



Volume: 2, Issue: 7, 323-327  
July 2015  
www.allsubjectjournal.com  
e-ISSN: 2349-4182  
p-ISSN: 2349-5979  
Impact Factor: 3.762

**Sudha Katyal**

Head, Deptt. of Human  
Development and Family  
Relations Govt. Home  
Science College, Sector-10,  
Chandigarh, 160010, India

## A study of resilience in orphan and non-orphan children

**Sudha Katyal**

**Abstract**

The objective of this study was to investigate resilience among orphan and non-orphan children. The study was carried out in two orphanages and two schools run by Government in Tricity- Chandigarh, Panchkula and Ajitgarh (Mohali) in India. The sample consisted of 50 orphan children (25 from each orphanage) and 50 non-orphan children (25 from each school) aged 12-18 years. Standardized tool was used to assess resilience of the subjects. The findings revealed that major reason for living in the orphanage was death of parents, closely followed by financial problems of single parenthood. Majority of children were left in these institutes by their mothers and relatives. Most of orphan children had relatives too, whom they visited 1-2 times in a year. There was significant difference in resilience of orphan and non-orphan children, with orphan children having higher resilience than that of non-orphan children.

**Keywords:** Resilience, Orphan, Non- Orphan

### 1. Introduction

Children are vital for deciding how the world is going to be after some years. Family plays a pivotal role in the development of children. All children need healthy relationship with their parents. Not only parents nourish their children and leave an impressionable mark on their personality but they also help them to cope with their personal problems particularly emotional as well as problems related to their school, studies and fight with friends during crucial years of their life <sup>[1, 2]</sup>.

Unfortunately, some children are not lucky and get separated from their parents at very early age due to one reason or the other. The phenomenon of early separation of young child from his parents is known as "parental deprivation" <sup>[3]</sup>. It creates a lot of psycho-social problems for children <sup>[4]</sup>. Being deprived of parental care and familial protection, such children get lesser opportunities for wider interactions with physical and social world outside their immediate neighbourhood. It is very much difficult for them to live a happy and normal life due to inability to meet their varied needs and cope up with problems like insecurity, stress, anxiety and loneliness <sup>[5]</sup>.

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 <sup>[6]</sup>. For the purpose of the present study, an orphan is operationally defined as a child who is below 18 years of age and is deprived of parental care due to death of one or both the parents or because of abandonment by parents due to various reasons.

India is the world's largest democracy with a population of over a billion people, of which 400 million are children. The number of orphan children in India stands at approximately 55 million which is about 47% of the overall population of 150 million orphans in the world <sup>[7]</sup>. The data from the National Family Health Survey-3 for the year 2005-06 reported that about 20 million of the total population of India - that is, more than the total population of greater Delhi - are orphans. Of those 20 million, only 0.3% of the children were orphaned by the death of their parents. The rest - 99.7% of them are abandoned children.

Loss of parents introduces a major change in the life of a vulnerable child. This change may involve moving from a middle or upper-class urban home to a poor rural relative's home. It may involve separation from siblings, which is often done arbitrarily when orphaned children are divided among relatives without due considerations of their needs. It may mean the end of a 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 a vulnerable child. They can be very stressful as they pose new demands and constraints to children's life <sup>[8]</sup>.

**Correspondence:**

**Sudha Katyal**

Head, Deptt. of Human  
Development and Family  
Relations Govt. Home  
Science College, Sector-10,  
Chandigarh, 160010, India

Resilience is a key factor in children's ability to cope with and survive adversity [9]. Some studies even argue that children could benefit socially and psychologically more if they have exposure to difficult circumstances [10, 11, 12]. Resilience-as-recovery perspective measures is defined as the time taken to recover from a disturbance or stressor [13]. Resilience is the capacity to face the challenges and to become somewhat more capable despite adverse experiences. People who display resilient adaptation may become stronger by learning new skills, developing creative ways of coping and overcoming life changes [14].

## Objectives

The present study was undertaken with the following specific objectives:

- To determine the level of resilience in orphan and non-orphan children.
- To compare resilience of orphan and non-orphan children.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Participants

The present research was conducted in selected orphanages and schools run by Government in Tricity - Chandigarh, Panchkula and Ajitgarh (Mohali).

