

Situational Analysis of Street Children in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh: A Study

Mutluri Abraham

Department of Social Work, Guest Faculty Andhra University, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, India

ABSTRACT

The present article discusses about the situation of street children in Guntur City of Andhra Pradesh. Street child is 'any boy or girl for whom the street has become his or her habitual house or source of livelihood'. UNICEF estimated that there are 400,000 street children are living in different parts of India with vulnerable conditions. Guntur is one of the growing cities in Andhra Pradesh. The researcher has selected Guntur City for research setting and collected the data from 42 street children on their socio economic and living conditions by using the purposive sampling method. The study found that the mean ages of the respondents' are 14 years. About 82 per cent street children stopped their studies. The major work they are doing for their livelihood is collect old papers, cooli, begging, helper, hawker, shoe polishers, seller of flowers, etc. A small percentage of street children are, as reported by key Informants, involved in theft, snatching, pick pocketing, sex work, drug business, Informer etc. The study suggests that the Street children must be provided tender care and emotional support and good nutritive diet so that they are not exposed to occupational and health hazards. Street based education system should be developed for the street children up to mainstream them with other government schools. Given the knowledge on hazards such as HIV/AIDS, early pregnancies, abortion, substance abuse, school dropout, child abuse and related rights etc. Media should publish the success stories of restoration of street children with their family members.

Keywords: Situation, Street Children, Abuse, Protection, Welfare, Development

UNICEF and Government of India estimated that there are more than 400,000 street children are living in Mumbai,

Kolkata and Delhi, Hyderabad, Bangalore and remaining parts of India (UNICEF, 2005). UNICEF defines a street child as, "any girl or boy for whom the street has become his or her habitual abode and/or source of livelihood; and who is inadequately protected, supervised, or directed by responsible adults". Street children in India have unique vulnerabilities than other children. It is reported in Rose (2010) that the working conditions for street children are often very poor because they are confined to working in the informal sector. Lack of protection from a family

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Address for Correspondence

Department of Social Work, Guest Faculty Andhra University, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, India

E-mail:

the employers often exploit them, making them virtual prisoners and abusing them. Because of the low pay from employers, street children in India often choose to be self-employed or work multiple jobs. Street children, especially the older children, are also sometimes engaged in activities such as stealing, pick-pocketing, drug-peddling, and prostitution. Most of the street children work 8–10 hours in a day in their various economic activities (Rose, 2010).

Review of Literature

Several scholars have done research on problems of street children in India. A study “The health and well-being of neglected, abused and exploited children: the Kyiv Street children project” reveals that 70 per cent of street children have behavioral and emotional difficulties, and 74 per cent have depression. Current health problems were reported by 78 per cent, with 43 per cent described as persistent or severe. Two thirds of the children in this sample were not homeless but had chosen life on the streets in preference to permanent residence with their families.

A study on “The prevalence of mental health problem in child laborers” found that any childhood has emotional and behavioral disorders to be 16.5 per cent to 20.1 per cent. Internalizing disorders such as mood disorders were significantly higher among the laborers than the non-laborers. Anxiety disorder was seen over twofold among child laborers while psychosocial stressors were one and half times more likely among the study than controls.

A study on “Street children face many sexual risks”. Revealed that about 70 per cent are on the streets, during the day and return home at night and 20-25 per cent knows where their families are, but prefer to live on the streets. 5-10 per cent is without family and lives on the streets. About 25-33 per cent is young girls. These children face illness such as respiratory infections, skin diseases, gastro intestinal problems, trauma, sexual abuse, exploitation, unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, such as syphilis and gonorrhoea. The study states that a model programme is established for providing health, nutrition, counseling, and referral.

A study was conducted on “Mental health status of runaway adolescents”. The result suggests that 20.7 per

cent of children were found to have high hopelessness and 8 per cent of children had depression. About 38 per cent of children gave history of physical abuse. About 69.33 per cent were found to have behavioral problems, and 7.8 per cent were neurotic. The study states that the runaway adolescents suffer from a wide array of mental health problems and there is a need for a broad based psychosocial intervention programme.

Above studies in both academic and welfare literature has emphasized the worldwide problem of street children but not able to explain fully the root causes of this phenomenon. The present study summarizes the identified characteristics of street children in Guntur city and it also documents the dire consequences of a street children lifestyle for children’s health and development.

Research Methodology

Guntur is a one of big railway junctions in India. Many NGOs are reported that there are many street children are living and roming from Guntur to many places in India. It is also reported that the street children may not stay in one place. The present study has identified 42 respondents to assess the situation of street children in Guntur. The study assesses the situation of street children in the areas of education, psychological, health and abuse. There is a need to address the issues of street children in Guntur and also in India.

