

Plight of Street Children: A Study from Moradabad District, India

Shailendra Singh Rana

Ph.D Research Scholar, Lucknow University, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India

Abstract: *When it comes to the issue of child labor or child work and the pathetic conditions of children there is no dearth of research work. Most of such work is related with children working in factories, cottage industries, domestic sector and other formal or informal sectors but in this context one category of highly underprivileged children is left out. This is the category of street children. The present research work is one such humble attempt in this direction to study the socio-economic conditions of street children in Moradabad, India.*

Keywords: Child labour, Children, Street, Moradabad

1. Introduction

There is no single universally accepted definition of the term "street children". There are variations due to differences in the various ideological and theoretical backgrounds of researchers and other experts in the field, as well as differences in time and place. Definition of child labour itself has been approached in diverse ways. International Labour Organization, a major player in this field defines child labour as- "any work that deprives children of their childhood, potential and dignity and what is harmful to their physical and mental development". Work is described as that which is mentally, physically, socially and morally dangerous to children, and, work that interferes with the children schooling by depriving them the opportunity to attend school, by obliging them to leave school prematurely or that demands them to combine school attendance with heavy work. There are others who believe that the "concept of child labour should be restricted to the spheres of production and services that interfere with the normative development of children and a single estimate of child labour which includes children who are engaged in hazardous work as well as children who do non-hazardous work. children who work full time and who work part time, children who work for wages and who work as un-paid family workers is detrimental for policy purposes". India in its declaration to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child realized the difficulty in implementing the rights of the child pertaining to the economic, social and cultural rights noting several reasons due to which children work in India and found it not practical to immediately prescribe minimum ages for employment of children in each and every area of employment.

Broadly, child labour has been understood by the following characteristics:

- 1) Those children who work in exploitative, hazardous conditions.
- 2) Any child involved in an economically gainful employment.
- 3) Any child involved in work (household work) that can interfere with his/her schooling.

- 4) Any child not in school and not in the workforce (the "nowhere children"); implying that anyone not in school must be working.

Street children fall under all the above except the category of children involved in household work. The first definition is restricted to the children doing more extreme forms of child labor ignoring the children working elsewhere and it is this category most street children belong to.

In particular the term —'street children' is used for all those children —for whom the street is a reference point and plays a central role in their lives.

Ruth (2002) as quoted by Sharmila(2014) found that street children are vulnerable to exposure to physical, verbal, psychological or sexual abuse, from passersby, from employers and supervisors, or from older street children. Besides lack of adequate sanitation, shelter and nutrition, one of the most pressing health problems faced by street children presently is drug abuse, which an increasing number see as offering an escape from the harsh daily realities of family break-up, poverty, violence and homelessness.

Ganeshan (1996) in a study consisting of 100 street children conducted in Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi and Mumbai; documented the abuse of street children and their deaths in police custody. All the children reported the fear of police. His work also documented the death of 15 children in police custody from 1990 to 1994 and 1 death in remand home in 1996.

2. Objectives

Present study was undertaken with the following objectives-

- To know the socio-economic profile of street children in Moradabad.
- To know the type of abuse street children encounter.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research method

This research was a cross sectional study conducted on each respondent once only. Survey was conducted by the field investigators from 2nd January 2019 to 26th February 2019.

3.2 Characteristics of the respondents and inclusion criteria

In absence of consensus among the researchers on who is a 'street child', this term reflects many categories of children - a child beggar, a child rag picker, a child vending in the streets, a child performing acrobats etc. Street children have been broadly divided among two categories by the UNICEF. These categories have already been discussed in the 'introduction' section of this study. These two categories are- 'children of the street' and 'children on the street'. Due to the problem in precisely defining a 'street child', children falling under the above two categories were considered as street children for this research study. In addition to this any child found roaming/begging/vending in the streets, religious places, railways vicinity, bus stations/stops etc. were also considered as street children. Children who fall in the age group of 5-16 years were included in the survey.

3.3 Area of study

Present study was conducted in Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh. Moradabad is a District located in northern Uttar Pradesh and is known for its brass industry. According to Indian Census 2011, Moradabad with a population of 4,772,006 is the most populous district of Uttar Pradesh after Allahabad (now Prayagraj) with 5,954,391 population.

