

Defective Socialization of Orphan Children in Maharashtra: A Sociological Study

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Abstract- Socialization is the process through which individuals internalize the norms, values, and a role of society is crucial for the holistic development of children. The agents of socialization in the process are lacking in the matter of orphan children. Orphan children, lacking parental care and stable family structures, are vulnerable to defective socialization, which can manifest as emotional instability, deviant behaviour, and social exclusion. This paper explores the sociological dimensions of defective socialization among orphan children in Maharashtra, examining the causes, manifestations, and possible interventions.

1. INTRODUCTION

Maharashtra, one of India's most industrialized states, has witnessed rapid urbanization and migration of rural population. These socio-economic changes coupled with poverty, health crises, and natural disasters, have contributed to a significant orphan population. According to the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) estimates (2021), thousands of children in Maharashtra live in state-run or privately managed orphanages. While institutional care provides basic necessities, it often fails to replicate the emotional bonds, role models, and everyday interactions of a family, leading to defective socialization a process where children do not adequately learn social norms and interpersonal skills.

1.1 Objectives of the research work:

- 1) To understand the factors causing defective socialization of orphan children.
- 2) To assess the impact on their emotional, educational, and social development.
- 3) To understand the contribution of major agents in the process of socialization.
- 4) To suggest policy measures and sociological interventions.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several scholars (e.g., Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Mead, 1934) have emphasized that primary socialization occurs in the family through intimate interactions. Indian studies (Patel 2018; Kulkarni 2020) highlight that children in orphanages often show delayed language skills, lower self-esteem, and weak peer relationships. In the Maharashtra context, NGOs such as Prerana and SOS Children's Villages have reported that institutional settings frequently struggle to provide consistent emotional care and support to the cultural grounding.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study draws on:

Symbolic Interactionism (Mead): absence of meaningful adult-child interaction hampers role-taking and identity formation.

Social Learning Theory (Bandura): limited exposure to positive role models reduces opportunities to imitate pro-social behaviour.

Structural Functionalism: family is a key social institution; its absence disrupts the transmission of norms and values.

4. METHODOLOGY

Research design: Qualitative, exploratory study.

Sample: 5 orphanages across Mumbai, Pune, Nagpur, and rural districts; 50 children aged 7–16 and 10 caregivers.

Data collection: Semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and focus group discussions.

Data analysis: Thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns in behaviour, peer interaction, and emotional expression.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Emotional and Psychological Impact:

Children frequently exhibited attachment disorders, difficulty in trusting adults, and fear of abandonment. Lack of one-to-one parental attention led to feelings of neglect and low self-worth.

5.2 Behavioural and Social Skills:

Limited exposure to diverse social roles resulted in delayed development of social etiquette, conflict resolution skills, and empathy.

Peer bonding occurred, but often in the form of competitive or survival-driven interactions.

5.3 Educational Challenges :

High dropout rates were linked to poor motivation and absence of parental guidance. Teachers reported attention deficits and irregular attendance.

5.4 Institutional Factors :

High caregiver-child ratio and frequent staff turnover reduced the quality of primary socialization.

Cultural rituals and festivals were celebrated, but without the intimate family context, weakening cultural identity.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Family-based care: Strengthen foster care and adoption programs to provide stable family environments.

Training for caregivers: Continuous professional development to ensure emotional responsiveness.

Community participation: Encourage mentorship programs and volunteers to create positive adult- child interactions.

Education support: Targeted tutoring and counseling services for orphan children.

Government-NGO collaboration: Integrate child welfare schemes with community development projects.

7. CONCLUSION

The study highlights that defective socialization among orphan children in Maharashtra is not merely an individual issue but a structural social problem. Lack of stable family environments hampers the acquisition of social norms, emotional maturity, and life skills. Effective policy interventions must focus on family-like care models, professional training for caregivers, and community engagement to ensure that orphan children can integrate into society as confident and socially responsible adults.

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