

# A Situational Analysis of Street Children in Bhilwara City of Rajasthan

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## ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted to analyze the prevalent situations and to highlight the extent of the problems faced by the street children of Bhilwara city of Rajasthan. Objectives of the study were: (1) To formulate a database profile of street children related to their socio-demographic characteristics. (2) To use this information to facilitate and encourage the development of various programs for the help of street children. The study was conducted on a sample of 300 street children (182 boys and 118 girls) age range 12-17 years, selected from public places like railway station, bus stand, footpath/pavements, under bridges of Bhilwara city Rajasthan. The descriptive survey was conducted with the help of self prepared semi-structured interview schedule to collect data.

**Keywords:** Urbanization, UNICEF, SOCIO, BOSCO

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the world today “the process of urbanization has become a phenomenon which is inevitable. In fact, it has gripped the entire human society. While the developed countries have almost completed the cycle of the process of urbanization, and are grappling with the problems created by the rapid growth of cities, the developing countries are engaged in exploring solutions to the problems created by a rather unplanned and haphazard growth of cities. However, one major consequence of waves of migration to the cities is ‘population boom’ in the cities. A large number of these migrants have no access to the basic services and amenities and have been constantly involved in the struggle for survival. These are the people who migrate from the rural areas and settle down in slums, jhuggi jhopad pattis, shantytowns, or squat on wherever there is vacant land available. Some of them even cannot get this and lead their life on city streets, pavements, in public places, parks, etc., perhaps looking daily for a place to spend night. A more serious and vulnerable group of the urban poor that is growing rapidly in big cities is that of street children and working children, with a home or without a home. Many of them may be just the runways, as a result of broken

homes, allured by the city life and have no alternative to staying on the streets.

Although efforts are being made through planning and urban community development to supply the basic services and amenities of life to the slum dwellers to improve their quality of life, the challenge is of a magnitude and size that often eludes planners. In fact, their target groups swells again making implementation of little consequence. However, the problem of the urban poor was identified long back and in comparison the phenomenon of the street children is a recent one. It is stated that the Latin American countries were the first to recognize it in their cities being the phenomenon of a magnitude and size which warranted the attention of all concerned.

However, the problem of street children is a global one and exists in both, the developed as well as developing countries, with a difference in its size and magnitude. But the countries are becoming more and more urbanized the number of the street children is swelling. Many cities of India are still facing the challenges of dealing with the problems of street children. Therefore, the government of India has to pay serious attention to the problem of street children and both the prevention

and rehabilitative measures may have to be planned and implemented simultaneously and effectively.

According to UNICEF Street Children- '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'.

Street children are the most marginalized and vulnerable section of our society. Poverty, breakdown in family relationships, abuse, abandonment, social disturbances and attraction to city life are some of the major factors pushing children to the streets. Surviving on streets, children face multiple risks and vulnerabilities including psychological trauma, physical and sexual abuse, malnutrition and economic exploitation (WHO, 2000; Thomas de Benitez, 2011; Save the Children, 2011). Further, the alarming increase in number of children landing in metropolitan cities also contributes to the extent and severity of the problems and vulnerabilities faced by these children (Mathur, 2009). Therefore, care and protection of street children living on streets necessitates immediate response and action from decision makers and programme implementers.

### **Need of the Study**

It is important to study the situations, patterns of their existence and life challenges of street children in order to identify the potential precursors, future risks, reasons and nature of the problem among them. Street Children live in more hostile circumstances and are among the most vulnerable groups of society. Literature indicates that there is dearth of prevention and intervention programmes for Street Children. Situational analysis among these children is informative and essential to identify the future risk at right time. Their unfulfilled physical, emotional, social, cultural, as well as the economic needs make them victims of exploitation and abuse. Such children are more prone to develop antisocial tendencies because of their unloved and unprivileged conditions that associated with severe and frequent conduct problems and criminal behavior. Therefore it becomes mandatory to understand and study the prevalence, conditions and nature of challenges

among street children. The reasons for studying and analyzing their life situations allows for the possibility of prevention, interventions, and effective risk management.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study is designed with the following objectives:

- To analyze the situations of street children in Bhilwara City of Rajasthan.
- To understand the patterns of their existence.
- To formulate a database on street children to facilitate program and interventions for their help.

