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Personality traits of orphans and non-orphans

Jonnada Pavani, Dr. Bilquis, Dr. S Prasanthi and Dr. K Dhanasree

Abstract

The current study examined the personality traits of orphan and non-orphan adolescents. An exploratory study was conducted on 200 respondents where 100 were orphans and 100 were non-orphans. The age group of respondents was 11-17 years. General information schedule and Big Five Personality Assessment Scale by Goldberg, 1992 was used. The results interpreted that non-orphan adolescents irrespective of gender scored high on openness to experience, conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion and low levels of neuroticism. Whereas orphan adolescents exhibited equal levels of high and low status in all the five dimensions of the personality. A significant difference between the personality traits of orphans and non-orphans was observed.

Keywords: Personality traits, orphan, non-orphan, exploratory study

1. Introduction

The first eight years of life with enriched early experiences provide foundation for learning, health and behaviour which significantly impacts the overall development. Family members are the one with whom a child interacts with and learns many things by observation (Momspresso, 2018) [7]. Hence family plays an important role for optimum development of a child. The way a child is loved, cared and nurtured provides an opportunity to be better in his/her life in future. Socialization with family members helps the child to develop trust, seek friendships, find comfort with others and maintain sustain relationships (Children's Bureau, 2017) [3]. Positive parenting improves children's cognitive, social and problem-solving abilities as they grow older (Daffodil Health, 2022) [4]. Family relationships provide resources that helps an individual to cope with stress, engage in healthier behaviors and enhance self esteem, leading to higher well-being (Patricia *et al.*, 2017) [10].

Orphan is an individual who is under the age of 18y and lost both the parents due to death (ONETrack International, 2019) [8]. 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) [9]. In Andhra Pradesh the orphan population has crossed 26,000 (THE HANS INDIA, 2018) [13]. 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.

Personality can be defined as "a dynamic and organized set of characteristics possessed by a person that influences his or her cognition, motivation and emotion in various situations" (Ryckman, 2004) [11]. Parental acceptance-rejection theory (Kagan, 1974) [5] explains how parenting effects the behavioral, cognitive, emotional and personality development of children. Human beings need a positive responses like love, approval, warmth and affection for the development. Children who are rejected by their parents tend to be anxious, hostile, aggressive, emotionally unstable and have low self esteem (Khan *et al.*, 2014) [6].

Orphanhood is associated with personality problems due to their vulnerable living conditions. As percentage of orphans was increasing day by day there is a need to address their problems and develop their personality traits which would help them to become responsible and productive citizens in the society. The available research on orphans provides evidence that the personality problems in orphans were due to their socioeconomic, cultural and environmental factors. In Andhra Pradesh there is minimal research evidence on personality traits of orphans and non-orphans. The study helps to know about the status of orphan children living in orphanages.

The study findings helps in planning suitable intervention programmes to improve the quality of life of orphans thereby making them productive citizens of society.

2. Material and Methods

Comparative study was conducted to examine the personality traits of orphans and non-orphans. 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 select the respondents. Exploratory research design was adopted for the study. General information schedule and Big Five Personality Assessment Scale by Goldberg, 1992 were used. Frequency, percentages and t- test were used for the analysis of the data.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Personality traits of Orphan adolescents

N=100

S. No	Personality traits	Male (n=50)		Female (n=50)		Total N=100	
		High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
		f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)
1	Openess to Experience	27 (54)	23 (46)	22 (44)	28 (56)	49 (49)	51 (51)
2	Conscientiousness	23 (46)	27 (54)	28 (56)	22 (44)	51 (51)	49 (49)
3	Extraversion	26 (52)	24 (48)	22 (44)	28 (56)	48 (48)	52 (52)
4	Agreeableness	22 (44)	28 (56)	27 (54)	23 (46)	49 (49)	51 (51)
5	Neuroticism	33 (66)	17 (34)	28 (56)	22 (44)	61 (61)	39 (39)

*Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages

The above table 1 depicts that the females were high in dimensions of conscientiousness (56%), agreeableness (54%) and neuroticism (44%) while males were high in dimensions of openess to experience (54%) and extraversion (52%). Overall majority of adolescents did not scored high on all the dimensions of personality as they get less opportunities to explore and learn, no role models to observe and imitate, lack

of family environment and absence of morals and values for better development. This deprivation leads to low levels of self confidence and self esteem affecting their overall personality. Avakyan *et al.* (2014) ^[2] found that the orphan children had high level of anxiety, depression and social anxiety than the children living with their parents.

