



Street Children's Situation in Tehran (Iran) and Hyderabad (India) – A Descriptive Study

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Abstract:

The primary interest of present study is to descriptive about street children situation in Tehran (Iran) and Hyderabad (India) cities. 150 children (female=75, male=75) were selected based on the simple random sampling from rehabilitation homes in each city (150 children in Tehran and 150 children in Hyderabad) and the total of 300 children were involved in the study. Data was collected via personal and family information data sheet. Research findings related to respondents' gender, age, educational level, experience as street child, father occupation, guardians, type of family, and reasons for leaving home presented by using the frequency distribution and percentage.

Key words: Family Information, Hyderabad, Personal Characteristics, Street Children, Tehran

Introduction

Every child has right to explore the opportunity of accessing the education and in order to protect from all forms of callous activities. Yet millions of children are neglect and malnourished due to improper care by parents and community. The miserable conditions prevail in home and community where in these children are exposed result in child abuse and exploitation in societies. As a result their right to childhood is very much jeopardized and such a condition ultimately affects their physical and mental health. So much so, the most vulnerable group who are exposed to these physical and psychological live and work on the street and sleep and die there as a result of negligence by society[1].

In the present scenario street children is the global problem; as a matter of fact, the phenomenon of street children is considered to be the most important problem being faced by children today in both the developed and developing countries In 1989, UNICEF estimated 100 million children were growing up on urban streets around the world. 14 years later UNICEF reported: 'the latest estimates put the numbers of these children as high as 100 million [2]. And even more recently: 'The exact number of street children is impossible to quantify, but the figure almost certainly runs into tens of millions across the world. It is likely that the numbers are increasing' [3]. In 1983 Inter-Non-

Governmental Organization (Inter-NGO) in Switzerland defined street children as follows: Any girl or boy who has not reached adulthood, for whom the street (in the broadest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc) more than their family has become her or his real home, abode and/or sources of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, supervised, or directed by responsible adults. According to Shilpa Hassani (2008) the term street children refer to children for whom the street, more than their family has become their real home [4]. As a matter of fact, they live and work on the streets and have no or very little family contact or support [5-10]. Children of the streets are sometimes called abandoned street children, which indicate that their families have abandoned them. Children of the streets can be either abandoned by their families or have left their families themselves [5].

UNICEF (1986) suggest that the children often feel abandoned by their family who can no longer support them while Rizzini et al, (1994) argue that the children are not the street because they need to earn money to support their family. Rizzini et al, (1994) state that relatively few have actually abandoned their families, even though many studies show that family ties are weakened by the lack of or absence of parental support[11].

Street children are a growing phenomenon of modern times, especially in the urban areas in developing countries, which are faced with the process of rapid and unplanned urbanization. The process of modernization coupled with rapid socio-economic changes and urban growth proved detrimental to children and they were the most vulnerable to the changes and risks wrought by it. Although poverty and rapid urbanization have been found to be the major contributing factors to the problem of street children, many children claim that physical abuse and neglect were the primary reasons which compelled them to drift away from their families.

As a matter of fact, one of the negative consequences of urbanization in the world particularly in developing countries is existence of a large proportion of the urban poor living in slums where many families don't find any shelter resulting in life on pavements. Although there are several schemes to provide basic services to the urban poor, the pavement dwellers are hardly covered by any one of them. Importantly, their number should be a matter of concern for all those responsible for urban community program. However, the most vulnerable section among them is the street children in modern industrial cities [12].

Street children live and work in conditions that are not conducive for healthy development. They are exposed to the street subculture such as smoking, drug, alcohol and substance abuse, gambling, engaging in sexual activities or selling sex for survival [13].

In sum, studies on the problems of street children are voluminous all over the world. Actually there are a large number of studies conducted on street children in order to understand the magnitude of the problem, causes and consequences of the problem; but there are a few studies, which also talked about these children, family background and compared those factors in different countries. Therefore the primary interest of this study was recording the profile of the street children, who were admitted into the rehabilitation homes in Tehran (Iran) and Hyderabad (India) cities. This will enable us to understand their family and personal background.

