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## CATEGORIES AND OCCUPATION OF STREET CHILDREN

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**Abstract:** The term 'street children' is hotly debated. The phenomenon of street children is not a recent issue worldwide. It has attracted attention of humanitarian aid agencies and governments for more than thirty years. In many cases, children and young people choose to move from a rural area to the city and then find them living on the street because they are unable to live elsewhere. Reasons for such rural-urban movement can be categorized as 'push' and 'pull' factors. It is attributed to exploitative socio and economic structure, lopsided development and inequitous resource ownership, large scale unemployment, rapid urbanisation, rural to urban migration, rapid population growth, extreme poverty, increasing disparities in wealth and income, cutbacks in government social and education budgets, high level child abuse by the parents and society, and the breakdown of traditional family and community structures etc. Street children can be categorized under different heads. A report on the status of street children in the major cities in India (IPER, 1991) indicated that the majority of identified street children in the cities were on the street category of children. Within the "of street category, most of the children had family contacts and most of their families were natives of these cities or neighbouring areas. . It clearly shows that dropout rate among the street children at the 5<sup>th</sup> class level is very high. On the whole, majority i.e. 280 respondents are in the begging profession. There is no any agency in begging profession. The main objectives of the present are Categories and Occupation of Street Children.

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**Introduction:** The phenomenon of street children is an offshoot of complex interplay of various socio-economic and cultural factors, religious, cultural, linguistic and geographical diversity. It has acquired a gigantic dimension in the wake of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation especially in the developing countries such as India. It is attributed to exploitative socio and economic structure, lopsided development and inequitous resource ownership, large scale unemployment, rapid urbanisation, rural to urban migration, rapid population growth, extreme poverty, increasing disparities in wealth and income, cutbacks in government social and education budgets, high level child abuse by the parents and society, and the breakdown of traditional family and community structures etc. The Institute of Psychological and Educational Research (IPER), Kolkata study of 5 major cities in India (Mumbai, Chennai, Kanpur, Bangalore and Hyderabad) recorded 314,000 street children (IPER 1991), another study in 1997 estimated 500,000 street children living in seven large cities (CRIN). In India, there have been various estimates of street children population. The 1991 Census recorded 18 million children. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) in 1993 had reported that India had the largest population of street children in the world. In 1999, R. Agarwal estimated that India was home to about 20 million street children, i.e. approximately 7% of the total child population of the world. Big cities draw in larger numbers of street children. India with a population of more than 1 billion in 2000 AD has the largest population of these street children in the world. The period immediately following the First World War, posed a variety of challenges to Britain

and other countries of Europe and North America. These were mainly connected to the question of how they could create a society which would preclude the cataclysm of violence and upheaval through which they had just passed. In India, the seventh largest country in the world, the country future depends upon the quality of present day children. Hence, there is every need to attend to this problem.

**Objectives:** Main objectives of the present articles are

1. To examine the Categories of Street Children and the Street Child Image
2. To examine the Educational Qualifications of the street children in study area.
3. To examine the Main Occupation and Bathing pattern of the street children in study area

**Source:** these articles based on the primary and secondary data

**Definition of Street Children:** The term 'street children' is hotly debated. Some say it is negative that it labels and stigmatizes children. Others say it gives them an identity and a sense of belonging. It can include a very wide range of children who: are homeless; work on the streets but sleep at home; either do or do not have family contact; work in open-air markets; live on the streets, railway platforms with their families or alone; live in day or night shelters; spend a lot of time in institutions (Consortium for Street Children).

According to UNICEF (as cited by Nandana Reddy in Street Children of Bangalore: A Situational Analysis (NOIDA: Government of India, 1992), street children are those for whom the street (in the widest sense of the word, i.e. unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) more than their family has become their real home, a

situation in which there is no protection, supervision, or direction from responsible adults.

#### **The operational categories of street children given by UNICEF**

1. **Children on the Street:** Forming the largest category, these are children who have homes, and most return to their families at the end of the day.

2. **Children of the Street:** These children choose the street as their home and it is there that they seek shelter, livelihood, and companionship. They have occasional contacts with their families.

3. **Abandoned Children:** These children have severed all ties with their families. They are entirely on their own, not only for material survival but also psychologically.

A Street child is a minor for whom the street (in the wide sense of the word, including un-occupied dwelling, waste land etc.,) has become his habitual abode and who is without adequate protection.

**Categories of Street Children:** Street children can be categorized under different heads. A report on the status of street children in the major cities in India (IPER, 1991) indicated that the majority of identified street children in the cities were on the street category of children. Within the "of street category, most of the children had family contacts and most of their families were natives of these cities or neighbouring areas. However, only a few of the children within the "of the street" category have no contacts with any family members, and live on their own in these cities without any supervision.

