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AN ANALYSIS OF PROBLEMS FACED BY THE STREET CHILDREN AT LAHORE

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ABSTRACT

The fundamental objective of the research is to shed light the problems of street children which they are facing in their street life. The study is conducted in the city of Lahore which is famous for serial killing of street children in the past. The field based, exploratory type of study uses both qualitative and quantitative methods of research and weighted from data collected. Observation and a structured interview schedule were used as a tool for data collection from the field. Different statistical techniques and scientific hypotheses were used for the purpose of interpretation of the results. The results of the research depicts the miserable condition of street children through high lighting their major problems of harassment, accommodation problem, physical torture, humiliating behavior and sexual abuse. Present research also indicate that majority of the street children were living at hired room while some of them were living at public places i.e., shrine, parks, graveyard and bus stop waiting rooms. The research also depicts that majority of the street children had future plans which indicate that were not satisfied with their current life and wanted to go back to their homes. The research reveals the dire need of initiating such programmes with the cooperation and combination of public and private organization which directly addresses to the root causes of the street children phenomenon.

Key Words: Street children, Problems, Harassment

INTRODUCTION

Children are the real assets and the future architects of society. They are very precious, delicate and need proper care. They are the most vulnerable segment of society because they are not independent rather than dependent on others. Childhood is the most significant, pompous as well as delightful phase of human life but not for those who are caught up by the cruel clutches of decree,

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not permitting them to heave up their mind and heart with many inner most wishes and inclinations. But those who strive for really endeavor to mean it, particularly true for street children preferring to shun their home to find out the horizon of their wishes and dreams.

Street Children are the unwanted gifts of economic growth, war, poverty, lost of traditional values, domestic violence, physical and mental abuse. Every street child has a reason for street life, while some children are deceived by the promise of excitement and liberty; the majority is pushed onto the street by the desperation and realization that they have nowhere else to go. If the problem of street children is explored at the inner level, it would not futile to say that poverty and parental negligence lies in the background of the street children and their needs and problems are a result of wanting to fulfill basic needs for survival. The enigma of street children demands and requires an understanding that who they are, what they need, what they do and how they can be identified and how this problem can be solved by our sincere practical efforts.

These street children are deprived of their basic human rights. In some cases, they do not find the guidance of their parents to be best nurtured children of the society. Their circumstances compel them to be on the street. As Waghid proves that the Street children phenomenon is an alarming and escalating worldwide problem representing one of the more pressing issues in field of child welfare. No other global child welfare problem is as significant as the loss of human potential experienced by millions of children who are being reared outside of the institution of family and education in the often perilous street environment.

Chetty also confirms this research statement that life in the street is difficult and that children are essentially alone. He adds that it might be happen that child fails to obtain some food, shelter, clothes, medical services and other relevant basic needs for child care and well being .

They fall prey to merciless and callous clutches of these unavoidable circumstances. In order to seek pleasure and comfort, they say adieu to their home. In doing so, they absolutely forget and neglect these pitiless clutches of the decree.

It is estimated that there are 10 to 100 million street children in the world today. These children live a transitory life style and are vulnerable to inadequate nutrition, physical injuries, substance use and health problems including sexual and reproductive health problems. Some street children are “on the street” which mean they still see their families regularly and may even return every night to sleep in their family homes. “Children of the street” on the other hand, have no home but the street. In present research, children of the street are focused.

In Pakistan, street children are deprived of their basic needs and rights. They have limited access to social services. Being separated from their families, they are deprived of parental care guidance and love which are significant factors in the healthy development of a child. They are at the mercy of

criminals, police drugs addicts and smugglers. Unhealthy living environment, lack of proper food, shelter and basic health services make them vulnerable to different types of diseases including sexually Transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV /AIDS, exploitation and abuse. They are heavily into substance abuse, glue being the cheapest and the most accessible of all the substances. They are socially rejected and lookdown by the society, due to which they develop negative attitude towards society which has life long effect and some time force them to indulge in anti social activities. The problem of street children is not that particular individual or family, it is problem of society which has to be eliminated by addressing the root causes of the problem (Spark, 2007). So this drastic plight calls for serious consideration to have the deep study of the problem.

Pakistan is also confronting the problems of street children like many other countries. No statistics are available related to street children in Pakistan. It is just estimated that 10,000 street children are present only in the city of Lahore.

The objectives of this study are following.