Tehran City

Tehran is the capital city of Iran and one of the major world cities. It had 8.5 million populations in 2012. According to official statistics, 20,000 children are in Teheran's streets daily and every day their number rises by 10 and most of them come from the provinces of Khorassan, Kermanshah, Kurdistan and Lorestan. According to research by the Public Health office, 87 percent of these have no jobs.

Hyderabad City

Hyderabad is the largest city as well as the capital of city the Andhra Pradesh. According to 2001 Census, in Hyderabad, the total city population was 7,280,000, out of which 40% were children. As per the Government report, the street children in Hyderabad city are more than 55,000. Majority of these street children are below 15 years age, and mostly are migrants from rural or semi-rural areas from all over Andhra Pradesh [14].

Materials and Methods

The study was descriptive and utilized cross-sectional survey method to gather information about the street children’s personal and family information in Tehran (Iran) and Hyderabad (India).

Tool

The personal and family information data sheet had been designed by researchers for this study and consisted of eight questions that were recorded on gender, age, education level, father occupation, guardians, experience as street child, type of family, and reasons for leaving home.

Research Procedure

After obtaining permission from the rehabilitation homes’ principals Tehran and Hyderabad cities and coordination with their official office to conduct the research, 50 children (females=25, males=25) were selected based on the simple random sampling from three rehabilitation homes in each city (150 children in Tehran and 150 children in Hyderabad) and the totally of 300 children were involved in the study. Effective cooperation between the researchers and children was achieved by upholding ethical norms, values, and practical principles of social work. Structured in the interview schedule which has been prepared for study and personal data sheet and family information scale completed for every respondent. After gathering the data, descriptive statistics was applied to analyzing them.

Results and Discussion

Gender of Respondents: A large number of street children were reported to be males. Reported low incidence of street girls in urban pockets may be due to their under enumeration. Generally girls are more invisible than boys since their operations are clandestine in nature and hence this finding is viewed with caution. According to NISD (2007) in actual situation in rehabilitation homes majority (78.00 percent) of the inmates are boys while the rest (22.00 percent) of the inmates at the rehabilitation homes are girls; though for

the purpose of research the researchers selected the equal proportion of both boys and girls from different rehabilitation homes in Hyderabad and Tehran for the present study [15].

Table-1 displays the frequency and percentage distribution of sample’s gender. In present study, the frequency of both gender was same (males=75, females=75) in each city.

Age Group of Respondents: Usually two-fifths of population is children (0-14), which is economically and socially dependent on the population that is economically active. This dependent population when related to the population responsible for supporting it shows that child dependency ratio is 0.75; that is, every economically productive member has to support almost the three of fourth dependents. This figure for developed countries is 0.33.

In sum, the age is an important factor in human life. It is the input of maturity and experience through which knowledge is acquired for social functioning. It reflects individual’s attitudes, perceptions, motives, level of understanding, capacities etc. Table-2 displays the frequency and percentage distribution of sample’s age in Tehran and Hyderabad.

The age structure of the respondents covered under this study range from 6 to 18 years which 55 % of research sample’ age in Tehran and Hyderabad were between 11 to 15 years; in the other hand more than one second of the respondents (55 percent) belongs to age group of respondents 11 to 15 years. In addition 78.3% of respondents were below 15 years and 23.3% of them were below 10 years.

Educational Level of Respondents:

In India the free and compulsory education to all the children till they attain the age of 14 years is a constitutional directive under the article 45 of the Constitution of India; as free and compulsory education to all the children till they attain the age of 18 years is a constitutional directive under the Constitution of Iran. During the last four decades, there has been a considerable quantitative expansion of the educational system at all levels. The literacy rates for aged 5 years and above have increased from 18.3 percent in 1951 to 41.4 percent in 1981 and for aged 7 years and above it increased from 43.6 percent in 1981 to 52.1 percent in 1991 and increased 58.3 percent in 2001. 82% of the Iranian adult population is now literate, well ahead of the regional average of 62%. This rate increases to 97% among young adults (aged between 15 and 24) without any gender discrepancy.