Guntur corporations have a high concentration of street children as compared to other cities in Andhra Pradesh. The main reasons behind the concentration of these people in the these corporation areas are the frequent crop failures due to flood and draught, uneconomic land holdings, dearth of employment, and above all the lure of the city life, which pushed rural people more and more to city. The parents who came with their children to these cities are large in number. The poor parents who could seldom earn enough to feed themselves allowed their children to grow-up unprotected and uncared for.

There are many researchers, officials and social workers who work directly with disadvantaged children in urban areas. There have also conducted many studies and published reports on this issue with various purposes and methods. Based on these existing works and studies, the researcher has analyzed the problem of street children further with a special attention on the dynamic implications.

Objective of the Study

1. To assess the socio economic demographic profiles of street children
2. To assess the psychosocial, economical and educational problems of street children.
3. To provide the suggestions and recommendations for promote quality of life of the street children in Guntur

Universe: It is estimated that there are 1500 street children are living in Guntur. They are coming to Vijayawada and Guntur frequently. The researcher identified the list of street children from the organizations working for the street children in Guntur.

Sample: Purposive sampling method has been used to identify the respondents in Guntur City. The researcher identified 42 street children and taken as sample for this study. They are from the railway stations, bus stands, parks and other hot spots of the Guntur city. The staff of the organization was shown the street children in different places but they did not involve in the research work.

Data collection and Analysis: the data collection tool is interview schedule and it has the 20 questions with socio, economic, educational and psychological issues of the

street children. The data was analysed with the help of MS Office Excel 2010. The data was entered into master sheet and divided the data into tables.

Data Analysis & Interpretation

Table 1 : Distribution of the respondents by their age

Age Group	Frequency	Percent
7-10	16	30.7
11-14	24	46.2
15-18	12	23.1
Total	42	100.00

The above graph presents that the age group of the street children in Guntur district. The data shows that majority of the street children are belongs to 11-14 years. They are staying at the bus stands and railway stations. The mean age of the respondents is about 14 years 8 months.

Some children have come out from the home and not have any relations with their parents. Some children may have the relations with their parents but they stay on the streets. Occasionally they visit their homes. The below graph present the information about the categories of street children in Guntur District.

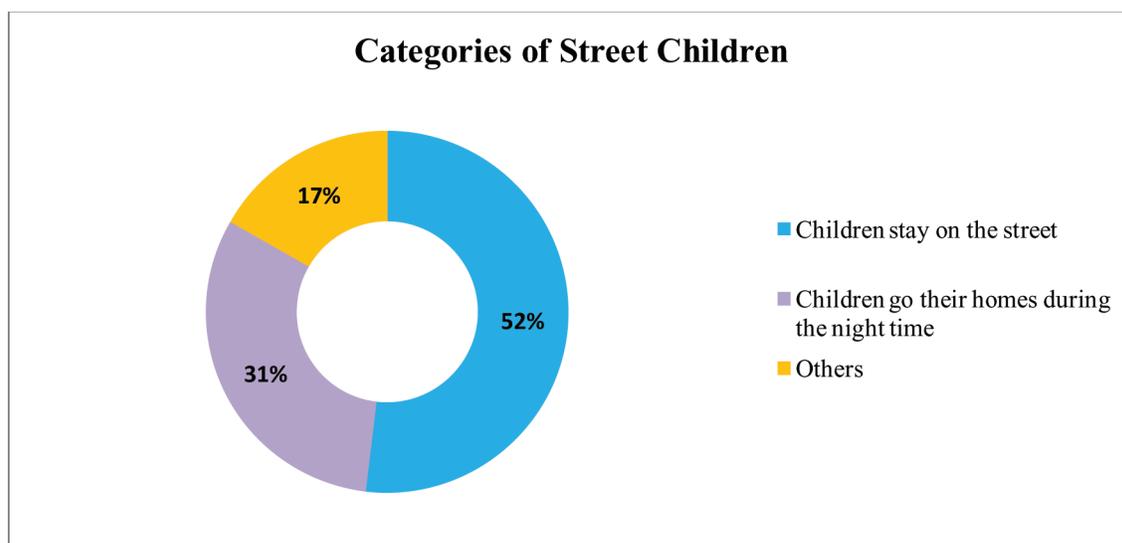


Fig. 1: Categories of Street Children

The data in the graph shows that the majority (56.9%) of the street children interviewed were children "of the street", who worked and slept on the streets. Thirty-one percent (31.4%) of the street children had homes to go to at night. Most were staying with at least one biological parent while others were staying with members of the extended family.

The 31.4 per cent of children “on the street” worked on the streets and slept at home. Nearly 12 per cent (11.8%) were children who slept both on the streets and at their homes. The last group represents the grey area

between the two categories of children “on and of” the street. This group represented children who were likely to become children “of the street” should home conditions deteriorate.