## **II. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

The Descriptive survey method was used in the study. The present study was a situational analysis of street children in Bhilwara City of Rajasthan.

### **Sample of the Study**

This study is conducted on a sample of 300 street children, 182 boys and 118 girls, age range 12-17 years, selected from public places like railway station, bus stand, footpath/pavements, under bridges of Bhilwara city Rajasthan. Convenient sampling technique was used for sample selection.

### **Tools Used**

Self-prepared, semi- structured interview schedule was used for the purpose of data collection.

## **III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF STREET CHILDREN**

The data collected regarding socio-demographic characteristics are presented in table below. The socio-demographic characteristic of any population are inevitable part of any descriptive research, therefore, socio-demographic profile of street children was studied.

<b>SOCIO DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF STREET CHILDREN</b>		
<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Age Group</b> (subject of approximation)		
12 to 13	106	35.33
14 to 15	76	25.33
16 to 17	118	39.33
<b>Gender</b>		
Boys	182	60.66
Girls	118	39.33
<b>Levels of Education</b>		
Illiterate	260	86.66
Primary	37	12.33
Middle	3	1
<b>Presence/absence of Parents</b>		
Both parents present	252	84
Both parents absent	15	5
Only father present	13	4.33
Only mother present	20	6.66
<b>Living with</b>		
With parents and siblings	250	83.33
With father and siblings	10	3.33
With mother and siblings	18	6
Alone	22	7.33
<b>Places of living</b>		
Jhuggi Jhopadi (Temporary Shelters)	158	52.66
Footpath & pavements	98	32.66
Railway stations	30	10
Under bridge and other places	14	4.66
<b>Substance use</b>		
Yes	198	66
No	102	34
<b>Reasons to use substance (198 respondents )</b>		
Fatigue and Lack of sleep	74	37.77
Company of friends	55	27.77
Tension & Stress	52	26.26
Own choice	17	8.58
<b>Assault</b>		
Assaulted	167	55.66
Non-assaulted	133	44.33
<b>Type of assault (167)</b>		
Physical Assault	71	42.51
Psychological Assault	96	57.48
<b>Nature of work</b>		
Construction workers	119	39.66
Street vendors	43	14.33
Rag pickers	64	21.33
Tea stall	30	10

Rickshaw pulling	27	9
Car washing	2	0.66
Shoe polishing	2	0.66
Garage	4	1.33
Not involved in any work	9	3
<b>Working hours</b>		
8-10 hr./day	300	100
<b>Daily Income</b>		
30-50 rs./day	77	25.66
70-100 rs./day	150	50
120-150 rs./day	30	10
Not fixed	34	11.33
No income	9	3
<b>Health status (as reported by respondents)</b>		
Normal	220	73.33
Frequent fever and cough	59	19.66
T.B.	12	4
Handicapped	9	3

**Note:** All of the respondents were living on streets since their childhood. Poverty, unemployment and broken families were among the common reasons of their stay on streets.

**Above table has been elaborated under the following description:**

**Age Group:** As evident in the table around 35 percent street children were in the age group of 12-13 years whereas 25 per cent children were in the age group of 14-15 years, and 40 per cent of the street children were in the age group of 16-17 years. The maximum number of boys and girls were within the age group of 16-17 years.

These age groups have been divided on the basis of approximation because these children and their parents were unable to mention the exact age of these children and also they had no proofs related to their ages.

**Gender** – As it is reflected in table, 61 per cent respondents were boys whereas 39 per cent were girls.

**Levels of Education:** After analyzing the level of education of street children it has been observed that majority of children almost 87 per cent were illiterate, 12 per cent have had education up to primary level and only 1 per cent studied up to middle level school.