3.4 Sampling technique and sample size

In absence of any sampling frame associated with street children and/or their families, we used snowball and convenience sampling for selecting child for the interview. Few hesitating/unwilling children were lured with money or other things for making them participate in the study. At the time of taking the interview all the subjects (children) selected for interview were found on the streets. Few of them were either roaming on the streets aimlessly, while few others were involved in one or other type of economic activity for instance- selling petty articles, collecting rags etc. This study was conducted on 50 children. All the children were given one chocolate after the completion of the interview with them.

3.5 Tool used for data collection

For the purpose of data collection a schedule was used. Field investigators verbally explained the questions the subjects in the vernacular language.

3.6 Tool used for data analysis

Data was analyzed using SPSS 16.0 software.

4. Data analysis and interpretation

Result obtained after analyzing the collected data are presented and discussed in the following sections.

4.1 Socio-demographic profile of street children

Age distribution	Percentage
5-8	28
9-12	36
13-16	20
Above 16	16
Sex	
Male	82
Female	18
Religion	
Hindu	66
Muslim	34
Others	Nil
Reason for living on the street*	
Family factors	15(30)
Employment factors	32(64)
Others	3(6)
Night Stay	
Family owned/rented house	34
Slum	24
Places of work (dhabas/construction sites etc.)	24
Pavements/parks/place of worship	4
Any other place unfit for human habitation	12
Child engaged in	
Begging	10
Hotel labor	12
Ragpicking	2
Street vending	40
Cleaning/washing wind shields in traffic	4
Others	30
Drug use**	
Cigarette/bidi#	26
Alcohol	15
Tobacco	36
Others (solvent,whiteners etc)	30
None	24
Alive status of parents	
Father not alive	22
Mother not alive	4
Both the parents not alive	4
Both the parents alive	70

*overlap as many children were forced to come on street due to family as well as employment factors

**overlap as many children revealed taking more than one drug

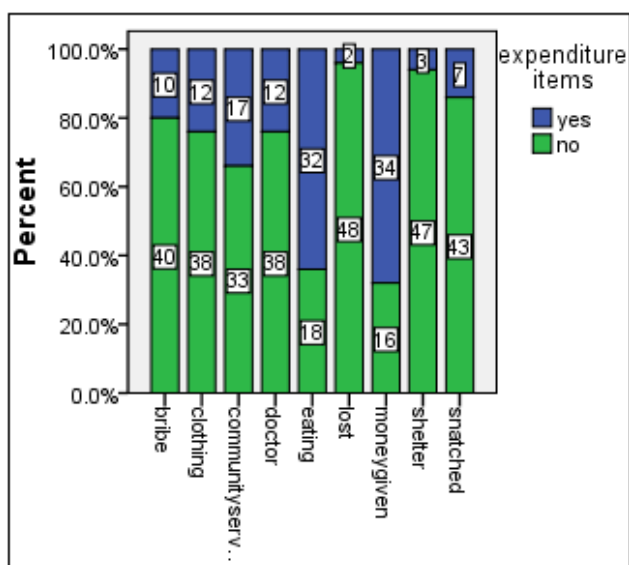
bidi is a type of cheap cigarette which is made of unprocessed tobacco that is wrapped in leaves. It is used in India and other South Asian countries

The socio-demographic characteristics reveal that majority (36%) of the street children belonged to the age group of 9-12 years. Very few of them were females (18%). More than half (66%) of the sample constituted of street children belonging to Hindu religion. The reasons for coming to street include violence in the family, family

discord, employment and hope for good life. 34% of them stay in a family owned or rented house. 40% of street children engaged in street vending, 30% were engaged in other types of petty work such as-dealing in junk, occasional domestic help etc. Majority of street children in Moradabad were addicted to cigarette/bidi, alcohol, solvent, whiteners. Both the parents of 70% of street children were alive at the time of conducting the survey.

4.2 Expenditure

64% children responded ‘yes’ to the question “do you spend money on eating out?”.68% responded ‘yes’ to the question “did you give away your money to others”? 34% responded ‘yes’ to the question “did you spend money on community services”? Detailed picture of the responses of the subjects in this regard is presented in the following stacked bar diagram.



Stacked bar diagram showing the percentage and count of children spending their earnings various items

4.3 Condition of housing and access to basic utilities

Out of 50 respondent children interviewed 30% were staying in a family owned or rented house, 28% were in slums, 26% were staying at place of work such shops, dhabas (road side eateries) construction sites etc. 12% were staying at miscellaneous places which are considered unfit for human habitation such as-in a temporary shelter using tarpaulins along the railway vicinity and under flyovers, in deserted/dilapidated buildings etc.

