



# Reviews of Literature

## SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF STREET CHILDREN IN INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

The main objective of presented paper is to understand the common social problems encountered among street children in India. Paper outlines the social issues like child labour, street children and trafficking. In Europe, common social problems of Indian street children has not paid enough attention, only fewer and sporadic efforts to understand these problems were addressed. In this paper, the author wants to highlight common social problems among Indian street children.



**KEYWORDS** :street children, trafficking, child labour, sexual abuse, education.

### I.INTRODUCTION :

The World Bank estimates that 45 % of the world population is forced to live with less than \$1 a day, of whom almost 50% are children [1]. Hundreds of millions of children today live in urban slums, many without access to basic services. They are particularly vulnerable because of the stresses of their living conditions [2]. The global WHO report on Violence and Health states that poverty does not contribute to violence on its own but instead accompanies factors such as unemployment, low educational levels, substance abuse and poor housing. Poor families, especially in areas with high birth rates, are stretched to their edges and children

are seen as a financial burden – yet another more mouth to feed. In such situations, girls are more likely than boys to be neglected when food is scarce. In India, between 3 million and 5 million female fetuses are aborted each year. For older children, and again especially girls, poverty and economic disadvantage makes them more vulnerable to trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation, bonded labour or low-paid labour. Growing unemployment has resulted in high incidence of child labour. Poverty is also seen as a cause (and a consequence) of early marriage. In India, 46 % girls married by the age of 18 years [3]. The desire of families to protect the chastity of girls and thereby their honour is a major cause of early marriages, which are quite common in many South Asian communities. In South

Asian dowry-practicing countries- there is a financial incentive to marry off girls early, as the dowry is likely to be lower for younger girls. The lack of economic independence of girls can also result in the girl staying on the street, due to lack of viable alternatives, especially when return to the native home is not an option. Children are at the lower scale of the ladder in a strong patriarchal and hierarchical system and as they are considered relatively immature adults in different settings usually make the decisions about their lives [4]. UNICEF has recently estimated that worldwide there are 80 million children without families who are living on the streets. 20 million of them are in Asia, 10 million in Africa and the Middle East, and 40 million in Latin America. The numbers and proportions for Latin America are staggering. Although Latin America has only 10% of the world's child population, it has nearly 50% of the world's street children. The number of Latin American street children is equal to the total population of Colombia and all of Central America [5].

## II. DEFINITIONS OF STREET CHILDREN

The definition of who is a street child is the determinant element in assessing their numbers and undertaking profiling of street children. However, most global bodies appear to disagree when it comes to deciding the age at which childhood is legally over. Various agencies, both national and international, set the upper age limit of childhood differently. The UN Child Rights Convention defines all those up to 18 years of age as children. Most of the international agencies which work on child's right issues follow this definition and they also insist that children in the 0-18 years age bracket should not be part of any kind of labour force. However, Article 24 of the Indian Constitution and the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act (1986) defines a child as „a person who has not completed 14 years of age". As a result, the law does not prohibit the involvement of children between 15-18 years in income-generating activities [6].

According to UNICEF, street child defined as a child for whom the street has become his or her habitual source of livelihood; and also who is inadequately protected, supervised, as well as directed by responsible adults. In previous researches on street children, the street child definition included to any child that worked on the street. However, based on more diverse global researches, different categories of children living on streets have been distinguished, while it is still difficult to categorize the recognition of children's complex experiences [7].

Mark W.Lusk developed four categories of children found in the street. Each group has its own psychological characteristics. First, there are poor working children returning to their families at night. They are likely to attend school and not be delinquent. Second, there are independent street workers. Their family ties are beginning to break down, their school attendance is decreasing, and their delinquency is increasing. Third, there are children of street families who live and work with their families in the street. Their conditions are related to poverty. In India, they are referred to as pavement dwellers. Finally, there are the children who have broken off contact with their families. They are residing in the streets full time and are the "real" street children [8].

