SOCIAL STATUS OF THE STREET CHILDREN IN COASTAL ANDHRA REGION IN ANDHRA PRADESH

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Abstract: In this paper, an attempt has been made to investigate the background of 450 street children from the selected study areas of three municipal corporations in Coastal Andhra region of Andhra Pradesh. The cities covered are Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, and Guntur. The focus of the study as pursued in this paper is on the following aspects. Background features of street children such as sex, age, place of birth, religion, community, caste, education level, and main occupation, reason for living on the street, Among 450 respondents' street children from three cities of coastal Andhra region of Andhra Pradesh,india. Males constituted 87 per cent and females 13 percent. Girl children are thus a small percentage. Age and sex structure is very important for any socio-demographic analysis. The average age of the street children is 13.6 years, with a minimum of 6 years and a maximum of 17 years. In India, Hindus are the major group in the society, and hence most of the street children in the present study are found among Hindus. It is found that poverty is very high among STs and SCs, and hence they are found in large numbers among street children. Even though there are street children belonging to all communities, their presence is more in STs. It clearly shows that dropout rate among street children after the 5th class level is very high. When an attempt is made to know the reasons for children leaving their house, even though parents are alive, out of 450 respondents the main reason cited are for 34 per cent of the respondents disputes in the house, for 20 per cent improper care and lack of protection from their parents, for 17 per cent parental poverty, and for 14 per cent pressure from their parents to continue education. Surprisingly, 9 per cent felt that harassment from their parents is the main reason for their leaving home.

Introduction: This phenomenon of street children is not only reported from developing countries but it is also a worldwide experience. The nature of the problem of street children is on constant change both in size and character. The efforts to estimate the magnitude of the street children's problem are huge as this population is not adequately covered by national census. Depending on the definition used, estimates of the ber of street children across the world range from 10 to 100 million, and (the majority of them are located in major urban areas of developing countries.) with up to 40 million in Latin America, 20 to 25 million in Asia and over 10 million in Africa. In all the countries boys predominate (WHO Report, 1992) (71-97%) the street children population. In Brazil, for example, only about 10 - 15 % of street children are girls, and the figure is even lower in India (UNICEF Report). Street girls lead a more difficult life and are often exposed to sexual abuse. The seventh largest country in the world, the future of India depends upon the quality of present day children. Hence, there is every need to attend to this problem.

Methodology: Objectives: Objectives of the present article is

1. To examine the Age and sex, Birth Place, and Duration of Stay of the street chidren in study aria
2. To examine the Religion , and Community of the Respondent
3. To examine the Educational Qualifications, and Occupation of the street children in study aria

4. To examine the Reasons for Living on the Street of the street children in study aria.

Source: the study is based on the primary data

Selection of the Sample: Selection of the sample is done through a purposive sample at a few places of concentration of the street children in the three cities selected for the study. For the purpose of the research study, a 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. Out of total sample of 450 street children, 57 are girl children, the street children are scatted over different places taking a variety of work activities for their livelihood. The rarely stay for a longer periods of times 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 structured questionnaire was administered on the children.

Social Status of the Street Children.

Age and sex

Table -1 Sex of the Respondents			
Sl.No	Sex	Number	Percentage
1	Male	393	87.3
2	Female	57	12.7
	Total	**450**	**100**

Source: Primary data

An analysis of table 1 shows the sex of the respondents in the present study. Out of 450 respondents, a majority i.e. 393 (87.3%) are males, and the remaining 57(12.7%) are females. Males are the bread winners in the Indian family/society and hence, they are found in large numbers in the present study also.

Table – 2 Age of the Respondents (in completed years)			
Sl. No	Age	Number	Percentage
1	6-10	73	16.2
2	10-15	291	64.7
3	16 +(<18)	86	19.1
	Total	450	100

Source: Primary data

An analysis of table 2 shows the age of the child at the time of the survey. Out of 450 respondents, a majority i.e. 291 (64.7%) of them are between the age of 10-15 years, 86 (19.1%) are above 16 years of age, 73 (16.2%) are between 6 -10 years. The average age of the respondents is 13.6 years with a minimum of 6 years and a maximum of 17 years. The study reveals that these respondents are falling on the roads at a very young age which hinders their social, physical, psychological development.

