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## Socio-emotional behaviour problems of rural and urban primary school children

**Gayatri A Anikivi and Ganga V Yenagi**

### Abstract

The study was conducted to identify socio-emotional behaviour problems of rural and urban primary school children. The population of the present study was primary school children studying in 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grade of Dharwad and Bailhongal taluks. A sample of 160 rural primary school children and 80 urban primary school children were randomly selected from schools of Bailhongal and Dharwad taluks. General information schedule was prepared to collect information about the child's age, age of the mother, gender, ordinal position, caste, type of family, education of mother and occupation of parents. The child behaviour problems were measured through Child Behaviour Checklist (Teacher Report form Achenbach, 2001). The data were subjected to percentage, t-test and chi-square analysis. The result revealed that, majority of the rural and urban primary school children had normal behavioural problems. It was revealed that, rural children had higher level of externalizing and total behavioural problems, similarly urban children had exhibited more internalizing problems but it was non significant. It also revealed that, rural girls exhibited more internalizing problems compared to boys. Among urban groups, girls were found with significantly higher level of total behavioural problems compared to boys.

**Keywords:** Internalizing problems, externalizing problems, total behavioural problems, socioeconomic status, school children, gender

### Introduction

Birth to school age is the period of greatest growth and development. In the contemporary society, children are confronted with a variety of situations which are frequently associated to negative consequences on the social-emotional and academic development, and also on long term wellbeing. The early childhood years are not only a time for taking first steps or for saying first words. But also through their relationship with others, children build expectations about their world and the people. Children learn and acquire traits and behaviours that they exhibit throughout their life time. Starting school is a critical stage in child's development. In most countries children start primary school at around 6 or 7 years of age. The emergence of social, emotional and behavioral problems in children depends on the individual child's predisposition and the social context. Behavioral problems are comparatively high among students of government schools in all types of behavioral problems as compared to aided and private schools (Hiremath, 2007) [5]. Usually, the children's behavioral problems are derived from the lack of emotional and social competences and are conceptualized as internalizing and externalizing problems. Externalizing problems, including aggressive, defensive and hyperactive behaviours, are displayed when the child cannot control, self-regulate or inhibit the disruptive behaviours. These children have difficulties in understanding others' emotions and motivation and in social relations. Externalizing problems are related to lack of social functioning and academic problems in adolescence. Internalizing problems imply a high control and refer to behaviors as sadness, social withdrawal, anxiety. Internalizing problems are more specific to girls than boys, and boys show more externalizing problems than girls. Many factors are associated with behavioural problems of children, one among is gender. Internalising problems are more specific to girls than to boys. In childhood, boys show more externalising problems than girls, but regarding anxiety and depression there is no difference by gender. Girls are twice as predisposed to become depressed and anxious than boys, a pattern which continues also into adulthood. The study considered the following objectives, to study the socio emotional behaviour of rural and urban primary school children. To know the association between gender and socio emotional behavior of rural and urban primary school children. Shala and dharmo (2013) [7] revealed no significant differences in mean scores among boys and girls on total problems, internalizing and externalizing

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behaviour. Verhulst *et al.* (2003) [8], who also observed that boys scored higher than girls in externalizing problems such as aggression. Roza *et al.* 2003 [6]; Botsari 2005 [3]; Verhulst *et al.* 2003 [8], showed that internalizing behaviours such as anxiety, mood disorder and depression were more frequent in females than males. Taking into these findings the following study is chosen.

### Material and methods

The population of the present study was primary school children studying in 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grade of Dharwad and Bailhongal taluks. A sample of 160 rural primary school children and 80 urban primary school children were selected randomly from schools of Bailhongal and Dharwad taluks. General information schedule was prepared to collect information about the child's age, age of the mother, gender, ordinal position, caste, type of family, education of mother and occupation of parents.

The child behaviour problems were measured through Child Behaviour Checklist (Teacher Report form Achenbach, 2001) [1]. The checklist consists of 113 statements about the child's behaviour, and the responses are recorded as likert scale: 0 = not true, 1 = sometimes true, 2 = very true or often true. The tool assesses the internalizing problems, externalizing problems, and total behaviour problems. The raw scores were converted to T scores and classified as normal, borderline and clinical category. The data were analysed using SPSS 16.0 version. The association between behaviour problems and locality was done through chi-square, and t-test was used for comparison of means. Socio-economic status was assessed by Aggarwal scale (2005) [2].