1. To know about the personal profile of street children.
2. To identify the socio-economic activities of street children.
3. To find out the problems of street children.

METHODOLOGY

Methodological techniques are very important for analyzing sociological problems empirically. Sound methodology is vitally important to establish chain for knowledge and empirical verification of hypothesis. The population for the study consisted of street children who were spending their life away from their home at least for one month ago and they have no or very little contact with their families. Present study is conducted at Lahore city. Different areas i.e., Data Darbar, Railway station, Minar-e-Pakistan, Laxmi Chock, Regal Chowk and Badami Bagh were the focal locals of the study. 370 street children were selected as a sample size through purposive sampling.

According to Lawrence Neuman, “Purposive sampling is an acceptable kind of sampling for special situation. It uses the judgment of an expert in selecting cases with a specific purpose in mind”.

Data was collected with the help of a well structured interview schedule. Collected information's were analyzed through SPSS software. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table-1. Background of the Respondents

Age (in years)	Frequency	Percentage
9-11	76	20.5
12-14	111	30.0
15-17	183	49.5
Total	370	100.0
	Mean age = 14.90	Std. Dev. = 3.18
Number of siblings	Frequency	Percentage
1-4	91	24.6
5-8	208	56.2
9 and above	71	19.2
Total	370	100.0
	Mean = 6.24	Std. Dev. = 3.78
Geographical Background	Frequency	Percentage
Urban	123	33.2
Rural	247	66.8
Total	370	100.0
Earned family members	Frequency	Percentage
One	166	44.9
Two	145	39.2
Three	59	15.9
Total	370	100.0
Dependent family members	Frequency	Percentage
1-4	88	23.8
5-8	165	44.6
9 and above	117	31.6
Total	370	100.0

Above table indicates that about one-fifth i.e., 20.5 percent of the respondents had 9-11 years of age, while 30.0 percent of the respondents had 12-14 years of age and about a half i.e., 49.5 percent of the respondents had 15-17 years of age. Mean age of children was about 15 years.

Table also presents the number of siblings of the respondent. As the siblings play an important role in the life of children, so the numbers of the siblings of the respondents were asked. About one-fourth i.e., 24.6 percent of the respondents had the siblings 1-4 in number. A majority i.e., 56.2 percent of the children had the siblings 5-8 in numbers and little less than one-fifth i.e., 19.2 percent of them had the siblings 9 and above in number. Average number of siblings (as calculated by mean) was almost 6.

Table also indicates that about one-third i.e., 33.2 percent of the respondent's family belonged to urban areas, while a majority i.e., 66.8 percent of the respondent's family belonged to rural areas. In our rural areas has less entertainment, educational and economic opportunities as compare to urban areas, so due to more attraction majority of the children run towards cities.

Table further depicts that a major proportion i.e., 44.9 percent of the respondents had one earning member, while 39.2 percent of the respondents had two earner family members and remaining 15.9 percent of the respondents had three earner family members. It indicates low economic status of the respondents' family.

Table also reveals that 23.8 percent of the respondents reported that in their family 1-4 dependent members, while a major proportion i.e., 44.6 percent of the respondents said that 5-8 family members were dependent and 31.6 percent of them told that 9 and above family members were dependent.

Table-2. Distribution of the Respondents According To Their Total Family Members and Family Income

Family size (Nos.)	Frequency	Percentage
1-6	134	36.2
7-12	147	39.7
13 and above	89	24.1
Total	370	100.0
Monthly Family Income (Rs.)	Frequency	Percentage
Up to 4000	191	51.6
4001- 8000	127	34.3
Above 8000	52	14.1
Total	370	100.0

The size of family is an indicator of economic growth. Family members include all the persons (adults and children) living in a house. Respondents were asked about the number of family members. Data in table indicate that 39.7 percent of the respondents had 7-12 family members, 36.2 percent of the respondents had 1-6 family members and 24.1 percent of the respondents had 13 and above family members. Table also presents the approximate family monthly income of the respondents. Table depicts that slightly more than a half i.e., 51.6 percent of the respondents had up to Rs. 4000 family monthly income, while about one-third i.e., 34.3 percent of them had Rs. 4001-8000 monthly family income and only 14.1 percent of the respondents had above Rs. 8000 monthly family income. Above table presents the picture of poverty among the respondent's family.