Table – 3 Age and Habit of taking Alcohol by the Respondent				
		Habit of Alcohol		
Sl.No	Aage	Yes	No	Total
1	6-10	41(13.90)	32(20.30)	73(16.30)
2	11-15	197(67.20)	94(59.90)	291(64.70)
3	> 16	55(18.80)	31(19.70)	86(19.10)
	Total	293(100)	157(100)	450(100)

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

An analysis of cross table 3 shows the relationship between age of the child and the habit of taking alcohol. Out of 450 respondents, 293 (65.1%) consume alcohol. Among the persons consuming alcohol, those in higher age group of 11 and above constitute 86%. The proportion of the others is low. The table reveals that more the age that higher the habit of consuming alcohol. There exists a positive relationship between age and habit of taking alcohol by the respondent.

Birth Place of the Respondents Table -4 Place of Birth					
S. No	Place	Number	Place	Number (Mandal)	Number (District)
1	Rural	312 (69.3)	Same	81(18)	134 (29.8)
2	Urban	138 (30.6)	Different	369 (82)	316 (70.2)
	Total	450(100)	Total	450(100%)	450(100)

Source: Computed
Note: Figures given in parentheses indicate percentage to column total

An analysis of table 4 shows the birth place of the respondents. Out of 450 respondents, a majority i.e. 312 (69.3 %) were born in rural areas and another 138 (30.6 %) were born in urban areas. Children who were born in rural areas of the district as well as of the state migrated to Guntur, Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam cities for various reasons.

An analysis of table 4 further shows the mandal to which the respondent belongs. Out of 450 street children, a majority i.e. 369 (82.0 %) belong to a different mandal where the child is not born, and the rest 81 (18%) belong to the same mandals, namely Guntur, Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam.

An analysis of table 4 further shows the District to which the respondent belongs. Out of 450 street children, majority i.e. 316 (70.2%) belong to a different district where the child is not born and the rest 134 (29.8%) belong to the same District.

Duration of Stay of the Respondent:

Table -5 Duration of Stay in the Present Area					
Sl.No	Years	Number	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	1-5	411	91.3	91.3	91.3
2	6-10	36	8	8	99.3
3	11-15	3	0.6	0.6	100
	Total	**450**	**100**	**100**	

Source: Primary data

An analysis of table 5 shows the duration of stay of the respondents at the present place. Out of 450 street children, a majority i.e. 411 (91.3%) have been staying in the present place for about 1 to 5 years and another 36 (8%) have been staying in the present place for about 6 to 10 years and remaining. 3(0.6%) of the respondents have been staying in the present place for about 11-15 years. The average period of stay of these street children in the present place is 2.6 years with a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 15 years. It indicates that these children are spending a deprived life for pretty a long time.

Religion:

Table – 6 Religion of the Respondents				
Sl. No	Religion	Number	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	Hindu	381	84.7	84.7
2	Muslim	27	6	90.7
3	Christian	42	9.3	100
	Total	**450**	**100**	

Source: Primary data

An analysis of table 6 shows the religion of the respondents. Out of 450 respondents, majority i.e. 381 (84.7%) are Hindus, another 42 (9.3%) are Christian, and 27 (6%) are Muslims.

Community of the Respondent Table – 7 Community of the Respondents				
Sl.No	Community	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
1	OC	95	21.1	21.3
2	OBC	110	24.4	24.7
3	SC	113	25.1	25.3
4	ST	128	28.5	28.7
	Total	**446**	**99.1**	**100**
5	Not responded	4	0.9	
	Grand Total	**450**	**100**	

Source: Primary data

An analysis of table 7 shows the Community of the respondents. Out of 446 respondents, the table reveals that majority i.e. 128 (28.7%) are STs followed by 113 (25.3%) SCs, 110 (24.7%) OBCs, and 95 (21.3%) OCs. Poverty is high among STs and SCs, and hence they are found in large numbers among the street children.

