

## Prevalence of orphans in Dharwad Taluka, Karanataka

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### ABSTRACT

Prevalence study was conducted in Dharwad Taluka of Karnataka state in the year 2016-18. Prevalence included rural area, urban area as well as institutionalized orphan children. Out of 109 villages in Dharwad 5 villages were selected in rural area. In the urban area, Dharwad city was considered and survey was conducted based on different localities covering four directions. Door to door survey was conducted to know the prevalence and supplementary information was collected through schools and Anganwadies. A self-structured questionnaire was used for the data collection. The results revealed that out of total 3504 children contacted in rural area 266 were found to be orphans. Thus 7.59 per cent of prevalence of orphans was found in rural area. Totally 1562 families/children were contacted in urban area of which 132 orphans were noted. In addition 62 orphans residing in private orphanages in Dharwad were also included in urban population of orphans. Hence in overall the prevalence of orphans in urban area was 11.95 per cent. On the whole the prevalence percentage of orphans in Dharwad Taluka was 8.97 per cent. The paternal orphans were found to be higher than maternal and double orphans.

**Keywords:** Orphans; children; prevalence; rural; urban; orphanages

### INTRODUCTION

An orphan or vulnerable child is a child under the age of 18 whose mother or father or both parents or a primary caregiver (a caregiver is the individual who takes primary responsibility for the physical, mental and emotional needs and wellbeing of a child) has died and who is in need of care or protection (Anon 2008). In common usage an orphan does not have any surviving parent to care for him or her. An orphan according to the Wordnet definition is a child who has lost both parents (<http://wordnet.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?s=orphan>). However The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) and other groups label any child that has lost one or both the parents as an orphan. This approach has identified three types of orphans. A maternal orphan is a child whose mother has died; a paternal orphan is a child whose father has died and a double orphan is a child who has lost both the parents (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orphan>).

The number of orphans in India stands at approximately 55 million children of the age of 0 to 12 years which is about 47 per cent of the overall population of 150 million orphans in the world (<https://www.unicef.org/sowc06/>). India is the world's largest democracy with a population of over a billion people of which 400 million are children. Approximately 18 million of this number of children live or work on the streets of India and majority of them are involved in crime, prostitution, gang-related violence and drug trafficking. However a large number of these children are orphans (Gupta and Agrawal 2018). The children who have lost their parents are most vulnerable because they do not have the emotional and physical maturity to address their psychological trauma associated with parental loss. In the society orphan children can be considered to be at more risk than average children (Subbarao and Coury 2004). Loss of parents introduces a major change in the life of a vulnerable child that includes moving from a middle- or upper-class urban home to a poor rural relative's home and separation from siblings which is often done arbitrarily when orphaned children are divided among relatives without

due considerations of their needs. 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.

## METHODOLOGY

Prevalence study was conducted in Dharwad Taluka of Karnataka state in the year 2016-18. Prevalence included rural area, urban area as well as institutionalized orphan children. Out of 109 villages in Dharwad 5 villages (Garag, Maradagi, Uppinbetageri, Mugad and Marewad) were selected in rural area. For the prevalence study in urban area, Dharwad city was covered considering different localities. Localities namely Saptapur- Sadankeri, Maratha colony- Mrutyunjay Nagar, Malamaddi- Tejaswi Nagar and Hosayallapur were selected covering Dharwad city in four directions (east, west, north and south). Door to door survey was conducted to know the prevalence and supplementary information was collected through schools and Anganwadies. A self-structured questionnaire was used for the data collection.

The information from childcare institutions (orphanages) was included with prior permission from Ministry of Women and Child Welfare. There were four government childcare centers (orphanages) present in Dharwad district. Among those two orphanages (childcare centers) were randomly selected to know the prevalence of orphans.

A structured-questionnaire was used to collect the personal information like gender, age, birth order,

number of siblings, type of orphan, period of orphanhood, present living status, length of stay in the institution, age at admission to the institution, family type, family size and caste. Primary caregiver characteristics such as their age, education and occupation were also noted.

## RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Table 1 depicts the prevalence of orphans in Dharwad Taluka. Total of 3504 families/children were contacted in rural area of which 266 were found to be orphans. Thus 7.59 per cent prevalence of orphans was found in rural area. Door to door survey was conducted in respective locality and additional information was taken from schools and childcare centers from the respective areas. Totally 1562 families/children were contacted and 132 orphans were noted. Along with this 62 orphans residing in private orphanages of Dharwad Taluka were also included in urban population of orphans. Hence in overall the prevalence of orphans in urban area was 11.95 per cent. On the whole the prevalence percentage of orphans in Dharwad Taluka was 8.97 per cent. In both rural and urban areas, paternal orphans were found to be higher (5.68 and 6.15% respectively) than maternal orphans (1.20 and 1.60% respectively) and double orphans (0.71 and 0.74% respectively). The increased prevalence of paternal orphans was due to fathers' accidental deaths. The major reasons given by the respondents for the death of fathers' were accidents, suicides and ill-health. Similar results were also found by Skinner et al (2013) and Smiley et al (2015). Shimamura (2016) revealed that regardless of age and gender, the proportion of paternal orphans was higher than that of maternal and double orphans. Lindblade et al (2003) revealed that 6.4 per cent had lost father, 0.8 per cent had lost mother and 0.75 per cent had lost

Table 1. The prevalence of orphans in rural and urban areas of Dharwad Taluk

Type of orphan	Number of orphans		
	Rural (n= 3504)	Urban (n= 1562)	Total (N= 5128)
Paternal orphan (PO)	199 (5.68)	96 (6.15)	295 (5.82)
Maternal orphan (MO)	42 (1.20)	25 (1.60)	67 (1.32)
Double orphan (DO)	25 (0.71)	11 (0.74)	36 (0.71)
Total	266 (7.59)	132 (8.45)	398 (7.86)
Orphans from institutions (orphanages)	0	62	62
Prevalence of orphans	266 (7.59)	194 (11.95)	460 (8.97)
Non-orphans	3238 (92.41)	1430 (91.55)	4668 (91.03)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentages

both parents in Kenya. Belsey and Sherr (2011) found that 4.0-26.4 per cent was range of children who lost one or both the parents in South African countries.

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