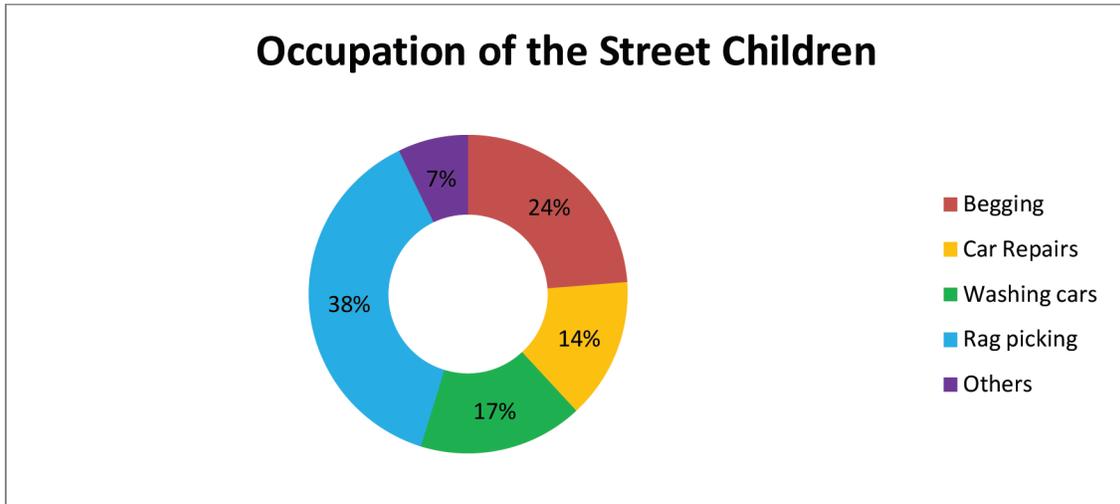


Fig.: 2 Occupation of the Street Children

The above graph presents the occupation of the street children in Guntur City. The data shows that majority of the street children are rag picking in the city and selling in the shops. Remaining street children are begging, working in car repair sheds, washing cars and doing some other works for their livelihoods. The research confirms that the majority of vendors are children on the street (58.3%)

followed by those who slept both at home and on the streets (22.3%). Ninety percent of those escorting blind parents were children on the street. The majority of beggars were children of the street (66.4%) followed by children on the street (27.3%). Those guarding cars were mainly children of the street (67.3%). Car washers were also mainly children of the street (56.3%).

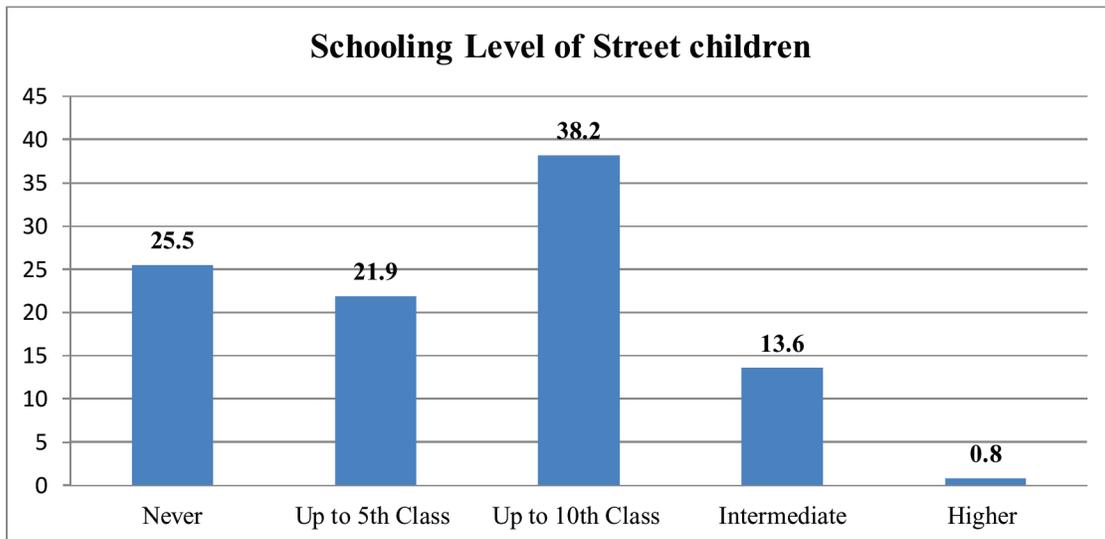


Fig. 3 Schooling level of Street Children

The data in the above chart shows that (38.2) per cent of the respondents is studied upto 10th class. Over twenty-five percent (25.5%) of the street children had never attended school. Slightly over twenty percent (21.9%) had some lower primary education. About 13.6 per cent had +2 education. The study is in line with the study of Rose (2010) which stated that children of the street were the least educated.

