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# Understanding the Socio-Psychological well-being of Orphans An Empirical Study

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## ABSTRACT

*The vocation in which children procure happiness and joy is the family which provides them with the basic needs of life on one hand and platform with opportunities to perceive their full potential on the other. Unfortunately, a large number of children are underprivileged of parental love, affection and protection because of death or abandonment of single or both the parents, impotence of parents to take ample care of the child due to any sort of disease, intoxication, poverty etc or also for desertion for the reason of being illegitimate child. Such are the vulnerable children who are also the victims of abuse may it be physical, mental or sexual and are often neglected by the society. Some of them become rag pickers, beggars, get engaged in petty thefts and crimes or often used as child labors by many uneducated and inhuman adults, for which they are punished in various ways. Many of them are also admitted by general public, police or any such relative to institutions or orphanages which make them prone to live in a society, and encourages them to stand on their own feet with a respectable life instead of being uncared for. This paper throws light on the social and psychological well-being of the children belonging to orphanage by taking into consideration the living environment, health care, the psychological vulnerability and the sources and functions of social support in buffering nerve-racking situations at an orphanage located at Cuttack, the silver city of eastern Indian state of Odisha, Basundhara (Rehabilitation Centre for Children, Women Aged in Distress) about the practical socio-psychological aspects, well-being and status of the orphan, abandoned and surrendered children.*

**Keywords:** Abandoned, Abuse, Underprivileged, Victim.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Children growing up without a mother, father or any parent as their prime caregivers has become a very usual phenomenon in developing countries like India. There is a large body of empirical evidence to show the impact of socio-psychological well-beings of the surrendered, abandoned and orphaned children of Cuttack. Recent estimates from United Nations

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Children's Fund (UNICEF) show there are 140 million children worldwide who have lost one or both parents. Statistics show that India is home for the 30 million orphan and vulnerable children (OVC), the largest in the South Asian region.<sup>2</sup> According to Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD), adoption rates in India have declined from 6286 to 2762 during 2010 to 2016, making the situation alarming<sup>3</sup>. Childhood experiences generate the future social, emotional and psychological dynamics along with the functioning of individual children in their adulthood life. Unfavourable and agonizing childhood experiences can vandalize psychological well-being of a child which eventually affects the child's productivity, intellectualism and social functionality. In case of orphans, children undergo the phase of sorrow, depression, anxiety and lack of parental love. It is often found that children not being able to bear the loss of parents often get engaged by badly getting influenced by some inhuman and get themselves indulged in activities like pick pockets, petty thefts which also results in abusive and inadvertent behaviour.

#### **(A) Aims of the Study**

1. To evaluate the study of not only orphans but also those children who are surrendered by their parents for the lack of earning a support and also to those who are abandoned in the streets.
2. To explore the socio-psychological impacts as well as solutions to the children belonging to orphanage irrespective of their religion, gender, caste and sex.

#### **(B) Methodology of the Study**

The Basundhara (Rehabilitation Centre for Children, Women Aged in Distress) located at the silver city of the eastern Indian state of Odisha is the macrocosm of the study. This fact-finding case study on orphanages uses non-probability quota sampling techniques to collect primary data. The main criteria for selection of the sample was the vulnerability of children. The sample is of 121 respondents. Semi-structured interview and talk session was waged to collect the pertinent information. Secondary data is collected through websites, journals, newspaper reports, and articles in magazines.

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<sup>2</sup> Unicef, Re-imagine the future innovation for every child. New York: United Nations Children's Fund; 2014 Nov [cited 2021 March 26].

<sup>3</sup> MoWCD. 2010-2011- Annual report of the Ministry of Women and Child Development. New Delhi: 2011 [cited 2021 March 26].

## II. DIVISION OF CHILDREN ACCORDING TO THEIR VULNERABILITY: EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

*About the sample:*

- Twenty six(21%) children belong to the age group of 0-5, among them twelve are infants who are abandoned, one is orphan, six are surrendered and seven children were found by public and police.
- Seventy children (58%) belong to the age group of 5-18, among them seven are orphan, four are abandoned, two are surrendered, four are child beggar, four children are child labour, one is runaway, eleven are physically and sexually abused, seven are physically and mentally challenged, eight children's parents are convicted or accused prisoners and twenty two are living in the orphanage due to various family disturbances.
- Strength of open shelter is twenty six (21%). The number varies between twenty-thirty, subject to situation.

## III. MECHANISM TO MANAGE SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL CONDITION OF CHILDREN:

To manage the socio-psychological condition of different people belonging to different age group and culture having conflicted past is a herculean task. However, the government have taken certain initiative for such children. Some of them are -

a) CARA (Central Adoption Resource Authority) which functions as the nodal body for adoption of Indian Children and is mandated to monitor and regulate in-country and inter-country adoptions through its recognized adoption agencies.<sup>4</sup>

b) The government of Odisha has also launched a website called 'Sishu Suchana' portal for monitoring child protection services.<sup>5</sup>

c) The 'Cradle Baby Scheme' by Govt. Of India which was launched to eradicate female infanticide and protect girl children from the clutches of death.

d) Children's Home (Section 50, Juvenile Justice Act, 2015) is meant for care, treatment, education, training and rehabilitation of children who are in need of care and protection. Specials homes are established by State Governments in every districts either by itself or through NGOs.

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<sup>4</sup> Cara.nic.in. 2021. CARA- Central Adoption Resource Authority. [online] Available at: <<http://cara.nic.in/>> [Accessed 14 July 2021].

<sup>5</sup> Latest Sarkari Yojana. 2021. Mo Sishu Portal Login | Registration at [sishusuchana.odisha.gov.in](https://sishusuchana.odisha.gov.in). [online] Available at: <<https://sarkarireader.com/mo-sishu-sishusuchana-portal-odisha/>> [Accessed 14 July 2021].

e) The District Child Protection Unit is supervised by the District Magistrate of the district and ensures children's safety and proper livelihood including donation of Rs. 50,000/- to a girl eligible for marriage.

f) Social investigation and inquiry is also conducted by one of the teams of the orphanage for the parents who are willing to adopt a child from the orphanage. This would ensure the child goes to a safe hand depending on the occupation of social status of the parents.

g) The rules and regulations of Basundhara Rehabilitation Centre, Cuttack also states that after the age of 12, boys and girls stay in a separate campus to avoid any kind of unexpected issues.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

The present study has explored some of the laws, procedure and well-beings of the children belonging to the orphanage at Cuttack. The founder and the care takers of Basundhara Rehabilitation Centre work with 120 respondents with utmost care. Minimal basic needs of them are taken care of by some voluntary organizations and NGOs. Annual functions, picnic, Saturday-Sunday movie night are some of the programme which are conducted by the authorities for the purpose of entertainment of the children.

However, a child is the most vulnerable as well as sensitive creature of the society. Just like a clay mould, the child would turn into good or bad as per the situation and treatment it gets. Children without a parental support and care do have to go through a lot of extra ordinary hurdles in life but with NGOs, voluntary organizations and orphanages some get rescued and walk on with a motto while there are still some abandoned and uncared for children who are in need of attention, affection and care.

The findings of the study indicates that various laws and procedures have been formed by the central as well as state government to make sure the safety, treatment and care of the child. Sometimes, children belonging to the 'teen' categories do undergo emotional and hormonal traumas but with due and utmost care by the authorities and counselling sessions, they move forward from the phase. With the help of the Government schemes, the prior condition of the orphanages have however developed towards betterment, as many of the children belonging to that place have become doctor, engineer, MBA and many such contributing to their shelter.

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