#### 2.1.1 Selection of Orphan Children

A list of all the orphanages run by Government in Chandigarh, Panchkula and Ajitgarh (Mohali) was obtained from the internet. From this list, 2 orphanages were selected randomly. From each selected orphanage, a list of all the children along with their age was taken from wardens of both the institutes. The age range of the children staying in orphanages was found to be between 6 years to 23 years. From both the orphanages, 50 children (25 from each orphanage) irrespective of their gender, falling in the age range of 12-18 years were selected.

#### 2.1.2 Selection of Non- Orphan Children

For the comparison of orphan children with non-orphan children, an equal number of children i.e. 50 children between the age range of 12-18 years, staying in homes were selected from two Government Schools of Chandigarh, Panchkula and Ajitgarh (Mohali). For this purpose, a list of all Government Schools was obtained from the internet (Appendix-II). From the list, two schools were selected randomly. From each school, 25 children irrespective of their gender, falling between the age group of 12-18 years were selected on the basis of random sampling.

## 2.2 Instruments Used

### 2.2.1 Socio-Personal Profile

#### Socio-Personal Profile for Orphan Children

A socio-personal profile schedule for orphan children was developed by the investigator to assess their socio-personal characteristics. It has two parts - one for the children and other for the warden of orphanage. The children part consists of items like age, gender, education, religion, duration of living in institution, relatives if any, various stressful situations he/she is being exposed to and about ability to face adversity. While the warden part was developed by the investigator to get details of the child on items like reasons of child for living in institution, social and psychological behaviour of the child. Both the parts of the tool are in Hindi.

### Socio-Personal Profile for Non-Orphan Children

A socio-personal profile schedule for non-orphan children as developed by the investigator. This schedule consists of items like age, gender, education, religion, birth order, family structure, exposure to stress/adversities, about self and ability to face adversity. It is in Hindi.

### 2.2.2 The Resiliency Scale

For determining the resilience of subjects, a standardized resiliency scale developed by Wagnild and Young (1987) was used [15]. It is reported to be a highly valid and reliable scale. The reported reliability of the instrument has been tested across a variety of sample populations. The alpha coefficient ranged from .85 to .94. Overall the alpha coefficient exceeded .80. This resiliency scale has a total number of 25 items with a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) for taking response. The authors reported that the resiliency scale has two major factors- acceptance of life and personal competence- both of which concur with the definition of resilience. Personal competence covers items on self-reliance, independence, determination, mastery and resourcefulness. While the acceptance of self and life represents adaptability, balance, flexibility and a balanced perspective on life. The scale is in English. So it is translated in Hindi for use with children. The scale was administered individually on each subject.

### 2.3 Procedure

Permission from the wardens of the selected orphanages and principles of the selected schools was sought to carry out the study. After creating rapport with the subjects, the selected psychological tools were administered. On an average, a subject was approached twice individually for completing data collection.

### 2.4 Statistical Analysis

For analyzing the data, percentage, mean, standard deviation, standard error of mean and 't' test were used.

## 3. Results and Discussion

**Table 1:** Socio-Demographic Information about Orphan Children (N = 50)

Variables	Categories	Orphan Children (%)
Socio-Personal Attributes	12-14years	36.0
	14-16years	32.0
	16-18 years	32.0
• Gender	Boys	28.0
	Girls	72.0
• Class	5 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> class	38.0
	8 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup> class	44.0
	Above 10 <sup>th</sup> class	18.0
• Duration of stay in orphanage	1-6 years	44.0
	6-12 years	50.0
	12 years and above	6.0
Socio-Demographic Information from Warden		
• Parent (s) alive	Yes	56.0
	No	44.0
• Reason of living in the institution	Death of parents	44.0
	Financial problems of single parent	42.0
	Rearing issues of family	8.0
	Divorce of parents	4.0
	Any other	2.0
• Left in institution by	Mother	36.0