### Results and Discussion

Distribution of children's characteristics such as age, gender, ordinal position are presented in table 1. It indicated that with regard to gender 52.50 per cent were girls, and 47.50 per cent were boys. In rural area 50 per cent were boys and 50 per cent were girls. Where as in urban area 57.50 per cent were girls and 42.50 per cent were boys.

The age of the children ranged between 6-11 years, about 54 percent of the children belonged to 6<9 years of age group, and 46 per cent of the children belonged to 9-11 years. About 39 per cent of the children were first borns, 33 per cent were of middle borns and 28 per cent of the children were last borns.

The percentage distribution of primary school children according to parental characteristics, such as mothers' age, education of mother, and occupation of mother is presented in table 2. Nearly 64 per cent belonged to younger age group and 36 per cent belonged to middle age in rural area. In urban 65 per cent of mothers belonged to middle age and 35 per cent of them belonged to younger age group. About 51 percent of rural mothers were illiterate, and 44 percent were with high school education followed by 5.62 percent with graduation. Where as in urban locale majority (70.50%) had high school education and about 28 percent were graduation.

With regard to mothers' occupation, in case of rural area majority (76.90%) were house wives, while 23.10 percent were self employed with income less than five thousand. Where as in case of urban area 53.80 per cent were self employed with income less than five thousand, about 36 percent were house wives and 10 percent were working in private sector.

With regard to type of family, In urban area 74 per cent belonged to nuclear family, 19.80 per cent belonged to

extended family and 6.20 per cent were from joint family. In rural area 48.75 per cent of the children belonged to joint family followed by 43.12 per cent belonged to nuclear family, 8.10 per cent belonged to extended family.

Regarding caste, In urban area about 74.10 per cent of children were from other back ward caste while only 16 per cent were from upper caste and 8.75 per cent were from dalit. In rural area, 75 per cent of children were from other back ward caste followed by 18.12 per cent were from dalit and 6.80 per cent were from upper caste.

Regarding the overall socio economic status, in urban area about 53 per cent belonged to upper middle level followed by lower middle and high socio-economic status (38.75% and 7.40%). In rural area majority 63.72 per cent of the children were from lower middle socio economic status and about 31 percent and 4 percent were from upper middle and high socio economic status.

The results of socio-emotional behaviour of rural and urban primary school children are presented in table 4. It revealed that majority of the rural and urban children were in normal level (73.8%) followed by clinical level (rural 17.50% and urban 13.80%) and borderline (rural 14.40% and urban 12.50%). There was no significant difference between rural and urban primary school children on levels of socio-emotional behaviour. ( $t=0.58$  and  $\chi^2=0.83$ )

Comparison between rural and urban children by levels of components of socio-emotional behaviour is presented in table 5. Regarding internalizing problems majority (69.40%) of the rural children had normal level behaviour problems, followed by clinical level (18.80%) and borderline (11.90%). In urban area 56.20 per cent of children fell in normal level followed by clinical (25%) and borderline (18.80%). With regard to externalizing problems in both rural and urban majority of the children (rural 74.40%, urban 78.80%) were in normal level followed by borderline (13.10 per cent and 11.20) and clinical level (12.50% and 10.00) There was no significant association and difference between rural and urban children on levels of components of socio-emotional behaviour.

Association between gender and socio-emotional behaviour among primary school children is presented in table 6.

In rural area with regard to internalizing problems 67.50 per cent of girls were in normal level followed by clinical level (23.17%) and 6.25 per cent were in borderline. Among boys majority (78.75%) were found in normal level followed by clinical level (13.75%) and 7.50 per cent were in borderline.

With regard to externalizing problems, in rural locale it was such that, most of the girls and boys were found in normal level (75% and 73.80%) and 17.50 per cent of girls and 8.80 per cent of boys fell under borderline, and 7.50 per cent of girls and 17.50 per cent of boys fell under clinical level.

With regard to total behaviour problems, in rural locality majority of the girls and boys found in normal level (70% and 66.20%), followed by clinical level were with same percentage (17.50%) and 12.50 per cent and 16.20 per cent were in borderline. There was no significant association found between levels of internalizing problems, externalizing problems and total behaviour problems among rural girls and boys. There was no significant difference found between girls and boys on internalizing problems, externalizing problems and total behaviour problems among rural children.

About internalizing problems in urban locality 56.80 per cent of girls were in normal level, followed by clinical level (26.10%) and borderline (17.40%). Similarly 55.90 per cent

of boys fell under normal level followed by clinical level (23.50%) and borderline (20.60%).