The term "street children" refers to children for whom the street more than their family has become their real home. It includes children who might not necessarily be homeless or without families, but who live in situations where there is no protection, supervision, or direction from responsible adults [9]. It is difficult to count the number of street children living in India because of their floating nature. Their lack of permanent address, their wandering lifestyles, and their changing workplaces make them a difficult group to locate [10]. Over one third of children in urban areas go unregistered at birth, they have no birth certificate or an official identity card [11]. In India, 18 million children work on the streets and only 5-20% of them are truly homeless and disconnected from their

families [12]. According to UNICEF, about 72% of the street children were aged 6–12 years and 13% were aged below 6 years. In general, majority of street children in India are boys with little or no education [13]. Study on Child Abuse in India reported in 2007, that most street children, 51.8% slept on the footpath, 17.5% slept in night shelters and 30.7% in other places including under flyovers and bridges, railway platforms, bus stops, parks, market places, cinema theatres etc. They did not seem to have much access to sanitary places for defecation as a result of which majority of children (70.6%) were defecating on railway lines or road side ditches. Bathing is not a priority for most street children, they do not bathe at all [14]. "Sadak Chap" is a term by which children refer to themselves. "Chap" means stamp and "sadak" is street. The simplest definition is one the children have developed themselves, without a roof, and without roots...roofless and rootless [15].

In the case of street children, their living conditions (including residential and working locations) and their links with their families also become determinant factors. The street children in India choose to leave their families and homes for strategic reasons. After interviewing 1,000 children on the Patel claimed the major reason for street children was not poverty but family violence. Another Indian study Subrahmanyarn & Sondhi in 1990, this one of child porters (children under age 14 working and living without family support), showed that although poverty was a significant aspect of the children being on the streets, family discord was the major problem [16]. Many street children say that they ended up in the street due to violence in the home/family [17]. The most common family problems of street children are the death of a parent, strained relationships with stepparents, parent separation, alcoholism of father, insufficient food, abuse and family violence. Most children who leave home to live on the streets come from slums or low cost housing, both which are areas of high illiteracy, drug use, and unemployment [18]. Children usually adopted their lives to the streets through a gradual process, for example: they may at first started only stay on the street a night or two, followed by gradually spending more time away from home until they do not return [19]. In some cases, children sometimes find that their living conditions and physical and mental health is better on the streets than at home; especially because of the poor conditions of their homes rather than favorable and child-friendly conditions in the street [20]. Once they leave home, many street children move around often because of the fear that their relatives will find them and force them to return home [21].

### III. CHILD LABOUR

Child labor problem is not unique to India. New global estimates published by the Unicef in 2012 indicated that, in 2008, 215 million children were involved in child labour all over the world, 115 million of them in a hazardous work [22]. The 2001 National Census of India estimated the total number of child labour<sup>11</sup>, aged 5–14, to be at 12.6 million [24], about 0.12 million children in a hazardous job [25]. UNICEF estimates that India has the highest number of labourers in the world under 14 years of age [26]. The findings revealed that 65 % of the children were put to work by their parents and 76 % of the children handed over their earnings to their parents [27]. Sometimes children are abandoned by their parents or sold to factory owners. The last two decades have seen tremendous growth of export based industries and mass production factories utilizing low technologies. They try to maintain competitive positions through low wages and low labor standards. The child laborers exactly suit their requirements. They use all means to lure the parents into giving their children on pretext of providing education and good life. In India majority of children work in industries, such as cracker making, diamond polishing, glass, brass-ware, carpet weaving, bangle making, lock making and mica cutting to name a few [28].

According to Sheela Patel, in Bombay 50,000 children are illegally employed by 11,750 hotels,

restaurants, canteens, tean shops, and eating places. 75 % of these children are migrants [29]. Street children"s are often exploited by the employers, because of their lack of protection from a family and the law. The employers often kept them in their own confinement and control, sometimes withholding pay, and abusing them. In general, honest employers often not hired them because it is too risky. The most common job of street children is scavenging for recyclable materials, such as plastic, paper, and metal [30], and cleaning cars; petty vending, selling small items such as balloons or sweets; selling newspapers or flowers; begging; shining shoes; working in small hotels; working on construction sites; and working in roadside stalls or repair shops. Street children, particularly the older children, often engaged in activities such as stealing, pick-pocketing, drugpeddling, and prostitution. Begging in transport hubs, car parks and public places is a characteristic of child work in Delhi [31]. According to the Beggar Research Institute, there are more than 60,000 beggars in Delhi, over 300,000 in Bombay; nearly 75,000 in Kolkata. Most of the street children work about 8–10 1 hours per day in their various job oriented economic activities [32].