	Father	8.0
	Grandparents	16.0
	Relatives	34.0
	Administration	4.0
• Having relatives	Yes No	96.0 4.0
• Meeting the relatives	Yes No	82.0 18.0
• Frequency of meeting the relatives	Once in a month 4-5 times/year 1-2 times/year	48.0 26.0 8.0
• Before coming to orphanage, earlier lived with	Both the Parents Only Mother/Father Siblings Grandparents Relatives	24.0 44.0 2.0 8.0 22.0
• Talking about past life	Frequently Rarely	59.0 41.0
• Being independent	Dependent Moderately independent Quiet independent	4.0 10.0 86.0
• Suicidal tendencies in children	Yes No	2.0 98.0
Exposure to Stress / Adversity in Last Few Years	Physical Stress Psychological Stress Educational Stress	22.0 60.0 18.0
About Self:	Happy and Interested in Life Somewhat Happy Unhappy and Disinterested Somewhat Unhappy	54.0 40.0 2.0 4.0
• Define yourself as		
• Like to go to school	Yes No	94.0 6.0
• Aim in life	Doctor Engineer Police/Army officer Lawyer Teacher Have not thought of it Any other	14.0 4.0 22.0 6.0 16.0 21.0 19.0

Results in Table-1 indicate that the sample of orphan children was almost equally distributed in the age group of 12-14 years, 14-16 years and 16-18 years. Majority of them were girls and were studying in 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> standard. Regarding the duration of stay in the orphanage, half of the total sample was living there for 6-12 years.

As reported by the warden, majority of them had their parents alive. The major reason for living in the orphanage was death of parents, closely followed by financial problems of single parenthood. Majority of children were left in these institutes by their mothers and relatives. Most of orphan children had relatives too, whom they visited 1-2 times in a year. Before coming to the orphanages, majority of them used to live with single parents i.e. either with mothers or fathers. They frequently talked about their past life and were quiet independent and never showed any suicidal tendencies.

As far as exposure to stress/adversity was concerned, majority of the orphans reported that they faced psychological stress i.e. anxiety, loneliness, separation from a friend, emotional trauma etc. in the last few years. Surprisingly inspite of difficulties, a little more than 50% defined themselves as happy and interested in life followed by somewhat happy.

Most of them showed their liking towards school. Their aim of life varied from becoming a police/army officer to teacher and doctor in the future.

**Table-2:** Socio-Demographic Information about Non-Orphan Children

(N = 50)

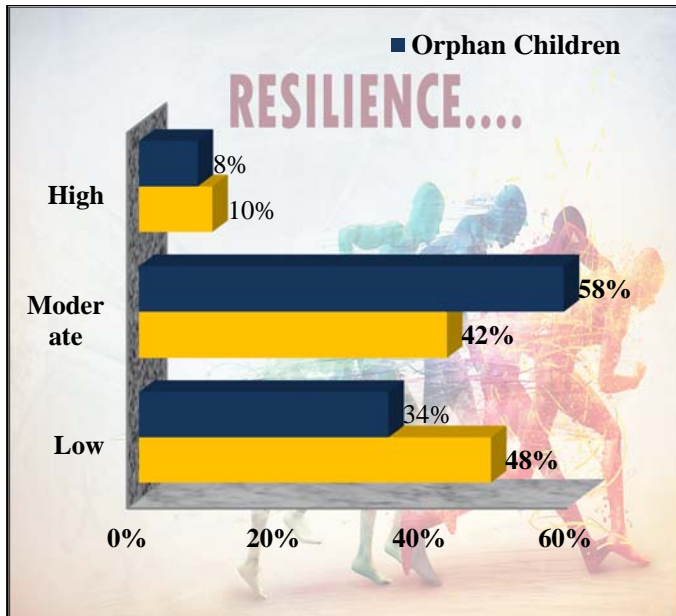
Variables	Categories	Non-Orphan Children (%)
Personal Attributes	12-14years 14-16years 16-18 years	62% 26% 20%
• Age		
• Gender	Boys Girls	64% 36%
• Class	5 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> class 8 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup> class Above 10 <sup>th</sup> class	48% 34% 18%
• Religion	Hindu Muslim Sikh	86% 2% 12%
Family Structure	Nuclear Joint	74% 26%
• Family		
• Birth order	First Born Second Born Third Born Fourth born	44% 34% 10% 12%
• Father's occupation	Government Job Private Job	42% 58%
• Mother's working status	Housewife Working	84% 16%
• Monthly income	Rs. 5000-Rs. 20,000 Rs. 20,000-Rs. 40,000 Rs. 40,000 and above	52% 42% 6%
Exposure to Stress / Adversity in Last Few Years	Physical Stress Psychological Stress Educational Stress Any other	34% 42% 18% 6%
About Yourself:	Happy and Interested in Life Somewhat Happy Unhappy and Disinterested Somewhat Unhappy	60% 32% 2% 6%
• Define yourself as		
• Like to go to school	Yes No	84% 16%
• Aim in life	Doctor Engineer Police/Army Lawyer Teacher Have not thought of it Any other	12% 10% 24% 4% 10% 28% 12%

