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# A Study on the Overall Mental Health of Orphan Male and Female Children of Indore Division

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**ABSTRACT:** The objective of this study is to examine the mental health of orphaned male and female infants in the Indore Division. Our objective is to determine the mental health status, prospective gender disparities, and the influence of orphanhood on mental well-being through comprehensive psychological assessments. The study comprised 100 orphan children, 50 of whom were male and 50 of whom were female, who were aged 6 to 18 and resided in a variety of orphanages. Assessments were conducted using standardized instruments, including the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL), Revised Children's Anxiety and Depression Scale (RCADS), and Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). Descriptive statistics and independent t-tests demonstrated substantial gender disparities, with female orphans demonstrating elevated levels of psychological distress. The results of the ANOVA revealed substantial disparities among the various age categories. These results emphasize the necessity of targeted mental health interventions to assist destitute children, particularly females, in the Indore Division.

**KEYWORDS:** orphan children, mental health, gender differences, psychological assessment, Indore Division, CBCL, RCADS, SDQ.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Orphanhood is a significant global concern that impacts millions of children on a global scale. An estimated 140 million children are orphans, having lost one or both of their parents, according to UNICEF (2020). This status frequently exposes them to a variety of psychological, social, and economic obstacles that can significantly impede their development and overall well-being. The situation in India is particularly alarming, as a significant number of children are residing in orphanages as a result of a variety of factors, including poverty, disease, and social issues (Desai et al., 2019).

The mental health of a child is significantly impacted by the absence of parental care and support. Children who are orphaned are more susceptible to elevated levels of anxiety, depression, tension, and behavioral issues than their non-orphaned peers. The absence of a nurturing environment that typically provides emotional security and stability can result in substantial psychological distress. AIDS-orphaned children in Uganda exhibited higher levels of psychological distress than non-orphans, as found by Atwine, Cantor-Graae, and Bajunirwe (2005). This finding underscores the impact of parental loss on mental health.

Additionally, research has documented gender disparities in the mental health outcomes of bereaved children. Cluver, Gardner, and Operario (2012) noted that female orphans frequently exhibit elevated levels of emotional and psychological distress when contrasted with their male counterparts. Various factors, such as social expectations, gender roles, and differential treatment in caregiving environments, can be attributed to this disparity. Additionally, females may be more susceptible to exploitation and maltreatment, which can exacerbate their psychological distress. The dynamics and challenges of the Indian context are distinctive. In India, orphaned children frequently encounter a combination of adversities, such as stigma, inadequate healthcare, and restricted access to education and social services. Desai, Madhusudan, and Seshadri (2019) emphasized that the mental health requirements of orphans in India are frequently disregarded, as the current support systems are inadequate to address the psychological challenges these children encounter. This neglect can result in long-term repercussions, which can impact their capacity to assimilate into society and lead productive lives.

A critical need exists to comprehend and resolve the mental health challenges encountered by these vulnerable individuals in the Indore Division, a region with a substantial number of bereaved children. There is an urgent need for research that concentrates on the unique conditions and requirements of deserted children in this region, as localized studies are scarce. The purpose of this study is to address a critical lacuna in the literature and offer insights that can be used to inform targeted interventions by analyzing the mental health status of orphan male and female children in the



Indore Division. This study utilizes standardized psychological assessments, such as the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), the Revised Children's Anxiety and Depression Scale (RCADS), and the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL), to assess the mental health of orphan children. The objectives of the study are to ascertain the general mental health status, examine potential gender disparities, and comprehend the influence of age on mental well-being.

This study's importance is derived from its potential to influence policy and practice. The findings can inform the development of customized interventions and support mechanisms by emphasizing the mental health requirements of orphan children in the Indore Division. This is crucial for the cultivation of a supportive environment that can assist these children in overcoming their psychological obstacles and leading fulfilling lives.

In conclusion, orphanhood has a substantial impact on the mental health of children, with female orphans frequently encountering more severe psychological obstacles. The Indore Division, in particular, presents distinctive challenges that require localized research in the context of India. The objective of this study is to address this need by offering valuable insights into the mental health status of orphan children and informing targeted interventions to promote their well-being.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous research has demonstrated a robust association between orphanhood and mental health conditions, including anxiety, melancholy, and behavioral issues. Orphaned children are more likely to display symptoms of psychological distress than their non-orphaned peers, according to a study conducted by Atwine et al. (2005). Additionally, gender disparities in mental health outcomes have been identified, with female orphans frequently exhibiting elevated levels of emotional distress (Cluver et al., 2012). Studies have emphasized the compounded challenges that orphan children in the Indian context encounter, such as stigma, inadequate care, and restricted access to mental health resources (Desai et al., 2019). Nevertheless, the Indore Division is underrepresented in localized research, which is why this study is necessary to address the lacuna in the literature and offer actionable insights.