Table 2: Distribution of the respondents by their father's occupation

S.No	Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
1	Coolie	25	59.52
2.	Private employee	5	11.90
3.	Welding work	5	11.90
4.	Late	7	16.67
	Total	42	100.00

The above graph presents that the majority (59.52) of the respondents fathers are the coolies and remaining fathers are working in welding and private employees. The data found that 16.67 per cent respondent's fathers are died due to different reasons. The vast majority of street children reported that they spend their money on food. A little over fourteen percent reported they bought their own clothes while 22.7% spend it on meeting family expenses.

Table 3: Distribution of the respondents by the reasons to left from the home

Reasons	Frequency	Percent
Orphan-hood	13	31.0
Abused by parents, Guardians/ care givers	9	21.3
Employment	5	12.0
Earning income for family	15	35.7

The data shows that street children cited a number of reasons for being on the streets. These include earning income, being orphaned, abuse by stepfathers /stepmothers / some relatives, inadequate care and support by parents or guardians and peer pressure. The study revealed that the majority (35.7) of the street children gave earning income for their families as their main reason for being on the streets. Just over thirty percent (30.9) said they were orphans and did not have care-givers while 21.4 said they were abused by parent(s), 11.9 per cent were

employed to work on the streets and 11.9 per cent had committed a misdemeanor and had run away from home.

Table 4: Distribution of the respondents by with whom they share their problems

Sharingt	Frequency	Percent
Family Members	7	16.7
Friends	18	42.8
NGO staff	11	26.2
Others	6	14.3
Total	42	100

The data in the above table shows that about 42.8 per cent of the street children share their problems with their friends. About 26.2 per cent of the respondents share their problems with NGO staff members and remaining respondents share their problems with their parents and others like police, Gunda, doctors etc. It may be the reason that majority of the street children stay on the streets and always mingle with their friends. So that street children believe their friends than others. Sometimes they believe the NGO staff because those are working for the upliftment of Street children.

Findings of the study

1. The mean ages of the respondents' are 14 years 8 months. This indicates that majority of the street children are in teenage. Poverty and abuse by family members are the major reasons to become a street child.
2. As high as 82 percent children stopped school in order to start work while 18 per cent combined school and work together.
3. The street children are involved in a wide variety of activities. The most frequently mentioned activities are: collect old papers, cooli, begging, helper, hawker, shoe polishers, seller of flowers, etc. A small percentage of street children are, as reported by key Informants, involved in theft, snatching, pick pocketing, sex work, drug business, Informer etc.
4. Daily working hours ranges between 5 to over 12 hours in a day. The modal group is 8-12hours. The estimated average working hours was 10 hours in a day. It seems that intensity of work was not correlated with age.

5. Average daily income of the street child is between Rs. 200 to Rs. 400. They do not have the security to save the money. So that they spent all the money on the same day. Due to lack of identification proofs banks and postal department are not opening any account for them.
6. The study revealed that poverty has driven these children to the street for survival. The Government and NGOs should come forward to rehabilitate these children and initiate education and vocational training programmes so that they are able to have a better future.
7. Majority of the street children believes their friends than others. It may be reason that majority of the time they mingle with the friends on the streets

Recommendations

1. The data of the street children should be collected and maintained by the department of child welfare and Social Welfare departments.
2. Street children must be provided tender care and emotional support and good nutritive diet so that they are not exposed to occupational and health hazards.
3. Street based education system should be developed for the street children up to mainstream them with other government schools
4. They must be motivated for admission in child labour school so that their educational and curricular activities can be empowered.
5. Health education and knowledge of personal hygiene must be imparted to street children.
6. Child protection services must be provided at government level and various non-government organizations should further be coordinated with Department of Woman and Child Welfare.
7. Advocacy and protection through the government must be provided against this Human Rights Violation against these helpless children.
8. Police department should be protected the street children from the Gunda's of the street
9. Pediatricians need to be sensitized to recognize child abuse or neglect and to incorporate-rate knowledge of various aspects and the skills to address this in their activities.
10. Policy makers must be sensitized to the issue of children in street situations and the societal hazards to which they are exposed. The subtle nature of the phenomenon means that it has so far been obscured. The children on the streets of Mauritius need to be given particular attention by the concerned authorities because they are at risk of exposure to various societal hazards especially given the relatively more discrete nature of the phenomenon.
11. Given the knowledge on hazards such as HIV/AIDS, early pregnancies, abortion, substance abuse, school dropout, child abuse and related rights etc.
12. Media should publish the success stories of restoration of street children with their family members

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