Results presented in Table-2 reveal that majority of non-orphan children in the sample were 12-14 years old, boys and were studying in 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> standard. A very large majority of them belonged to Hindu religion, nuclear family and were first borns. Their fathers had been doing private jobs and mothers were housewives. Their monthly family income was between Rs.5,000 and Rs. 20,000.

As far as exposure to stress/adversity in last few years was concerned, majority of the children were facing psychological stress like anxiety, loneliness, separation from a friend,

emotional trauma etc. followed by physical stress/adversity like death of a close relative, suffering from any illness or disease, conflict or argument with parents, change in eating habits etc. Surprisingly, inspite of reported stresses/adversities, majority of them defined themselves as happy and interested. A very large number of them enjoyed going to school. However, they had never thought about what they would like to be in future.

Figure-1 presents data regarding the percentage distribution of orphan and non-orphan children with regard to level of resilience.



**Fig-1:** Percentage Distribution of Orphan and Non-Orphan Children with regard to Level of Resilience

The findings given in Figure-1 highlight that majority of orphan children had moderate (58%) level of resilience while majority of non-orphan children had low (48%) followed by moderate (42%) level of resilience.

**Table-3:** Significance of Difference between Mean Scores of Resilience of Orphan and Non-Orphan Children  
N = 100 (50 Orphan Children + 50 Non-Orphan Children)

Variables	Sample	Mean	SD	SEM	t- alue	p-value
Resilience	Orphan Children	119.36	24.2846	3.4343	1.8678	<0.05
	Non-Orphan Children	114.6	18.2878	2.5862		

Results presented in Table-3 show that there existed significant difference ( $t=1.8678$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) between mean scores of orphan and non-orphan children with regard to resilience. Orphans were found to be more resilient than non-orphans.

The obtained results related to more resilience among orphans as compared to non-orphans are in line with the findings of Toth (1997) [16], Octavia (2006) [17], Musisi *et al.* (2007) [18], Fernando and Ferrari (2011) [19] and Yasin and Iqbal (2012) [20]. On the other hand, contrary results have also been cited in a number of studies [21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26].

The possible reasons for the present findings could be that positive, stimulating and enriched environment in the orphanage that is sustained over time contribute to boosting

resilience among orphan children [17]. Moreover, higher sense of resilience in orphan children as compared to their non-orphan counterparts mainly develops due to development of close and warm social bonds and friendships with peers in orphanages. Peer attachment/friendship bonds may buffer children and adolescents from the adverse effects of parental absence [27]. Another justification for obtained results could be given in light of some developmental assets that facilitate resilience in orphan children. These relate to four main components: external stressors and challenges, external supports, inner strengths and interpersonal and problem-solving skills. Right from the early years, orphan children are left alone to fight their own battle and face the challenges. The hard circumstances pull their inner strengths to the maximum to face the adverse circumstances in life, thus, contributing a spark of resilience among them as compared to those who are reared at homes with their parents.

**4. Recommendations**

The present study has implications for social welfare workers and policy makers. On the basis of results of the study, it can be recommended that conducive environment in orphanages should be created in order to compensate for effect of parental deprivation on resilience of children.

**5. Acknowledgment**

The author expresses thanks to Ms. Vibha Chandel for collecting data for this research work.