The daily minimum wage for an unskilled child worker is 3.80 rupees (\$ 0,10). Most street children in India earn between 200 and 800 rupees a month (\$4.00-\$16.00). Self-employed children also typically make more than children who are employed under an employer. The largest expense in a street child"s budget is food, which often costs 5-10 rupees a day. In order to cut down on food expenses, many children drink tea to dull hunger or eat free diner in durga [33]. While children occasionally send some of their earnings home to their families, they spend most of their extra money on entertainment [34]. According to a 2004 Action Aid Report, for 96% of beggars the average daily income is 80 rupees more than what daily wage earners can make. Spending patterns also reveals a unique pattern: 27% beggars spend 50-100 rupees a day. In some cases, the study found that a child's income accounted for between 34 and 37 percent of the total household income [35].

According to Chatterje most street children spend 300 rupees a month on movies, though older children also use their money to buy cigarettes, chewing tobacco, alcohol, and drugs. Street children often spend very little on clothing because their employers often provide clothes for work or their families occasionally give them clothes if they know where they are living [36]. An estimated 90% of them are addicted to inhalants such as shoe glue and paint thinner, which cause kidney failure, irreversible brain damage and, in some cases, death. Many children who live and work on the streets are exposed to high levels of drugs and sexual abuse and at considerable risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS because of their early exposure to both heterosexual and homosexual sex.

#### IV. EDUCATION

Understanding the educational levels of street children is critical for providing them appropriate basic education and skill training. According to a recent survey report of situational analysis of young children in Delhi, done by Samajik Suvidha Sangam Society, New Delhi has 242 000 children out of school. Only 71% of Delhi"s children attend school against the national figure of 94.5%. The survey also found that among the people surveyed 25.4% were illiterate. The educational disparity between the rich and the poor in Delhi can be judged from another finding of the survey conducted on 12,000 households in 22 slums clusters which found that only 4.7% of the people were graduates. Only 20% were found to have completed elementary education, 15.2 % primary and only 7.9% higher secondary [37]. According to Yuko survey in Delhi, a primary school attendance rate is 54,5 % among children living in slums in 2004-2005, compared with 90 % for the city as a whole [38]. In general, street

children dislike to attend school, for instance, a study of Kombarakaran [39] on street children in Bombay revealed that 60% of the children had never attended school, approximately 65 % were illiterate, and 30% had been to elementary school, while only 10 % had been to middle or high school. A census of street children in Delhi, conducted in 2010 by Save the Children, a nongovernmental organization working for children's rights and the Institute for Human Development, revealed that 50.5 % of the street children in Delhi were not literate. Twenty-three per cent of the children had received some form of non-formal education while almost 20 % had received some form of formal education. The various initiatives discussed here largely refer to informal interventions such as those by NGOs, mobile schools, better-off people in the neighborhood teaching them, and night schools [40].

## V. CHILD ABUSE

According to WHO: "Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power" [41]. It is quite frequent that street children in India are exposed to abuse and extortion. The main reason for this as they have no social status and no adults to protect them. Because of this reason, street children often being physically threatened and intimidated by adults as the one factor that contributes most to the misery of living on the streets [42]. Street children are detained illegally, beaten and tortured and sometimes killed by police who view them as vagrants and criminals. The primary cause for this treatment is the views that the police and general public hold toward them: most scorn them and react to them with hostility [43]. "Clean up" city street campaigns have been conducted to round up alleged street children and send them to closed camps, without due process measures. Children who have been trafficked across borders have been treated like criminals in the countries of destination, as illegal immigrants or as prostitutes. They have been placed in "education camps" or transported to "rehabilitation centres" without due process [44]. There are many factors contribute to the police abuse of street children, such as the police perceptions of the children, widespread corruption, a culture of police violence, the inadequacy and non-implementation of legal safeguards, and the level of impunity that the police enjoy. Though the Juvenile Justice Act, which applies to all the states and Union Territories in India except Jammu and Kashmir, prohibits detaining neglected or delinquent juveniles in police lock-ups or jails, it is rarely enforced [45]. The street children in Jaipur in 2009 in the study reported five types of abuse: general abuse and neglect, health abuse, verbal abuse, physical abuse, psychological abuse, and sexual abuse. Verbal and psychological abuse were reported the most. Older children and children with higher incomes were abused more than younger children and children with lower incomes [46]. In Delhi in 2004, 525 cases of rape were reported and social workers revealed that rape of minors was rampant in the slums [47]. Studies on street children discuss the sexual abuse that children experience on the street and at the workplace. A visible form of sexual exploitation is commercial flesh trade. The children are largely exploited by strangers, adult street dwellers, and sometimes by fellow street children [48]. A large number of girls are forced into sexual slavery in the region. In 2007, the Ministry of Women and Child Development reported the presence of over 3 million female sex workers in India, with 35.47 % of them entering the trade before the age of 18 years. Human Rights Watch puts the figure of sex workers in India at around 20 million, with Mumbai alone being home to 200,000 sex workers, the largest sex industry center in Asia. The number of prostitutes rose by 50 % between 1997 and 2004. Girl prostitutes in India are tortured, held in virtual imprisonment, sexually abused and raped. Girl prostitutes are primarily located in low-middle income areas and business districts and are known by