Table-3. Distribution of the Respondents According To Their Activities before Leaving Home

Activities	Frequency	Percentage
Studying	49	13.2
Working	277	74.9
Do nothing	44	11.9
Total	370	100.0

Above table presents the activities of the respondents before leaving home. Data indicate that only 13.2 percent of the respondents were studying before leaving home, while a significant majority

i.e., 74.9 percent of the respondents was working before leaving home and remaining 11.9 percent of the respondents told that they do nothing before leaving home.

Table-4. Distribution of the Respondents According To Their Education Level

Education level	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	60	16.2
Below primary	98	26.5
Primary	87	23.5
Below Middle	54	14.6
Middle	42	11.4
Below Matriculation	21	5.7
Matriculation	8	2.2
Total	370	100.0

Above table shows that 16.2 percent of the respondents were illiterate, while more than one-fourth i.e., 26.5 percent of the respondents were below primary and less than one-fourth i.e., 23.5 percent of them were primary passed. About 14.6 percent of the respondents were below middle and 11.4 percent of them were middle passed. Only 5.7 percent of the respondents were below matriculation and 2.2 percent of the respondents were matriculated.

Table-5. Distribution of the Respondents According To Their Type of Work

Type of work	Frequency	Percentage
Vehicle cleaning	64	17.3
Work at tea shop	84	22.7
Massage work	58	15.7
Shoes polish	52	14.1
Flower selling	44	11.9
Not working	68	18.4
Total	370	100.0

Above table presents the type of work of the respondents. About 17.3 percent of the respondents were involved in vehicle cleaning, 22.7 percent were doing work at tea shop and 15.7 percent of the respondents were doing massage work. About 14.1 percent of the respondents were shoes polisher, 11.9 percent were flower seller and remaining 18.4 percent of them were not doing any type of work.

Table-6. Distribution of the Respondents According To Their Residential Pattern

Residential pattern	Frequency	Percentage	
Room hired	250	67.6	
Public places	Shrine	70	18.9
	Parks	30	8.1
	Graveyard	11	3.0
	Bus stop waiting room	9	2.4
	Total	370	100.0

Above table presents the residential pattern of the street children. A large majority of the respondents i.e., 67.6 percent were living in hired room and other were living at public places i.e., 18.9 percent at Shrine, 8.1 percent at parks, 3.0 percent at graveyard and 2.4 percent at Bus stop waiting rooms.

Table-7. Distribution of the Respondents According To Their Food Getting Way

Food getting way	Frequency	Percentage
Lunger Khana of Shrines *	250	67.6
Purchase readymade	20	5.4
Self cooked	16	4.3
Provided by owner	84	22.7
Total	370	100.0

* Free food point at Shrines

Above table presents the food getting way by the respondents. A large majority i.e., 67.6 percent of the respondents reported that they getting food from Lunger Khana of Shrines, 5.4 percent of the respondents were purchased readymade food, 4.3 percent were self cooked and 22.7 percent of the respondents told that the food provided them by the owner.

Table-8. Distribution of the Respondents According To the Type of Substance They Used

Type of substance	Yes		No		Total	
	Freq.	%age	Freq.	%age	Freq.	%age
Opium	5	1.4	354	98.6	359	100.0
Hashish (Chars)	27	7.5	332	92.5	359	100.0
Heroin	10	2.8	349	97.2	359	100.0
Alcohol	22	6.1	337	93.9	359	100.0
Glue sniffing	141	39.3	218	60.7	359	100.0
Cigarette	215	59.9	144	40.1	359	100.0
Pan	56	15.6	303	84.4	359	100.0
Gutka	77	21.4	282	78.6	359	100.0
Niswar	82	22.8	277	77.2	359*	100.0

* 11 respondents never used substance.

Table No. 8 presents the type of substances used by the respondents. Table reveals that 5 (1.4%) respondents used opium, 27 (7.5%) used Hashish (Chars), 10 (2.8%) respondents used heroin and 22 (6.1%) respondents were drinking Alcohol. Whereas 141 (39.3%) of the respondents used Glue sniffing, a majority i.e., 215 (59.9%) of the respondents were smoker, 56 (15.6%) of them used Pan, 21.4 percent used Gutka and 22.8 percent of them used Niswar.