**6. References**

- 1 Coleman, J., & Hendry, L. (1999). *The nature of adolescence*. London: Routledge.
- 2 Cyrulnik, B. (2010). *Early Attachment and the building of resilience: The theoretical basis of bereavement counselling*. Retrieved on November 13, 2014 from <http://www.sagepub.com/Working-with-Bereaved-Children-and-Young-People>.
- 3 Nagar, D. (1992). *Deprived Children*. Jaipur, India: Printwell.
- 4 Kiirya, S. (2005). *Parental death and its effect on orphaned children's self-esteem and sociability at school*. Ph.D Dissertation, Makerere University, Uganda.
- 5 Thomas, D., Cas, G. A., Frankenberg, E., & Suriastini, W. (2011). *The Impact of ParentaDeath on Child Well-being*, 51(2), 437-457
- 6 Kiyapi, L. I. (2007). *The psychosocial issues of orphaned youth in Western Kenya*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Australian Catholic University.
- 7 United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (2005). GCM India. Retrieved on November 13, 2014 from <http://gcmindia.org/orphan-homes.html>.
- 8 Sengendo, J., & Nambi, J. (1997). The psychological effect of orphanhood: A study of orphans in Rakai district. *Health Transition Review*, 7, 105-124.
- 9 Grotberg, E. H. (2003). *Resilience for today: Gaining strength from adversity*. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group Inc.
- 10 Garmezzy, N. (1983). Children in poverty: Resilience despite risk. *Psychiatry*, 56, 127-136.
- 11 Dawes, A. (1992). *Psychological discourse about political violence and its effects on children*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Mental Health of Refugee Children Exposed to Violent Environments, University of Oxford, UK.

- 12 Boyden, J., & Mann, G. (2005). Children's risk, resilience, and coping in extreme situations, in M. Ungar (ed.) *Handbook for working with children and youth: Pathways to resilience across cultures and contexts* (3-26). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- 13 Maguire, B., & Hagan, P. (2007). Disasters and communities: Understanding social resilience. *The Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, 22(2), 16-20.
- 14 Johnson, J. (2011). *Resiliency and Development*. New York: Kluwer Academic.
- 15 Wagnild, G. M. & Young, H. M. (1993). Development and psychometric evaluation of the resilience scale. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 1, 165-178. Retrieved on 10 September, 2014 from [http://www.resiliencescale.com/en/rstest/rstest\\_25\\_en.html](http://www.resiliencescale.com/en/rstest/rstest_25_en.html).
- 16 Toth, S. L. (1997). The making of a developmental psychopathologist. In: Cantor J, Spiker, C. & Lipsitt L. (Eds.), *Child behavior and development: Training for diversity*, 34-72.
- 17 Octavia, L. (2006). *Factors which contribute to orphaned learners' academic achievements*. Master's thesis, University of Zululand.
- 18 Musisi, S., Kinyanda, E., Nakasujja, N. & Nakigudde, J. (2008). *A comparison of the behavioral and emotional disorders of primary school-going orphans and non-orphans in Uganda*, 202-13.
- 19 Fernando, C., & Ferrari, M. (2011). Resilience in children of war. *Journal of spirituality in mental health*, 13, 52-77.
- 20 Yasin, G. M., & Iqbal, N. (2012). *Resilience, Self esteem and Delinquent Tendencies among Orphan and Non-Orphan Adolescents*, Ph.D, University of Sargodha.
- 21 Hoffman, D. L. (2000). *The resilient earth*. New York: Guilford Press.
- 22 Klein, S. (2001). Resilience to natural hazards. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 178, 76-81.
- 23 Prayor, J., & Rodgers, B. (2001). *Children in Changing Families, Life after Parental Separation*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- 24 Brisch, H. K. (2002). *Treating Orphaned Children with Attachment Disorders: From Theory to Therapy*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- 25 Stein, J. (2005). *Sorrow Makes Children of Us All: A Literature Review on the psychosocial impact of HIV/AIDS on Children*. Working Paper 47, Centre for Social Science Research, University of Cape Town.
- 26 Henderson, N. (2006). Resiliency in action: Practical ideas for overcoming risks. *American Psychologists*, 28(2), 69-76.
- 27 Divine, D. (2013). Growing Up in an Orphanage: Tales of Personal Resilience. *Hazard, Risk and Resilience*. New York: IHRR.