The survey highlighted the fact that one of the main reasons of illiteracy among street children was poverty.

**Presence/absence of parents:** The data showed that both parents of 84 percent of the children were alive; only mother was alive in 7 percent cases, only father

was alive in 4 per cent cases. While in 5 per cent cases both parents were died. Therefore mostly children were living with their parents.

**Living With:** Study showed that 83 per cent of the street children were living with their parents and siblings, 4 per cent of street children were living with father and siblings, 6 per cent were living with mother and siblings and 7 percent street children were living alone. In some cases there was no valid reason for not living with parents. Some of the street children were left by the parents and in some cases parents were dead so there was nobody to look after them.

**Places of Living:** Street children were a common sight in the city. They were found all over the city- at the railway stations, under the bridges, on pavements, in parks, etc. Data revealed that about 53 per cent of the street children were living in suffocating temporary shelters (Jhuggi Jhopadi). About 33 per cent were living on footpaths and 10 per cent on the railway platforms. About 4 per cent children were living under the bridges. Study showed that all the respondents were living on streets since their childhood and poverty, unemployment and broken families were common reasons among them.

**Substance use:** Table revealed that 66 per cent street children were involved in substance use whereas 34 per cent were not involved in substance use.

**Reasons to use drugs:** The data in the table revealed that mostly 37 per cent street children were habitual users of tobacco, alcohol and smoking. According to

them the reason of using these drugs was to reduce fatigue and sleeplessness. Some of them 28 per cent were using alcohol, tobacco, smoking for enjoyment purpose. For 26 per cent street children reasons were tension & stress and for 9 per cent street children it was a matter of their will.

**Assault:** Table showed that out of a total number of respondents 56 per cent street children were assaulted whereas 44 per cent were not assaulted.

**Type of assault:** Out of the assaulted respondents majority 57 per cent were psychologically assaulted while 43 per cent of street children were physically assaulted.

**Nature of work:** Street children were engaged in a variety of jobs like working at construction site as labor, tea stalls, hotels, garages etc. some of them were self-employed as shoeshine boys, street vendors, rag pickers, rickshaw pullers etc. As evident in the table 4.1 majority 40 per cent street children were involved in construction work whereas 14 per cent were working as street vendors, 21 per cent were involved in rag picking and 10 per cent were working in tea stalls while 9 per cent children were rickshaw pullers and 0.6 per cent were working as car washers, around 0.6 per cent were shoe shining boys and 1 per cent street children were working at garage. Among all 3 per cent street children were not involved (unemployed) in any work for that period of time.

**Daily Income:** Out of the total number of street children, majority 50 per cent were reported their daily income between Rs 70 and Rs 100. The daily earnings of 26 per cent street children were in between Rs 30 and Rs 50. The daily income of 10 per cent street children was in between Rs 120 and Rs 150. Around 11 per cent of these children reported that their daily income was not fixed, while 3 per cent street children reported that they have no income in a regular manner.

**Health Status:** Out of a total sample of street children mostly 73 per cent street children were reported as normal whereas 20 per cent were reported frequent fever and cough. 4 per cent street children were T.B. (tuberculosis) patients while 3 per cent street children were handicapped.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The study has attempted to analyze the situations, challenges and pattern of street children's existence and

life in order to identify the future risk factors that are related to their conditions, nature and characteristics of the problem. It is found that street children were living in more hostile circumstances and are among the most vulnerable groups of society their unfulfilled physical, emotional, social, cultural, as well as the economic needs make them victims of exploitation and abuse these children are more prone to develop antisocial tendencies because of their unloved and unprivileged conditions that are associated with severe and frequent conduct problems and criminal behavior. Findings indicate that situational analysis among these children is informative and essential to identify the associated risk factors at right time so that it can be resolved through prevention and interventional programmes". Studying and analyzing the life situations of street children allows for the possibility of prevention, interventions, and effective risk management.

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