The mental health of bereaved children is a critical area of inquiry due to the unique challenges they encounter. The mental well-being of children can be significantly impacted by a variety of deleterious experiences, such as trauma, neglect, socio-economic hardships, and loss of parental care, that are frequently encountered during orphanhood. The psychological impact of orphanhood and the specific mental health requirements of these vulnerable children have been the subject of numerous studies conducted in a variety of contexts. Orphaned children are at an increased risk of developing mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), according to research conducted by Whetten et al. (2011). The study, which included orphans from a variety of low- and middle-income countries, discovered that the absence of parental care and the experience of numerous losses are factors that contribute to elevated levels of psychological distress among orphans. Furthermore, these issues are further exacerbated by the limited access to mental health care that orphans frequently have.

The impact of institutional care on the mental health outcomes of bereaved children has been a significant area of research. A comprehensive review of the literature on the psychological effects of institutionalization on children was conducted by Johnson et al. (2006). In comparison to children raised in family environments, they determined that children raised in institutional settings, such as orphanages, are more susceptible to developmental delays, attachment disorders, and behavioral issues. The absence of emotional support and personalized care in institutions can result in long-term psychological repercussions.

The mental health outcomes of bereaved children are also well-documented in terms of gender. In comparison to male orphans, female orphans frequently demonstrate elevated levels of emotional distress and internalizing behaviors, according to Murray et al. (2015)'s research. This discrepancy can be attributed to a variety of factors, such as societal expectations, gender roles, and the distinct methods by which boys and girls manage stress and trauma. The study underscored the necessity of gender-sensitive interventions to address the unique mental health requirements of male and female orphans. Sharma et al. (2012) conducted a study on the mental health status of orphans in North India within the Indian context. They discovered that deserted children exhibited substantially higher levels of anxiety, melancholy, and behavioral disorders than their non-orphaned counterparts. The study also emphasized the necessity of comprehensive mental health care policies and programs that are specifically designed to meet the needs of orphans in India, as it underscored the scarcity of mental health resources and support systems.

The influence of stigma and social exclusion on mental health is an additional critical aspect of orphanhood. Boyes et al. (2014) conducted a study that investigated the psychological impact of stigma on bereaved children in South Africa. The researchers discovered that the stigma associated with orphanhood and the subsequent social exclusion

considerably contributed to the elevated levels of anxiety and depression among orphans. This underscores the significance of confronting societal attitudes and promoting inclusive practices to enhance the mental health outcomes of bereaved children. Promising outcomes have been observed in interventions that are designed to enhance the mental health of bereaved children. For example, Betancourt et al. (2014) conducted a study to assess the efficacy of a psychosocial intervention that was community-based and targeted orphans who had been affected by the conflict in Sierra Leone. PTSD and depression symptoms were significantly reduced among the participants as a result of the intervention, which included individual counseling, group therapy, and community support. This underscores the potential of targeted psychosocial interventions to alleviate the mental health consequences of orphanhood.

In conclusion, the literature consistently suggests that bereaved children are at an increased risk of developing mental health issues as a result of the loss of parental care and exposure to deleterious experiences. The mental health outcomes of orphans are significantly influenced by gender differences, with female orphans frequently encountering more severe emotional challenges. These issues are further exacerbated by institutional care, stigma, and social exclusion. In order to promote the mental health of bereaved children, effective interventions must be multifaceted, addressing their psychological, social, and environmental requirements.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### Participants

The study involved 100 orphan children (50 male and 50 female) aged 6-18 years from various orphanages in the Indore Division. Participants were selected using a stratified random sampling method to ensure representation across different age groups and orphanages.

#### Instruments

- Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL): Used to assess behavioral and emotional problems.
- Revised Children's Anxiety and Depression Scale (RCADS): Measures symptoms of anxiety and depression.
- Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ): Evaluates overall psychological distress and well-being.

#### Procedure

Data collection was conducted over three months, with ethical approval obtained from the relevant authorities. Consent was secured from orphanage administrators and assent from the children. Assessments were administered by trained psychologists in a quiet, private setting within the orphanages.

### IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data, and independent t-tests were conducted to compare the mental health scores of male and female orphans. ANOVA tests were used to examine differences across age groups.

**Table:1 Descriptive Statistics of Overall Mental Health of Orphan Male and Female Children**

Measure	Male Mean	Male SD	Female Mean	Female SD
CBCL	50.8	10.2	55.4	11.3
RCADS	30.5	9.7	35.8	10.5
SDQ	16.2	5.3	18.7	6.1

**Table:2 T-test of Overall Mental Health of Orphan Male and Female Children**

Measure	t-value	df	p-value
CBCL	-2.19	98	0.031
RCADS	-2.55	98	0.012
SDQ	-2.16	98	0.033



**Table:3 Anova test of Overall Mental Health of Orphan Male and Female Children**

Measure	F-value	df1	df2	p-value
CBCL	4.35	2	97	0.016
RCADS	5.12	2	97	0.008
SDQ	3.98	2	97	0.022

Female orphans had significantly higher mean scores on the CBCL, RCADS, and SDQ compared to male orphans, indicating greater levels of psychological distress. The t-test results show significant differences between male and female orphans in all three psychological assessments. The ANOVA results indicate significant differences in mental health outcomes across different age groups, suggesting that age is a significant factor in the psychological well-being of orphaned children.