Educational Qualifications:

	Table .8 Educational Qualifications of the Respondents			
Sl.No	Education	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
1	Primary (I-V)	196	43.6	71.2
2	UP (VI and VII)	72	16	26.2
3	Middle (VIII and IX)	3	0.7	1.3
4	High school	3	0.7	1.3
	Total	274	60	100
5	Illiterate	176	40	
	Total	**450**	**100**	

Source: Primary data

An analysis of table 8 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 (1st to 5th) classes and another 72 (26.2%) studied between 6th-7th class. However, 3 (1.3%) studied Middle (8th and 9th) classes, 3 (1.3%) studied at high school level. It clearly shows that dropout rate among the street children at the 5th 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 - 9 Educational Qualifications and Annual Income of the Respondents						
	Annual Income (Rs.)					
Educational	< 5000	5000-10000	10000-15000	15000-20000	20000-25000	Total
Primary (1st - 5th)	7(58.30)	95(80.50)	78(66.10)	12(60.0)	4(66.70)	196(71.50)
UP (6th and 7th)	4(33.30)	22(18.60)	38(32.20)	8(40.0)	0	72(26.30)
Middle (8th and 9th)	1(8.30)	0	2(1.70)	0	0	3(1.10)
High school	0	1(0.80)	0	0	2(33.3)	3(1.10)
Total	12(100)	118(100)	118(100)	20(100)	6(100)	274(100)

Source: Primary data

Note: Figures given in parentheses indicate percentage to column total.

An analysis of cross table9 shows the relationship between educational level and the average annual income of the respondents. Out of 274 who have studied, those with primary education constitute 71.5%, up to 26.3% of other classes is very low (2.2%). Among those who studied primary, the dominant groups are of Rs.5,000-10,000 and Rs.10,000-15,000 (48.5%, 39.8% respectively). Among children of UP, out of 72 respondents, the dominant groups are of Rs.10,000-15,000 and Rs.5,000-10,000 (52.8% and 30.6% respectively). Out of the literate respondents of 274, Rs.5,000-10,000 and Rs.10,000-15,000 are equal in representation (43.1%). In various levels of education, the two income groups noticed prominently are of Rs.5,000-10,000 and Rs.10,000-15,000.

Occupation Table – 10 Main Occupation of the Respondents					
Sl.No	Occupation	Number	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative 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
	Total	450	100	100	

Source: Primary data

An analysis of table 10 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.

Table – 11 Main Occupation and Frequency of Consumption of Food						
Consume Food						
Main occupation	Daily once	Two times per a day	One time for 2 days	When got hunger	Three times per a day	Total
Begging	50 (25.4%)	19 (12.8%)	17 (26.2%)	4 (26.2%)	1 (4.5%)	91 (20.2%)
Begging cum Collecting Garbage	38(19.3%)	17 (11.4%)	9 (13.8%)	2 (11.8%)	8 (36.4%)	74 (16.4%)
Begging & Cleaning vessels in Hotels	7 (3.6%)	10 (6.7%)	3 (4.6%)	5 (29.4%)	2 (9.1%)	27 (6.0%)
Begging & Shoe Polish in Train Bogies	28 (14.2%)	13 (8.7%)	19 (29.2%)	5 (29.4%)	5 (22.7%)	70 (15.6%)
Paper Picking	3 (1.5%)	5 (3.4%)	2 (3.1%)	1 (5.9%)	2 (9.1%)	13 (2.9%)
Working in Auto Industry	21 (10.7%)	28 (18.8%)	1 (1.5%)	0	0	50 (11.1%)
Working in Service sector	17 (8.6%)	11 (7.4%)	2 (3.1%)	0	1 (4.5%)	31 (6.9%)
Working in Trade	17 (8.6%)	24 (16.1%)	3 (4.6%)	0	1 (4.5%)	45 (10.0%)
Working in Manufacturing	14 (7.1%)	20 (13.4%)	9 (13.8%)	0	2 (9.1%)	45 (10.0%)
Prostitute	2 (1.0%)	2 (1.3%)	0	0	0	4 (.9%)
Total	197 (100.0%)	149 (100.0%)	65 (100.0%	17 (100.0%)	22 (100.0%)	450 (100.0%)

Source: Primary data

X^2 = 96.859, df =36, p< 0.05, significant. Figures given in parentheses indicate percentage to column total.