The idea of education is not merely to impart knowledge to the pupil in some subjects but to develop in him/her those habits and attitudes with which may

successfully face the future. In the present study, the education of the respondents is categorized into the four grades. According to the result, 30 percent of respondents in Hyderabad and 18.7% of them were illiterate in Tehran that indicated the higher rate of street children’ illiterate in Hyderabad. Additionally, it was further observed that 42 percent of respondents were educated either up to 5th class or school dropouts with very little formal education. A little more than one fifth of the respondents (21 percent) of the respondents were educated up to 10th class, while (24.3 percent) of the respondents were illiterates and the rest (12.7 percent) are educated up to intermediate. The children were found to become runaways due to reasons such as academic delays, ill-treatment by teachers, poor academic performance, etc. It was observed that the lower educational levels of most of these children were associated with illiteracy of the parents, poverty and family break up. Following table and figure show the distribution for the street children’s education in Tehran and Hyderabad.

Respondents’ Experience as Street Child:

Research results showed that 34% of street children in Tehran had below one year experience in street while 25.3% for research sample in Hyderabad. According to the results, 70% of respondents have less than three years work experience as a street child in two cities. Table-4 and figure-4 show the distribution of street children’s experience in street in Tehran and Hyderabad cities

Respondents’ Father Occupation:

Occupation plays a very important role in molding the life styles of an individual. In present study, occupation of father was classified into five categories such as daily wage labor, seasonal work, Govt. job, Agriculture, and other occupations. It can be seen from table 5 predominant number (19.7 percent) of the respondents’ father’s occupations is other unorganized sector. 34.7 percent of respondents’ fathers’ are workless. Around more than one third (31.3 percent) respondents’ fathers occupation are daily wage work. The below one tenth (12.8 percent) agricultural work and rest are very little respondents fathers occupation government jobs (5.0 percent).

Respondents’ Guardians: The family members and NGOs were main guardians for the respondents (57%) that indicate the important original roll of them for street children; and 12.3% of sample group reported that they don’t have any body for support of them.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution for Gender in Tehran and Hyderabad

City Gender	Tehran		Hyderabad		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	75	50	75	50	150	50
Male	75	50	75	50	150	50
Total	150	100	150	100	300	100

Table 2: Comparison Distribution for Street Children’s Age in Tehran and Hyderabad

City Age Level	Tehran		Hyderabad		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
6 to 10 yrs	22	14.7	48	32	70	23.3
11 to 15 yrs	89	59.3	76	50.7	165	55
16 yrs above	39	26	26	17.3	65	21.7
Total	150	100	150	100	300	100

Table 3: Comparison Distribution for Street Children’s Education Level in Tehran and Hyderabad

City Education Level	Tehran		Hyderabad		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Illiterate	28	18.7	45	30	73	24.3
Upto 5th class	67	44.7	59	39.3	126	42
High school	36	24	27	18	63	21
Inter	19	12.6	19	12.7	38	12.7
Total	150	100	150	100	300	100

Table 4: Comparison Distribution of Street Children’s Experience in Street in Tehran and Hyderabad

City Experience	Tehran		Hyderabad		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below 1 yrs	51	34	25	16.7	76	25.3
1 to 2 yrs	46	30.7	32	21.3	78	26
2 to 3 yrs	23	15.3	31	20.7	54	18
3 to 5 yrs	15	10	40	26.7	55	18.3
More than 5yrs	15	10	22	14.6	37	12.3
Total	150	100	150	100	300	100

Table 5: Comparison Distribution for Street Children’s Father Occupation in Tehran and Hyderabad

City Father Occupation	Tehran		Hyderabad		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Workless	59	39.3	45	30	104	34.7
Daily wage	43	28.7	51	34	94	31.3
Agriculture	12	8	16	10.7	28	9.3
Govt. job	4	2.7	11	7.3	15	5
Others	32	21.3	27	18	59	19.7
Total	150	100	150	100	300	100

Table 6: Comparison Distribution for Street Children’s Guardian in Tehran and Hyderabad

City Guardian	Tehran		Hyderabad		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Friends	27	18	29	19.3	56	18.7
Relatives	15	10	21	14	36	12
Family members	54	36	42	28	96	32
NGO s	30	20	45	30	75	25
Nobody	24	16	13	8.7	37	12.3
Total	150	100	150	100	300	100

Table 7: Comparison Distribution for Street Children’s Family Type in Tehran and Hyderabad

City Type of Family	Tehran		Hyderabad		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Joint Family	29	19.33	48	32	77	25.67
Nuclear Family	36	24	65	43.33	101	33.67
Migrant Family	75	50	29	19.34	104	34.66
Don’t Know	10	6.67	8	5.33	18	6
Total	150	100	150	100	300	100