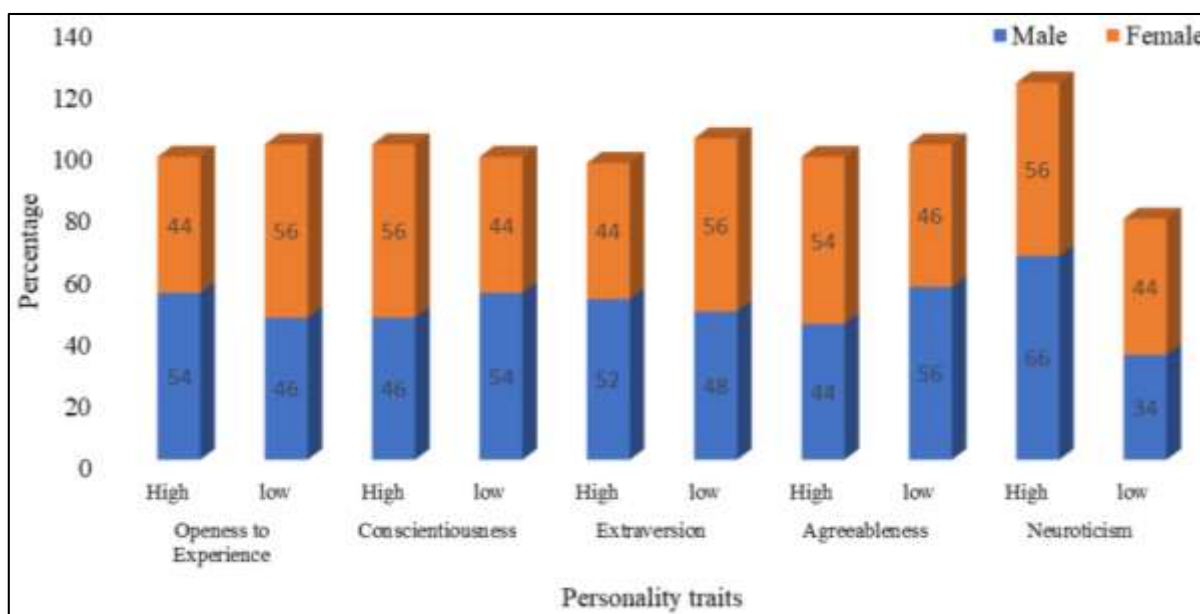


Fig 1: Representation in Personality traits of orphan adolescents

Table 2: Personality traits of Non-Orphan adolescents:

N=100

S. No	Personality traits	Male (n=50)		Female (n=50)		Total N=100	
		High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
		f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)
1	Openess to Experience	35 (70)	15 (30)	31 (62)	19 (38)	66 (66)	34 (34)
2	Conscientiousness	31 (62)	19 (38)	34 (68)	16 (32)	65 (65)	35 (35)
3	Extraversion	38 (76)	12 (24)	33 (66)	17 (34)	71 (71)	29 (29)
4	Agreeableness	32 (64)	18 (36)	36 (72)	14 (28)	68 (68)	32 (32)
5	Neuroticism	21 (42)	29 (58)	17 (34)	33 (66)	38 (38)	62 (62)

*Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

Non-orphan males scored high in openness to experience (70%) and extraversion (76%) while females scored high in conscientiousness (68%), agreeableness (72%) and neuroticism (66%). Overall majority of adolescents scored high in all dimensions as they had good communication skills, coping mechanisms, had opportunities to explore and learn,

supportive family environment, parental care, ethics and values learned from family and socio-economic factors. These all these factors help the adolescent for better development of their personalities. Siyad and Muneer (2016) [12] found that non-orphans had higher self-esteem than the orphans.

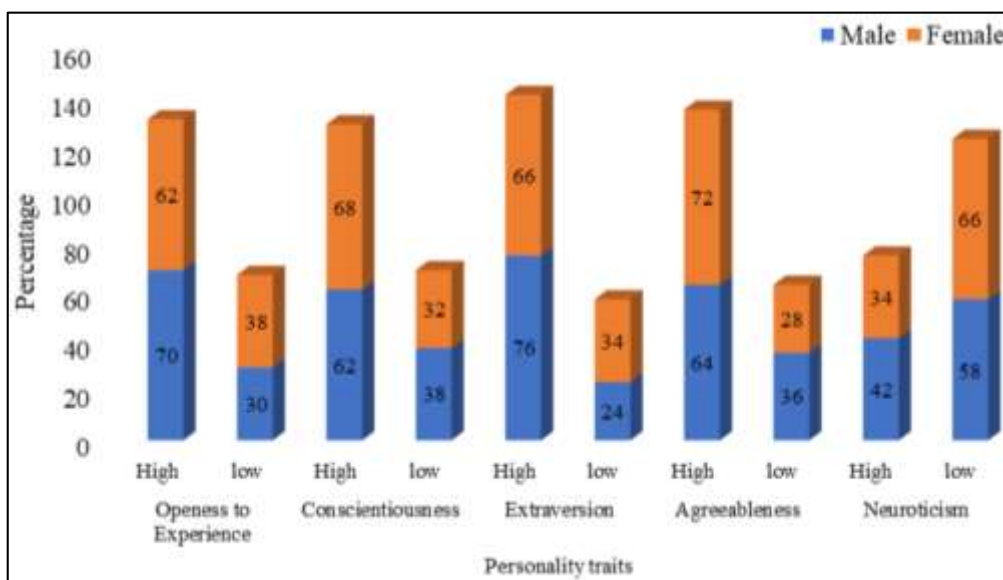


Fig 2: Representation in Personality traits of Non-orphan adolescents

Table 3: Gender differences in the Personality traits of Orphan males and Non-orphan males