With respect to externalizing problems majority of the girls and boys (88.40% and 76.50%) fell in normal level followed by borderline (6.50% and 17.60%) and clinical level (13% and 5.90%).

On total behaviour problems, among girls it was observed that 78.30 per cent, 4.30 per cent and 17.40 per cent were in normal, borderline and clinical level respectively. Among boys 67.60 per cent, 23.50 per cent and 8.80 per cent were found with normal, borderline and clinical level problems respectively.

There was no significant association between levels of internalizing problems, externalizing problems among urban children, where as significant association was found in case of total behaviour problems. ( $\chi^2= 7.09$ ). Girls had significantly more total behaviour problems as compared to boys in urban locality. There was no significant difference found between girls and boys on internalizing problems, externalizing problems and total behaviour problems among urban children. Majority of the children from rural and urban area (68.10% and 73.80%) were found under normal level, and 14.40 per

cent and 17.50 per cent of rural children and 12.50 per cent and 13.80 per cent of urban children were in borderline and clinical level, respectively. More children had clinical level problems. (table4).

In case of rural locality, this might be due to poor economic status and lack of parental education. In case of urban locality, it might be due to the fact of working mothers as more than 50 per cent of children mothers were working, and the children might not have been given due care and attention. However both urban and rural children were almost similar on levels of socio-emotional behaviour.

With regard to dimensions of behavioural problems, such as internalizing, externalizing and total behaviour problems, majority of the children from rural and urban area were found to be in normal behaviour range. No significant difference was found between rural and urban children (table 5). Gender was non-significantly associated with internalizing, externalizing and total behaviour problems in rural school children, But on total behaviour problems in urban group. there was significant association, where in higher percentage of girls were found in clinical level compared to boys.(table 6).

**Table 1:** Percentage distribution of rural and urban school children according to children’s characteristics N=240

Characteristics	Category	Rural Frequency (%)	Urban Frequency (%)	Total Frequency (%)
Gender	Boys	80(50)	34(42.50)	114(47.50)
	Girls	80(50)	46(57.50)	126(52.50)
Age of the child (years)	6<9	87(54.37)	43(53.75)	130(54.16)
	9-11	73(45.62)	37(46.2)	110(45.83)
Ordinal position	First born	62(38.80)	31(38.75)	93(38.75)
	Middle born	50(31.20)	30(37.50)	80(33.30)
	Last born	48(30)	19(23.80)	67(27.91)

**Table 2:** Percentage distribution of rural and urban school children according to parental characteristics

Sl. No.	Characteristics	Category	Rural	Urban	Total
1.	Age of mother	Younger	102(63.75)	28(35.00)	130(54.16)
		Middle	58(36.25)	52(65.00)	110(45.83)
2.	Education of mother	Illiterate	81(50.61)	-	81(33.74)
		High school education	70(43.74)	58(72.50)	128(53.33)
		Graduation	9(5.62)	22(27.50)	31(12.91)
4.	Occupation of mother	House wives	123(76.90)	29(36.20)	152(63.33)
		Self employment with income < 5000	37(23.10)	43(53.80)	80(33.33)
		Services in private sector/business	-	8(10.00)	8(3.33)

**Table 3:** Percentage distribution of urban and rural school children according to familial characteristics of children N=240

Sl. No.	Characteristics	Category	Urban Frequency (%)	Rural Frequency (%)	Total Frequency (%)
1.	Type of family	Nuclear	59(74.00)	69(43.12)	129(53.33)
		Joint	5(6.2)	78(48.75)	83(34.58)
		Extended	16(19.80)	13(8.10)	28(12.00)
2.	Caste	Upper caste	13(16.00)	11(6.80)	24(10.00)
		Other backward	60(74.10)	120(75.00)	180(75.00)
		Dalit	7(8.75)	29(18.12)	36(15.0)
3.	SES	High	6(7.40)	7(4.30)	13(5.40)
		Upper middle	43(53.10)	51(31.70)	94(39.16)
		Lower middle	31(38.75)	102(63.72)	133(55.41)

**Table 4:** Percentage distribution of children on levels of socio emotional behaviour by locality N=240

Levels of socio emotional behaviour	Rural frequency (%)	Mean ± SD	Urban frequency (%)	Mean ± SD	Total frequency (%)	t-value	$\chi^2$ 0.839NS
Normal	109(68.10)	53.76 ± 10.58	59(73.80)	52.92 ± 10.53	168(70.00)	0.583 <sup>NS</sup>	
Borderline	23(14.40)		10(12.50)		33(13.75)		
Clinical	28(17.50)		11(13.80)		39(16.25)		
Total	160(100)		80(100)		240(100)		