Table 8: Comparison Distribution for Street Children’s Reasons for Leaving Home in Tehran and Hyderabad

City Reasons for leaving	Tehran		Hyderabad		Total	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Parents Beat	18	12	23	15.33	41	13.66
Orphan	21	14	32	21.34	53	17.66
Missing Child	4	2.67	39	26	43	14.34
Don’t Know	107	71.33	56	37.33	163	54.34
Total	150	100	150	100	300	100

According to table-6, the family members and NGOs are main guardians for respondents (57%) that indicate the important original roll of them for street children; and 12.3% of sample group reported that they don’t have any body for support of their self.

Type of Family:

Family plays an important role in the life of an individual. It provides the primary and the most intimate environment in which human development takes place. The family can be considered as the social microcosm that creates and reflects both the strengths and weaknesses of the larger social structure. It is the foundation of the society and also the primary agent of socialization creates an internal construct of reality for their member which is used to create the external world.

When children are treated with respect and dignity and are given the proper nurturance and support in the family for developing their talents, they become such adults who help to create and participate in a demographic society. If the relationships between parents and their children are not congenial, they will impinge child’s development resulting in behavioral problems for the child.

Generally, parents and families live within the different social networks depending upon the complexity of a particular society. These social structural aspects influence the parents by causing stress and strain which in turn will influence their treatment and nurture of children in the family. It is therefore necessary to examine the background characteristics of the families of street children to identify the various factors and situations which may have led to their present predicament at life.

Table-7 displays one second (50.00 percent) of respondents belonged to the migrant families and near one fourth (24 percent) of respondents were from of

nuclear families in Tehran; also near one fourth (19.33 percent) of them were of joint families in city. While below one second (43.33 percent) of the respondents were nuclear family members, one third belonged to joint families, near one fifth were migrant families members, and rest of respondents don’t know their family background details in Hyderabad. Totally one fourth of respondents belonged to the joint families, and the rest of respondents (6.0 percent) don’t know their family background details in twin cities because they are orphan, missing child, single parent families. The others respondents were nuclear or migrant family members.

Reasons for Leaving the Home:

Coming to the reasons for the child leaving home, both push and pull factors were found to be operating in the drift of the child from the family and parents. Many studies highlighted abuse and neglect of the child in the context at family. Most of the street children of the study samples mentioned a history of abuse at their home by their parents and by other adults in the family. The children also received no or at the most minimum adult supervision and protection in the family. The much of time spent by child on the streets is another important indicator of the content of alienation of the child from home and parents. Some studies explored this kind of aspect found that the children were found to be on the streets on an average of about two years.

Some of the reasons reported by the boys, who forced them to leave their homes, are physical abuse, broken families, attraction to city life, peer influence, habit formation. Many of the boys reported the physical abuse as an important reason for drifting away from their family. Among boys whose parents are living together, it was found that the mother treated the boy well, compared to the father and the incidence of physical abuse of the children was more in families where the

father was present while there was a greater incidence of the neglect of children among female headed families. Boys reported more abuse in families headed by responsible persons other than the parents. The respondents who are interested in group living and do not wish to return to their family, have given the following reasons to leave their homes, out of which physical abuse, broken family and peer group pressure.

According to table-8 most of the respondents in both cities didn't know the reasons for leaving home (71.33 percent in Tehran and 37.33 percent in Hyderabad). It was further observed that below one fifth (17.66 percent) of the respondents were orphan. Missing child was the weak reasons for leaving home in Tehran while in Hyderabad 26 percent of respondents belong to the missing child group.

Conclusion

The field of street children is dynamic and changing. Of course the numbers of street children have increased in recent times as well. Today a lot of people and the government have expressed the concern about how to take those street children away from the street in every country. Street children's experiences in countries across the world are strikingly similar, including those in rich countries with child protection systems alongside children in poorer countries which have weaker support structures. Understanding the street children's situation and major causes of the problem could help to prevent it. The current research on street children may extend previous understanding and provide insights into the street children situation in different places. Actually present study substantially helps us to understanding the street children and some of the related issues in Iran and India. It may help to Iran and India government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to design and conduct the useful programs to more support of street children.

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