N=100

S.No	Personality traits	Orphan males	Non- Orphan males	t -stat Value	t-critical value
		Mean ± SD	Mean ± SD		
1	Openess to Experience	20.66±3.6455	23.72±3.6979	4.16**	1.98
2	Conscientiousness	19.92±3.361	22.68±4.137	3.66**	1.98
3	Extraversion	20.18±3.497	24.02±3.165	5.75**	1.98
4	Agreeableness	19.9±3.558	22.88±4.098	3.88**	1.98
5	Neuroticism	21.84±3.394	20.14±3.774	2.37**	1.98

**Significant at the 0.01 level

Significant difference was observed between the personality traits of orphan males and non-orphan males. Non-orphan males were high in all the dimensions when compared to orphan males except for neuroticism. As orphans had limited exposure to educational and socioeconomic factors like being ambitious, motivation and social skills impacted their

personality development. Orphan males faced social stigma, discrimination and exclusion lead to lack of trust and self confidence. While non-orphans had good access to resources and opportunities, positive role models and nurturing environment which lead to the better personality development of adolescents.

Table 4: Gender differences in the Personality traits of Orphan females and Non-orphan females

S. No	Personality traits	Orphan females	Non- Orphan females	t -stat Value	t-critical value
		Mean \pm SD	Mean \pm SD		
1	Openess to Experience	19.64 \pm 3.821	23.32 \pm 3.689	4.89**	1.98
2	Conscientiousness	20.12 \pm 3.745	24.06 \pm 3.633	5.34**	1.98
3	Extraversion	19.18 \pm 3.606	23.14 \pm 3.181	5.82**	1.98
4	Agreeableness	20.76 \pm 3.496	24.14 \pm 3.551	4.79**	1.98
5	Neuroticism	21.32 \pm 3.576	19.56 \pm 3.844	2.37**	1.98

**Significant at the 0.01 level

Non-orphan females had high means when compared to orphan females in all the dimensions of personality traits except for neuroticism and significant difference was observed. As orphans had traumatic experiences and early life stress leads to emotional instability. Lack of secured attachments of orphans leads to low levels of personality traits like trust, empathy, and social competence. Since non-orphans had intact family structures and mentors, adolescents developed traits such as empathy, social skills and emotional intelligence.

Table 5: Mean difference in the Personality traits of Orphans and Non- Orphans

S.No	Personality traits	Orphans	Non-Orphans	t -stat Value	t-critical value
		Mean \pm SD	Mean \pm SD		
1	Openess to Experience	20.15 \pm 3.75	23.52 \pm 3.68	6.41**	1.972
2	Conscientiousness	20.02 \pm 3.54	23.37 \pm 3.93	6.32**	1.972
3	Extraversion	19.68 \pm 3.57	23.58 \pm 3.18	8.14**	1.972
4	Agreeableness	20.33 \pm 3.53	23.51 \pm 3.86	6.06**	1.972
5	Neuroticism	21.58 \pm 3.479	19.85 \pm 3.801	3.35**	1.972

*Significant at the 0.01 level

The comparison between the personality scores of orphan and non-orphan adolescents revealed a highly significant difference in all the dimensions of personality. Where non-orphan adolescents scored high on all the dimensions of personalities compared to orphan adolescents. The differences in means between orphans and non-orphans in these personality traits could be attributed to a number of factors like children who are raised in stable family environments experienced less environmental stressors. As orphans had no stable family support effected their social interactions and personality development. Loss of parents can impact mental health which affect their personality expression and leads to social isolation. While non-orphans had consistent emotional support from parents contributed to a sense of security, confidence, and emotional well-being. Non-orphans had greater access to resources, educational opportunities, and social networks leads to wide range of exposure and experiences. Non-orphans with consistent emotional support, developed healthier coping mechanisms and mental resilience, which can positively influence their overall personality. Aqeel *et al.* (2019) [1] also found a significant positive relation between emotional empathy and extraversion trait of personality. The study highlighted that active avoidance coping strategies were found in orphan students resulting in higher levels of neuroticism compared to non-orphan students who adopted problem focused and religious coping strategies.

Conclusion

The study concluded that non-orphan adolescents exhibited

high levels of personality traits in all dimensions compared to orphan adolescents. For both orphans and non-orphans, females scored better on in dimensions of conscientiousness, agreeableness and neuroticism whereas males scored better in dimensions of openess to experience and extraversion. The study highlight the importance of providing better learning and living environments in orphanages.

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