significant at the 0.01 level

The comparison between the orphans and non- orphans indicating that orphans had high levels of emotional and behavioural problems compared to non-orphans except for prosocial behaviour. Highly significant difference was observed. Orphans had traumatic experiences due to parental loss or unstable living conditions which leads to

emotional distress and behavioral difficulties. In contrast, non-orphan adolescents had more stable family environments and support networks which contributed to lower levels of emotional and behavioral challenges. Furthermore, orphanages were lack in providing personalized attention and emotional support to the

adolescents which leads to increase emotional distress to the orphans. Datta *et al.*, (2018)^[2] also found similar findings that conduct problems, peer problems, emotional problems

and hyperactivity problems were more prevalent in children out of parental control than in children under parental care.

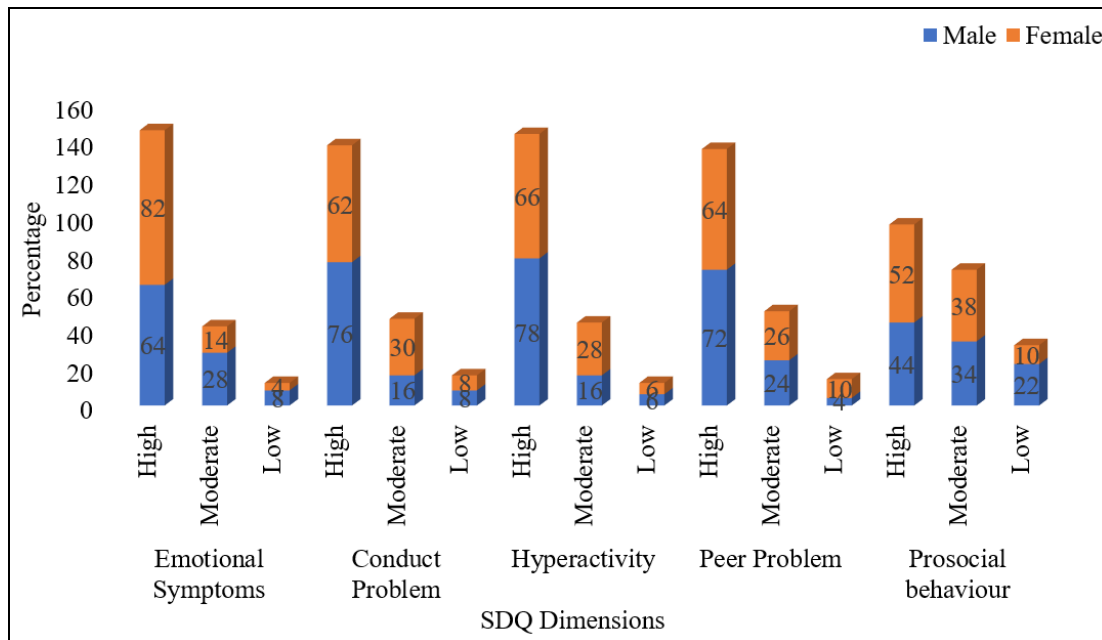


Image 1: Perception of emotional and behavioural problems perceived by the orphan adolescents

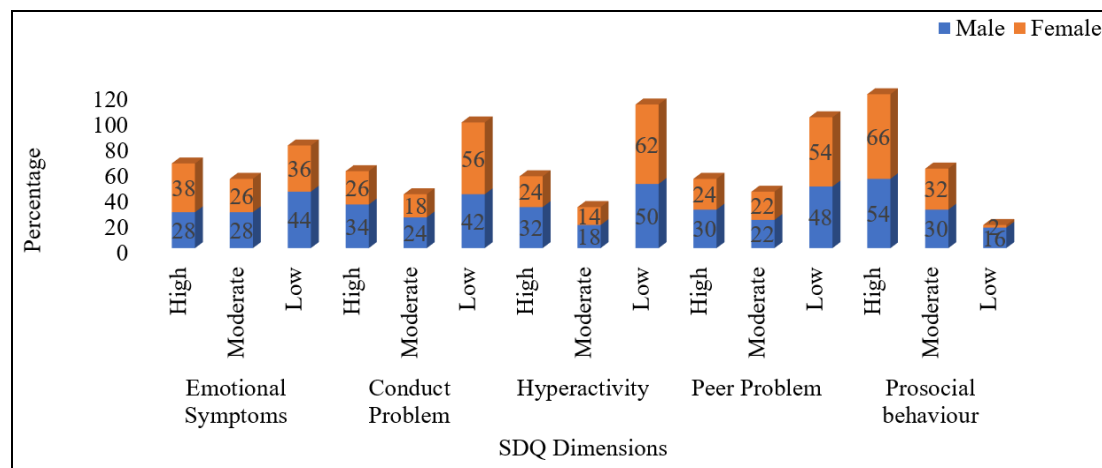


Image 2: Perception of emotional and behavioural problems perceived by the Non orphan adolescents

Conclusion

The study concluded that majority of orphans exhibited high emotional and behavioural problems compared to non-orphans and significant difference was observed. The gender differences revealed that comparatively males scored high on conduct problems, hyperactivity and peer problems whereas females scored high on emotional symptoms and prosocial behaviour. The significant differences in emotional and behavioral problems between orphans and non-orphans highlight the importance of the environment and support systems in adolescent’s psychological well-being.

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