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Comparative study between orphans and non-orphans on the dimension of self-concept

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Good psychological health helps adolescents to deal effectively with various adversities of life. There are a number of psychological factors such as productive dealing (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012) being resilient and strong self-concept of the individuals that are necessary to maintain their psychological well-being. To establish this, it is important for adolescents to have social approval and support from their parents, which might help them to handle the difficult situations occurring during this period (Harter, 1999). However, in India there has been a substantial increase in the number of children who have to live in orphanages due to problems of poverty, neglect, disease and death of the parents (Faith to Action Initiative, 2014). Keeping this view in mind, a study was designed to assess the Self-Concept of adolescents (15-17 years) living in orphanages and adolescents living with their families. Self-Concept questionnaire (Saraswat, 1984) was administered on both the groups. The t-value was calculated and the findings of the present study revealed that there is a significant difference in the Self-concept of Orphans and Non orphans.

Keywords: orphans, non orphans, self-concept, adolescents

Children are like buds in a garden and should be carefully and nurtured, as they are the future of the nation and the citizens 'grow,' said India's first prime minister ("Happy Children's Day", 2014). From the above mentioned statement, it is quite clear that the way children are raised determines the outcome of their life and the family as well as the environment play a significant role in the development of the child. The support of the family is required by the child at every stage of life as the family not only provides the child with food, shelter and clothing but also provides opportunities to realise his/her full potential.

Psychologists also agree with the fact that children who have strong emotional attachment with their parents tend to feel safe, secure and loved in their family. This makes them happy, successful and well-adjusted in their adulthood. Also, when children have the support of their family, they feel competent and are less affected by difficulties and adversities of life. The families that spend quality time and enjoy the activities together promote healthy social development in the children as it leads to development of various skills such as group bonding, communication and sharing. On the other hand, children who do not get the warmth, love and sympathy from their parents are more likely to consider themselves as 'outcasts'. They tend to develop behavioral and adjustment problems in everyday life. These children behave indifferently and have a feeling of isolation. Thus, it is evident that the family plays a crucial role in the development of the child.

Unfortunately, there are a large number of children who are not lucky to get the support of their parents and instead are deprived of the love and attention that the children living with their families get. This could be due to the death of the parents or the inability of the parents to

take adequate care of children due to various factors like disease, alcoholism, poverty or abandonment of the child when the child is born before marriage.

All these situations lead to separation of the children from their parents and causes 'Parental Deprivation' among them. Parental deprivation creates a lot of psycho social problems for the children (Kiirya, 2005) and one of those unfortunate individuals who have to suffer from this phenomenon of parental deprivation are orphans.

Orphans and children living in orphanages

The term 'orphan' is used more liberally to include young people bereft of one or more parent and/or any person bereft of protection and economic advantage because of loss of the parent or guardian (Kiyapi, 2007). The children who lose any one of their parents are known as 'single orphans' whereas children who lose both their parents are known as 'double orphans'. Globally, it has been estimated that there are around 153 million children who have lost one of their parent and around 17.8 million children who have lost both their parents (Faith to Action Initiative, 2014).

Reports have also suggested that India is currently a home to 2 million orphans and this figure is expected to increase by 2021 (SO Children's Villages CA, 2011). It has been found that the central and eastern regions of India are more affected as compared to the northern and the southern regions.

Challenges faced by orphanage children. There are a number of difficulties that the children living in the orphanage homes face and the most important ones are the following:

Lack of social support and approval Children who live in orphanages are socially deprived and disconnected from their parents, siblings, extended family members, neighbours and friends. Due to this, the children do not get adequate support. This becomes a major problem for them.