## 4.2 Discussion

### 4.2.1 Gender Differences in Mental Health Outcomes

The results of this investigation indicate that there are substantial gender disparities in the mental health outcomes of bereaved children in the Indore Division. In comparison to their male counterparts, female orphans achieved superior scores on all three psychological assessments (CBCL, RCADS, and SDQ). This implies that psychological distress, such as anxiety, melancholy, and behavioral issues, is more prevalent among female orphans. These findings are consistent with Murray et al. (2015)'s prior research, which revealed that female orphans frequently demonstrate elevated levels of emotional distress and internalizing behaviors in comparison to their male counterparts. The increased psychological distress experienced by female orphans can be attributed to a variety of factors. Girls may be more susceptible to psychological issues due to the additional emotional burdens imposed by societal expectations and gender roles. In addition, the emotional and psychological suffering of female orphans may be further exacerbated by their susceptibility to abuse and exploitation. The results emphasize the necessity of mental health interventions that are gender-sensitive and cater to the unique requirements of female orphans.

### 4.2.2 Impact of Age on Mental Health

The ANOVA results suggest that there are substantial disparities in mental health outcomes among various age categories. In comparison to younger children, older children demonstrated elevated levels of psychological distress. This could be attributed to the heightened awareness of their orphan status and the stressors that come with it as they age. This can also contribute to the psychological distress of older children, as they may have more recollections of their parents and the life they lived before becoming orphans. This discovery is in accordance with the research conducted by Whetten et al. (2011), which identified that elder bereaved children were more susceptible to elevated levels of anxiety and melancholy. The findings emphasize the necessity of offering ongoing mental health support as children mature and their psychological requirements mature.

### 4.2.3 The Role of Institutional Care

The research also illuminates the influence of institutional care on the mental health of bereaved children. Individualized care and emotional support are frequently absent in institutional settings, which are essential for the development of sound psychological states. The institutional environment may be partially responsible for the elevated levels of psychological distress observed in the study participants. Johnson et al. (2006) observed that children who are reared in institutional environments are more likely to experience behavioral issues, attachment disorders, and developmental delays. The findings of this study emphasize the necessity of enhancing the caregiving environment in orphanages, which includes providing emotional support training for caregivers and implementing structured mental health programs.

### 4.2.4 Stigma and Social Exclusion

This study did not explicitly measure stigma and social exclusion; however, these factors are acknowledged to have a substantial effect on the mental health of bereaved children. Boyes et al. (2014) emphasized that the stigma associated with orphanhood and the subsequent social exclusion can result in elevated levels of anxiety and depression among orphans. The results of this study, particularly the elevated levels of psychological distress among female orphans, indicate that these children may also be subject to social exclusion and stigma.

### 4.2.5 Implications for Interventions

The study's results have significant implications for the development of targeted mental health interventions for bereaved children in the Indore Division. Interventions that are gender-sensitive are essential for addressing the unique requirements of female orphans. These may encompass therapeutic activities, support groups, and counseling services



that are intended to assist females in managing their emotional and psychological difficulties. Furthermore, interventions should be customized to meet the requirements of various age groups, ensuring that children receive ongoing assistance as they mature. It is also imperative to improve the caregiving environment in orphanages by providing caregiver training and implementing mental health programs.

## V. CONCLUSION

The objective of this investigation was to assess the mental health status of destitute male and female children in the Indore Division. Standardized psychological assessments were employed to identify disparities in psychological well-being on the basis of gender and age. The results emphasize substantial gender disparities, as female orphans suffer from elevated levels of psychological distress, including anxiety, melancholy, and behavioral issues, in comparison to their male counterparts. Furthermore, the psychological challenges experienced by elder children were more severe, indicating that age is a critical factor in the mental health of bereaved children.

Several recommendations can be derived from this study to enhance the mental health outcomes of bereaved children. Initially, it is imperative to improve the caregiving environment in orphanages by providing caregiver training and implementing structured mental health programs. Secondly, it is imperative to create gender-sensitive interventions, such as therapeutic activities, support groups, and counseling services, in order to address the distinctive requirements of female orphans. Third, it is imperative to provide ongoing mental health support that is customized to the developmental stages of children in order to address the changing psychological requirements that arise as they age. In summary, this investigation offers valuable insights into the mental health obstacles encountered by bereaved children in the Indore Division. It is feasible to cultivate a nurturing environment that encourages the psychological well-being and overall development of these vulnerable children by addressing the identified needs through targeted interventions and supportive policies.

## Recommendations

- Develop and execute mental health programs that are particularly designed to meet the requirements of female orphans, who are at a higher risk of experiencing psychological distress.
- Enhance the quality of caregiving in institutional settings by offering comprehensive training to caregivers.
- Develop ongoing mental health support systems that are customized to the developmental stages of bereaved children.
- Promote the social inclusion of bereaved children and reduce stigma through community-based initiatives.
- Conduct longitudinal studies to evaluate the long-term effects of mental health interventions on bereaved children.

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