An analysis of the table 11 shows the main occupation and frequency of consumption of food of the sample respondents. Majority 20.2 per cent of the respondents reported that their main occupation is begging, followed by 16.4 per cent, 6.0 per cent, 15.6 per cent, 2.9 per cent, 11.1 per cent, 6.9 per cent, 10.0 per cent, 10.0 per cent, 0.9 per cent of the respondents were revealed that their main occupation is begging cum collecting garbage, begging and cleaning vessels in hotels, begging and shoe polish in train bogies, paper picking, working in auto industry, working service sector, working in trade, working in manufacturing and prostitute.

The table presents frequency of consumption of food of the sample respondents in relation to main occupation. Out of 450 respondents, 197 reported that they consume food daily once, of which for 25.4 per cent main occupation is begging, and very meager 1.0 per cent of the sample respondents stated that their main occupation is prostitute. Of the total 149 respondents consuming food two times per a day of which 16.1 per cent revealed that their main occupation is working in trade, and 1.3 per cent stated that their main occupation is prostitute. Regarding consuming food one time for two days of the total respondents, 65 of which 29.2 per cent reported that their main occupation is begging and shoe polish in train bogies, and very meager 1.5 per cent of the respondents revealed that their main occupation in working is auto industry. Out of 450 respondents 17 reported that they consume food when feel hungry of which 29.4 per cent stated that their main occupation is begging, and cleaning vessels in hotels, and 5.9 per cent are reported that their main occupation is paper picking. Of the total 22 respondents who consume food three times per day, for 36.4 per cent occupation is begging and collecting garbage, and for 4.5 per cent occupation is working in trade and in service sector. On calculation of chi-square calculated value of 96.859 is found to be significant because it is more than table value. The result reveals that there is a significant association between the main occupations and consumption of food of the respondents.

Reasons for Living on the Street:

Sl.No	Response	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
	Table – 12 Reason for Living on the Street			
1	Pressure from parents to continue the education	61	13.6	13.8
2	Harassment from Parents	40	8.9	9.1
3	disputes in the house	151	33.6	34.2
4	Poverty	76	16.9	17.2
5	Less care from parents	86	19.1	19.5
6	No parents	27	6	6.1
7	**Total**	**441**	**98**	**100**
8	Not responded	9	2	
	Grand Total	**450**	**100**	

Source: Primary data

An analysis of table 12 shows the reasons for children leaving their house even though parents are alive. Out of 450 respondents, 9 (2%) did not answer this question. Out of 441 (98%) respondents who answered this question, a majority i.e.151 (34.2%) revealed that the reason for leaving their house is disputes in the house, 86 (19.5%) answered the reason as less care and lack of protection from their parents. Another 76 (17.2%) answered the reason parental poverty and 61 (13.8 %) answered the reason as pressure from their parents to continue the education. Surprisingly 40 (9.1%) answered that they have faced harassment from their parents.

Suggestions:

1. There are many NGOs to address street children's problems but most of them are increasingly isolated. Government and NGOs should work together more effectively to give street children the services and attention needed to reconnect them with their families, and their communities, and develop the right attitude and skills among them by creation a conductive environment

through NGOs.

2. Advanced counselling centres should be established in villages and towns, which should guide and teach the street children the valuable human life.

3. Family based integrated educational psycho-therapeutic services should be provided to improve the life of street children.

4. Protection and care are necessary. Governments are required to do everything possible to protect street children from abuse and negligence.

5. Legal provisions against child abuse should be communicated to the employers where children are working.

6. Parents should be provided with the support system.

7. Child prostitution is a widespread problem that is not adequately addressed in our society. It should be addressed immediately.

8. Gaining access to key rights that facilitate active learning in formal education, improving family relationships, fostering employment in the formal sector, and enabling them to participate in the development activities as responsible adults.

9. There are so many rights to which street children can have access. These include protection from abuse, provision of shelter, basic economic conditions and supportive family environment, participation in school, family and community. Awareness programmes must be conducted in different centres for street children, which may guide their life in the right direction

10. There is need for intervention from government and NGOs to tackle the problems such as sexual abuse, physical illness or dangerous work.

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