**Children of Temporarily Migrated Families:** Cities are expanding virtually daily, with numerous high-rise buildings, workshops, warehouses etc. They carry out regular construction work like those of bridges, sheds, workshops. They also attract job seekers from different areas of the state as well as from other states of the country. People come with their families and live in temporary hutments erected by them in open space. Almost all of their families expecting the toddlers work as labourers. As they are contract labourers, they go back to their native place after the work is over.

**Children of Permanently Migrated Families:** Cities are transformed into commercial centres with a large number of factories, workshops, cottage industries, handicraft centres, and small-scale industries warehouses and innumerable offices. Naturally people with inadequate income belonging to the suburbs and surrounding villages are attracted by these vocational prospects. Cities provide hundreds of them with jobs. But there are many also who fall in the way side. They are driven to lead a most precarious existence. The children of these families have no alternative expect spending all their day in the open street. Some times they do some road side odd jobs like rag-picking, shoe polishing or car washing. Quite a

good number of these children have never known what a house is. They are subjected to all sorts of hazards of the open streets of a busy city, which they accept as a part of their existence.

**Children Travelling Daily to the City:** Another group of children come to the city regularly by train or bus to hawk their wares, which are mostly rice and green vegetables. They come early in the morning and take their place near the station or in the open space and sell their goods. Some also go on hawking their wares from one place to another. After they sell of whatever they have bought, they go back to their homes.

**Children of Very Poor Families:** The fourth group of children belong to destitute families who are almost permanent residents of the city living in the street often for generations. These children are in dire need for care and protection. Many of them do not even have a memory of their past. They do not know of their roots with nothing to look back at. Many of them are born in the street and brought up there. They are half-fed and ill clothed. Begging and picking, garbage are their main occupations. They are the most vulnerable group of children who are often victims of all sorts of exploitation and abuse. Many of them often take to anti-social activities to support themselves and their families. These children need proper care and parental protection. Under pressure of severe poverty, their parents rarely have the opportunity and ability to take care of them or satisfy their basic needs. These children also do not know anything about human relation or understand social value so necessary for the healthy rearing up of children.

**Working Children:** Many of the street children are working children compelled by their needs in support of themselves and often their families. These children take-up many different types of work ranging from casual rag-pickers to regular helpers in garages or road side dhabas, tea stalls or shops. Rag picking is the major occupation, which is taken up by many children living in the street because it does not require an employer nor any capital to run it. Many children living in sheltered houses turn into street children because of this profession taken by them.

**The Street Child Image:** Children and so called street children seem to have the very opposite of a childhood. Many adults ignore them or think of them as a social nuisance (Govt. Gazette, 1960). Others want to rescue them. They are certainly mythical figures, either because they seem to be romantically free from adult worries, or because they appear to be particularly immoral or usually pathetic victims. But they are not just outlaws or waif figures photographed as part of the urban scenery (ICIHI, 1986). Some popular perceptions about street children concerning their families, future and the children themselves are noted here (NISD, 2002).

**about Their Families:** They have been abandoned by their families, They have run away from home breakdown of the family, Their families have disintegrated because of poverty, Their fathers have disintegrated because of poverty, They come from mother-headed families, They have no contact with their families

**about their future:** They will grow up to criminals, They will not survive to adulthood, They cannot be rehabilitated, They turn into terrorists and revolutionaries

**About the Children:** They are victims of starving, They are thieves, They have no choice but to be prostitutes, They are uncontrollably violent, They have lost all ability to feel emotions such as love, They do not know how to play, They have no morals, They are drug addicts, They have AIDS.

**Selection of the Sample Respondents:** Selection of the respondents is done through a purposive sample at a few places of concentration of street children in the selected three cities. For the research study, a

because of sexual abuse, They are the result of the sample of 150 street children fulfilling the operational definition mentioned above has been selected from each city. The places of concentration selected are seven in each city these include railway station, bus stand, busy centres, market centres, temples, hotels, and parks as mentioned in below tables. Selection of Sample of the Cities are Visakhapatnam(150), Vijayawada(150), Guntur(150) total are 450.

Out of the total sample of 450 street children from three cities 57 are girl children. The street children are scattered over different places pursuing a variety of work activities for their livelihood. They rarely stay for a long period at a fixed place; as such no official estimates are available about the exact number and status of street children in the selected cities. Major concentrations in the respective cities were identified, and an interview schedule was administered on the children.