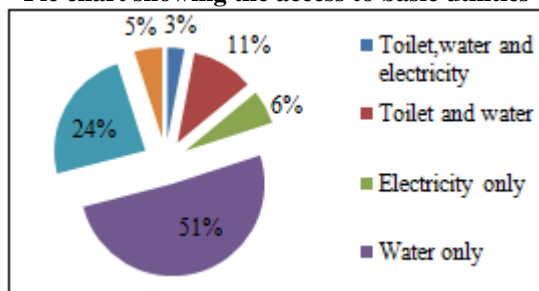
During night child stays at

Place where child stays at night	Percent
family owned/rented house	30
slum	28
Place of work (construction site, dhaba etc.)	26
Pavements/parks/places of worship	4
any other place unfit for human habitation	12
Total	100

Only 3% respondents were found to be living in places where all the basic utilities water, toilet and electricity were available. 5% were living in the conditions lacking

all the utilities. Detailed bifurcation is presented in the following pie chart.

Pie chart showing the access to basic utilities



4.4 Characteristics of abuse (type, perpetrator, escape method)

Physical abuse (62)	Count(percentage)
Slap	32(64)
Kick	14(28)
Burnt	1(2)
Hurt	15(30)
Sexual abuse (11)	
Males	3(6)
Females	8(16)
Neglect (119)	
Deprived of food	12(24)
No medical care	30(60)
Improper clothes	35(70)
No access to education	42(84)
Perpetrator (35)	
Police	10(20)
Employer	3(6)
Local bullies	5(10)
Older boys	8(16)
Parents	9(18)
Measures for escape (47)	
Ran away	30(60)
Resorted to crime	8(16)
Sought help of agencies	9(18)
Measures for escape (47)	
Ran away	30(60)
Resorted to crime	8(16)
Sought help of agencies	9(18)

Findings of the present study are in accordance with the available literature. About 20% of the street children were exploited by the police. Other studies also support the findings. About 8% to 65% of street children are reported to be harassed by police across various studies. In addition to older boys of the gang and local bullies Parents were also found to exploit children. 84% children had no access to education. Besides this majority of them were found without proper clothes and no medical care. 16% female street children were found to be sexually abused. 64% face physical abuse in the form of slap, 28% in the form of kick and 30% in other forms of hurt.

5. Limitations of the study

- 1) Due to definitional problem a substantial population of street children might have remained uncounted.
- 2) Due to the floating nature of street children it was difficult to reach them.

- 3) Rapport building with street children or with their parents for undertaking the survey was difficult and a time taking process.
- 4) Due to a part of a larger project conducted across the various districts of Uttar Pradesh, sample taken from Moradabad was limited to 50 only. Due to small sample size findings cannot be confidently generalized.

References

- [1] Gutierrez', J. (1970). Using a clinical methodology in a social study of deviant children. *Western Reserve Journal of Sociology*, 4, 1-28
- [2] Aptekar,(1988), *Colombian Street Children, Gamines and Chupagruesos, Adolescence*, Vol. 24,
- [3] Aptekar,Lewis (1988): *Street Children of Cali*, Duke University Press
- [4] Felsman, J.K. (1989) Risk and Resiliency in Childhood: the lives of street children, in T.F. Dugan & R.E. Coles (Eds) *The Child in Our Times: studies in the development of resiliency*, pp. 56-80; this work arose from a conference on 'The Child in our Times: resiliency and vulnerability – application to clinical practice', sponsored by the Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Cambridge Hospital & Department of Continuing Education, Harvard Medical School.
- [5] Korbin, J. (1981): *Child Abuse and Neglect: Cross-cultural Perspectives*, University of California Press
- [6] Agnelli, Susanna (1986), *Street Children, a Growing Urban Tragedy: A Report for the Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues*, London.
- [7] Kombarakaran FA. Street children of Bombay: Their stresses and strategies of coping. *Child Youth Serv Rev* 2004;26:853-6.
- [8] Sharmila K. (2014) Profile of Activities and Magnitude of Abuse among Street Children in Ludhiana city: a situational analysis Ph.D dissertation Submitted to the Punjab Agricultural University
- [9] Ganeshan, A. : *Police Abuse and killings of Street Children in India*, Human Rights Watch (Organization), 1996 edition.