officials. Brothel keepers regularly recruit young girls, they are grouped as common prostitutes, singers and dancers, call girls, religious prostitutes or devdasi, and caged brothel prostitutes [49]. India had a successful legal market in organ trading since 1994 by legislative law. Low cost and availability brought in global business from around the globe and transformed India into one of the largest kidney transplant centers in the world. In organ trading, there are many cheating and fraud problems. For example, in most of the cases patients were unaware a kidney transplant procedure even took place, and often patients being promised an amount much higher than what was actually paid out [50]. In 1994, The Transplantation of Human Organs Act (THOA) was supposed to promote cadaveric organ transplantation in India, but this has not happened due to the following reasons: the inclusion of loopholes either by design or default permitting the continued sale of kidneys<sup>22</sup> [51] the availability of enough poor people ready to sell a part of themselves; a social ethos which permits justification of the trade as "good for both - the seller and buyer"; a medical establishment willing to participate and, perhaps most importantly, a near absence of commitment on the part of Indian society to promote cadaver organ transplant [52].

## CONCLUSION

India has set in place various forms of public policy concerning street children over the past two decades, but they have largely been ineffective because they are uniformed by sociological, anthropological, and geographical research on street children, meaning they do not always correctly assess and address needs. A multiple level intervention strategy needs to begin with the rehabilitation of street families. They must be provided with social security to stop children from working for incomes; night shelters must be provided for boys and girls, and their health and education requirements must be addressed. Since most of the street children are illiterate, or near-illiterate, efforts to provide them with basic education need to spread their net much wider than they do at present [53].

Unfortunately, one of the main problem identified in India is child labour which, due to the precarious socio-economic situation of the workers and their families, is difficult to address. The government is however implementing numerous activities and programmes to deal with child labour. Similar interventions and programmes are being implemented with street children and trafficking of children. Measures include legislation, awareness raising, a national policy and education. incentives. Furthermore, resources are not always a problem and it must be understood that spending on children is important. Social services should be prioritized in the allocation of the national budget. Although institutional framework exists most of the time, implementation has lagged behind [54]. While equitable social and economic development is imperative for dealing with the root causes of violence, challenging the notions of masculinity could be the basis of a preventive strategy. Affirmative action for children, girls and boys of different age groups in different settings could add value to social policy. Effective and child-friendly legislation, complaints procedures and systems for redressal and justice and support services in the event of violence are critical. The most important is a need to change the people's mindsets with regard to violence against children [55].

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<sup>1</sup>India's Census office defines child labor as participation of a child less than 17 years of age in any economically productive activity with or without compensation, wages or profit. UNICEF defines child labour: if between 5 to 11 years of age, he or she did at least one hour of economic activity or at least 28 hours of domestic work in a week, and in case of children between 12 to 14 years of age, he or she did at least 14 hours of economic activity or at least 42 hours of economic activity and domestic work per week. UNICEF in another report suggests, "Children"s work needs to be seen as happening along a continuum, with destructive or exploitative work at one end and beneficial work - promoting or enhancing children"s development without interfering with their schooling, recreation and rest - at the other. And between these two poles are vast areas of work that need not negatively affect a child"s development."

<sup>2</sup>a person not related to the patient could donate a kidney by reason of "affection" and the inclusion of the spouse as "near relative" so that people can marry for organ "donation"