#### Educational Qualifications of the Respondents

Educational Qualifications of the Respondents Table 1				
Sl.No	Education	Number	Percent	V*Percent
1	Primary (I-V)	196	43.6	71.2
2	UP (VI and VII)	72	16	26.2
3	Middle (VIII)	3	0.7	1.3
4	High school	3	0.7	1.3
	Total	274	60	100
5	Illiterate	176	40	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>100</b>	

Source: Primary data

An analysis of table 1 shows the literacy and educational status of the street children. Out of 450 respondents 274 (60 %) are literates and 176 (40%) are illiterate. Out of 274 respondents majority i.e. 196 (71.2%) studied primary (1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup>) classes and another 72 (26.2%) studied between 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> class. However, 3 (1.3%) studied Middle (8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>) classes, 3 (1.3%)

studied at high school level. It clearly shows that dropout rate among the street children at the 5<sup>th</sup> class level is very high. As compared to normal population, the educational level is very low among street children. This indicates the need for motivating these children to go to school, so that their lives will be better in future.

**Table -2 Educational Qualifications of the Respondent and frequency of Bathing**

Sl.NO	Frequency of bathing							
	<b>Educational</b>	Daily once	twice a day	once in 2 day	Once in 3 days	Weekly once	Occasionally	Never
<b>Primary(1st-</b>	74(71.20)	35(61.40)	9(64.30)	34(69.40)	25(83.30)	17(94.40)	2(100)	196(71.50)
<b>UP (6<sup>th</sup> and</b>	28(26.90%)	22(38.60%)	4(28.60)	14(28.60)	3(10.0%)	1(5.60)	0	72(26.30)
<b>Middle(8<sup>th</sup></b>	2(1.90)	0	1(7.10)	0	0	0	0	3(1.10)
<b>High school</b>	0	0	0	1(2.0)	2(6.70)	0	0	3(1.10)
<b>Total</b>	104(100)	57(100)	14(100)	49(100)	30(100)	18(100)	2(100)	274(100)

Source: Primary data, Note: Figures given in parentheses indicate percentage to column total.

Cross table 2 shows the relationship between the educational qualification and frequency of bathing of

the child. Out of 274 literate children, those taking bath daily and going unto once in 3 days constitute

82%. Those taking bath as shown in subsequent columns is only 18%. Those with primary and UP

education generally take bath regularly as falling in the first three categories.

#### Occupation:

Table 7.21 Main Occupation of the Respondents

Sl.No	Occupation	Number	Percent	V*	C* Percent
1	Begging	91	20.2	20.2	20.2
2	Begging-Cum-Collecting Garbage	74	16.4	16.4	36.7
3	Begging and Cleaning vessels in hotels	27	6	6	42.7
4	Begging and Shoe Polishing in train bogies	70	15.6	15.6	58.2
5	Paper Picking	13	2.9	2.9	61.1
6	Working in Auto Industry	50	11.1	11.1	72.2
7	Working in Service Sector	31	6.9	6.9	79.1
8	Working in Trade	45	10	10	89.1
9	Working in Manufacturing	45	10	10	99.1
10	Prostitution	4	0.9	0.9	100
	<b>Total</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	

Source: Primary data, Note:V\* means valid percent, C\*means cumulative percent

An analysis of table 7.21 shows the occupational pattern of the respondents. Out of 450 respondents, majority i.e. 91(20.2%) are engaged in begging, followed by 74 (16.4 %) begging-Cum-collecting garbage, 70 (15.6%) begging and shoe polishing in train bogies. Another 50 (11.1%) are working in Auto Industry, 45 (10%) are working in Trade, 45 (10%) are working in manufacturing, 31 (6.9) are working in service sector, 27(6%) are begging and cleaning vessels in hotels, 13 (2.9%) are paper picking, 4 (0.9%) are Prostitutes. On the whole, majority i.e. 280 respondents are in the begging profession. There is no any agency in begging profession.

**Summary:** In this article, It clearly shows that dropout rate among the street children at the 5<sup>th</sup> class level is very high. As compared to normal population, the educational level is very low among street children. This indicates the need for motivating these children to go to school, so that their lives will be better in future. Out of 274 literate children, those taking bath daily and going unto once in 3 days constitute 82%. Those taking bath as shown in subsequent columns is only 18%. Those with primary and UP education generally take bath regularly as falling in the first three categories. On the whole, majority i.e. 280 respondents are in the begging profession. There is no any agency in begging profession.

**Suggestion:** There are two types suggestion, (a) Essential to know the precise numbers of street children in each city and to know their lifestyles and (b) Basic amenities. Short term measures suggested are as follows:

1. Safe drinking water, toilet and bath room  
NGO's and Government agencies working among street children need to have more interaction. They should involve street children and law enforcement authorities to work out realistic solutions.
2. NGO's like Sulabh International to be contacted to do these works and also work together with Govt. agencies
3. Methodologies need to be developed to determine various aspects of problem
4. Child participation- using discussion and interviewing, questionnaires have been found to be innovative, fun, suitable for children and easy to manage.
5. Socio-economic reasons such as poverty, urbanization and outdated primary education that force children on street must be addressed.
6. Child labor must be abolished, Families must be offered soft loans for setting up small enterprises, and given opportunities for vocational training, Schooling must be made compulsory and accessible. Promote rural development.

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