**Table 5:** Percentage distribution of children on level of components of socio emotional behaviour by locality N=240

Socio emotional behaviour dimension	Levels	Rural Frequency (%)	Mean ± SD	Urban Frequency (%)	Mean ± SD	Total Frequency (%)	t-value	X <sup>2</sup>
Internalizing problems	Normal	111(69.40)	53.91 ± 10.76	45(56.20)	55.28 ± 10.10	156(65.00)	0.952NS	4.19 <sup>NS</sup>
	Borderline	19(11.90)		15(18.80)		34(14.16)		
	Clinical	30(18.80)		20(25.00)		50(20.83)		
	Total	160(100)		80(100)		240(100)		
Externalizing problems	Normal	119(74.40)	53.61 ± 9.71	63(78.80)	52.91 ± 7.98	182(75.83)	0.562NS	0.57 <sup>NS</sup>
	Borderline	21(13.10)		9(11.20)		30(12.50)		
	Clinical	20(12.50)		8(10.00)		28(11.60)		
	Total	160(100)		80(100)		240(100)		

NS-Non significant. Figure in parenthesis indicate percentages

**Table 6:** Association between gender and levels of socio emotional behaviour among rural and urban children N=240

Locality	Gender	Levels of socio emotional behaviour				χ <sup>2</sup>	Mean ± SD	t-value
		Normal	Borderline	Clinical	Total			
Rural	<b>Internalizing problems</b>					5.54 <sup>NS</sup>	54.05 ± 11.25	0.16 <sup>NS</sup>
	Girls	48(67.50)	13(16.25)	19(23.17)	80(100)			
	Boys	63(78.75)	6(7.50)	11(13.75)	80(100)			
	Total	111(73.12)	19(11.87)	30(18.75)	160(100)		53.77 ± 10.30	
	<b>Externalizing problems</b>					5.5 <sup>NS</sup>	53.32 ± 9.70	0.38 <sup>NS</sup>
	Girls	60(75.00)	14(17.50)	6(7.50)	80(100)			
	Boys	59(73.80)	7(8.80)	14(17.50)	80(100)			
	Total	119(74.40)	21(13.10)	20(12.50)	160(100)		53.91 ± 9.76	
	<b>Total behaviour problems</b>					0.47 <sup>NS</sup>	53.98 ± 11.77	0.26 <sup>NS</sup>
	Girls	56(70.00)	10(12.50)	14(17.50)	80(100)			
Boys	53(66.20)	13(16.20)	14(17.50)	80(100)				
Total	109(68.10)	23(14.40)	28(17.50)	160(100)		53.55 ± 9.32		
Urban	<b>Internalizing problems</b>					0.15 <sup>NS</sup>	55.91 ± 8.97	0.47 <sup>NS</sup>
	Girls	26(56.50)	8(17.40)	12(26.10)	46(100)			
	Boys	19(55.90)	7(20.60)	8(23.50)	34(100)			
	Total	45(56.20)	15(18.80)	20(25.00)	80(100)		54.82 ± 10.94	
	<b>Externalizing problems</b>					3.19 <sup>NS</sup>	54.32 ± 7.10	1.36 <sup>NS</sup>
	Girls	37(80.40)	3(6.50)	6(13.00)	46(100)			
	Boys	26(76.50)	6(17.60)	2(5.90)	34(100)			
	Total	63(78.80)	9(11.20)	8(10.00)	80(100)		51.86 ± 8.49	
	<b>Total behaviour problems</b>					7.09*	54.67 ± 8.70	1.28 <sup>NS</sup>
	Girls	36(78.3)	2(4.30)	8(17.40)	46(100)			
Boys	23(67.60)	8(23.50)	3(8.80)	34(100)				
Total	59(73.80)	10(12.50)	11(13.80)	80(100)		51.63 ± 11.60		

NS-Non significant\*Significant at 0.05 level, High mean scores indicates higher levels of behaviour problems.

**Conclusion**

Majority of the rural and urban primary school children had normal behavioural problems compared to clinical level and borderline. Mean scores revealed that, rural children had higher level of externalizing and total behavioural problems, similarly urban children exhibited more internalizing problems but it was non significant. It also revealed that, compared to boys, girls exhibited more internalizing problems in rural locale. Among urban groups, girls were found with significantly more total behavioural problems compared to boys.

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