Table-9. Distribution of the Respondents According To the Type of Health Problem They Faced

Health problems	Frequency	Percentage
Stomach problem	107	28.9
Fever	86	23.2
Pain in body	60	16.2
Weakness	37	10.0
Any other (hepatitis, skin infection, teeth problem, allergy etc.)	10	2.7
No health problem	70	18.9
Total	370	100.0

Above table presents the health problems of the respondents. Most of the respondents had stomach problem (28.9%) and 23.2 percent of them were suffering from fever and 16.2 percent had pain in body. About one-tenth i.e., 10.0 percent of the respondents felt weakness and 2.7 percent of them were suffering any other problems i.e., hepatitis, skin infection, teeth problem, allergy etc. Whereas 18.9 percent of them had no health problem.

Table-10. Distribution of the Respondents According To the Problems of Street Life

Problems	Yes		No		Total	
	Freq.	%age	Freq.	%age	Freq.	%age
Harassment	160	43.2	210	56.8	370	100.0
Accommodation problem	106	28.6	264	71.4	370	100.0
Physical torture	100	27.0	270	73.0	370	100.0
Humiliating behavior	84	22.7	286	77.3	370	100.0
Sexual abuse	69	18.6	301	81.4	370	100.0
Transportation	28	7.6	342	92.4	370	100.0
Uncomfortable weather	17	4.6	353	95.4	370	100.0

Above table presents the problems of street life faced by the respondents. A major proportion i.e., 43.2 percent of the respondents faced the problem of harassment, 28.6 percent of them had accommodation problem and 27.0 percent of the respondents faced physical torture problem. About 22.7 percent of the respondents were facing humiliating behavior, 18.6 percent of them faced sexual abuse, 7.6 percent of them faced transportation problem and 4.6 percent of them faced uncomfortable weather problem.

Table-11. Distribution of the Respondents According to the Missing Their Family and Wanted to Go Back To Home, Knowledge About Stds, Aids & Child Rights

	Yes		No		Total	
	Freq.	%age	Freq.	%age	Freq.	%age
Missing their family	305	82.4	65	17.6	370	100.0
Intention to go back home	193	52.2	177	47.8	370	100.0
Knowledge about STDs	59	15.9	311	84.1	370	100.0
Knowledge about AIDs	207	55.9	163	44.1	370	100.0
Knowledge about child rights	91	24.6	279	75.4	370	100.0

Above table indicates that a huge majority i.e., 82.4 percent of the respondents reported that they were missing their family; while 17.6 percent of them were never miss their family. Table also depicts that little more than a half i.e., 52.2 percent of the respondents had intension to go back to home and remaining less than a half i.e., 47.8 percent were never like to go back to home. Table further shows that 15.9 percent of the respondents had knowledge about STDS and a huge majority i.e., 84.1 percent of them was replied negatively. Table also presents the respondents' knowledge about AIDS. A majority i.e., 55.9 percent of the respondents had knowledge about AIDs and 44.1 percent of them were replied negatively. Table further presents the respondents' knowledge about child rights. About one-fourth i.e., 24.6 percent of the respondents had knowledge about child rights and a large majority i.e., 75.4 percent of them were replied negatively.

Table-12. Distribution of the Respondents According To the Type of Their Future Plan

Type Of Plan	Frequency	Percentage
To go back home	193	52.2
To establish their own business	40	10.8
Marriage	21	5.7
To work in film industry	61	16.5
Any other	27	7.3
No future plan	28	7.6
Total	370	100.0

Above table present the type of future plans of the street children. Little more than a half i.e., 52.2 percent of the respondents wanted to go back to home in future, while 10.8 percent of them wanted to establish their own business. About 5.7 percent of the respondents wanted to be marry in future, 16.5 percent of the respondents had interested future plan, they aim to do work in the film industry and 7.3 percent of them had any other future plans. Remaining 7.6 percent of the street children had no future plan.

CONCLUSIONS

It was concluded that the street children were facing a lot of problems in their street life. The results of the research depicts the miserable condition of street children through high lighting their major problems of harassment, accommodation problem, physical torture, humiliating behavior and sexual abuse. It is also concluded that majority of the street children were living in hired room while some of them were living at public places i.e., shrine, parks, graveyard and bus stop waiting rooms. It is also concluded that majority of the street children had future plans, which indicate that they were not satisfied with their current life and wanted to go back to their homes. The research reveals the dire need of initiating such programmes with the cooperation and combination of public and private organizations which directly addresses to the root causes of the street children phenomenon.

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