A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY ON STREET CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT:

Once a child leaves the family home for whatever reasons –to live on the street, they labeled as a street children. Street children are the causalities of economic woes, war, poverty, loss of traditional values, domestic violence and physical and psychological abuses. They seldom have a choice in becoming a straw in the wind and going to school is always out of question. For kicks, these young souls turn to narcotics or to sniffing rubber solvent. Many street children gather money by begging, selling flowers, washing cars, shoe-shining, working in small hotels, selling water, and newspapers or other items or via prostitution, receiving only a small cut from the money that gets collected. In this study the researcher used observation and case study method to analyses the problems faced by the street children. The study took place in slum area at Chennai nearby Chennai harbour. I spent 5 weeks on the street children. This approach was appropriate as it is descriptive, and it attempts to take hold of things as they appear and interpretive.

1. INTRODUCTION

Street children is a term used to refer to children who live on the streets of a city. They are deprived of family care and protection. Many children on the streets are between the ages of about 5 and 18 years old, and their population between different cities is varied. Street children comprise a major social problem in India from various viewpoints. It is a despicable problem not only in the developing countries but also in some of the developed countries also. The problem is more seriously in industrialized and urbanized countries of the world. However, rapid emergence of the street children in developing cities of any country in considered as a natural phenomenon all over the world as the poorest of the poor masses of the rural areas migrate to their accessible cities under the operating forces of push and pull' factors. They comprehensively hope of getting regular employment in cities and thereby leading a better living over there such poor and helpless people settle down in slums, pavements, railway platforms, bus stand, abandoned construction sites etc, and also in some cases in the back yards of some city residents.

Street children live in abandoned buildings, card board huts, parks or on the street itself. There are no precise categories for street children, but rather a continuum, ranging from

children who spend some time in streets and sleep in a house with ill-prepared adults, to those who live entirely in the streets and have no adult supervision or care.

Street children are going through the struggle of providing themselves with basic things such as food, shelter and clothing. Providing targeted interventions that meet the needs of street children requires an understanding of who they are, what they need, what they do and how they can be identified.

It is estimated that there are between 10 and 100 million street children in the world today. These Children live a transitory life style and vulnerable to inadequate nutrition, physical injuries, substance use and health problems including sexual and reproductive health problems. Some street children are part of entire families who live on the street,. Others are born to older street girls. Despite peer solidarity and support through charitable services, street children have extremely high rates of morbidity, disability mortality.

Improving the quality of live of street children is a difficult and challenging task. Street children's education is a very effective way to support street children as it occurs at locations where they live. Street children's education can involve many types of activities, for example, counseling about harmful effects of substances or about prevention of STDs, improving literacy and educating street children on the importance of seeking assistance on health issues or other social problems that could be addressed. It can be of vital importance in meeting the needs of street children in the areas of substance use, sex education, life skills, health education and literacy.

Youth homelessness and street children are phenomena, not only of developing countries, but experienced worldwide. Definitions of "Street children", "homelessness" and "youth" vary across countries and cultures, as do the causes of homelessness and the associated problems. There are major difficulties in trying to estimate the number of street children and the magnitude of difficulties they experience as these populations are not adequately covered by national census, educational and health data.

Some of these children are "on the street", that is they maintain quite good family contact, often returning home each night. They may be on the streets to work, have fun, to pass time, or due to overcrowding in their homes which may provide little more than a place to sleep. In some countries, these are the majority of street children. Others are "of the street", where the street is their home. Some search for their identify of the streets.

Most accounts focus on particular groups at a particular time and tend to ignore the historical continuity which exists; most are male, their peer relationships, group life and survival strategies have been much the same whatever the time or place, and they are

usually younger in developing than in developed countries. However, more recent economic situations (e.g. recession), political changes, civil unrest, increasing family disintegration, and natural disasters have led to larger numbers of children heading from rural areas and smaller towns to larger cities and their streets.

Some are born on the streets to older street children, some come from families which can no longer support them due to overcrowding or poverty, some are members of whole families who live on the streets (street families) and others come to streets after being orphaned by armed conflicts natural disasters, or parental death through diseases such as AIDS; one estimate suggests that there will be 16 million children orphaned by AIDS Africa by the year 2015. The increased availability of a wide range of drugs adds to other potential health risks.

Causes:

Children may end up on the streets for several basic reasons.

They may have no choice- they are abandoned, orphaned, or disowned by their parents. Secondly, they may choose to live in the streets because of mistreatment or neglect or because their homes do not or cannot provide them with basic necessities. May children also work in the streets because their earnings are needed by their families. But homes and families are part of the larger society and the underlying reasons for the poverty or breakdown of homes and families may be social, economic, political or environment of homes and families may be social, economic, political or environment or any combination of these.

In a 1993 report, WHO offered the following list of causes for the phenomenon? Family background, Armed conflict, Poverty, Natural and man-made disasters, Famine, Physical and sexual abuse, Exploitation by adults, Dislocation through migration ,Urbanization and overcrowding, Acculturation, Disinheritance and being, The orphaning of children because of HIV/AIDS is another cause that might be added to this list.

Self Esteem Among Street Children in Chennai City

In most cases, low self-esteem in children, stems from unfortunate childhood experiences. The greatest gift we as parents can give to our children is sound self-esteem. When we fail to give it we unconsciously build low self-esteem in our children.

Problems of Street Children

The Street children, because of their poor socio- economic conditions, unhygienic standards and indiscipline faced a lot of problems in the society they lived in. The maximum number of them perceived that the general public and peer group was a problem

to them. An equal number of street children felt that older street adults, gangsters and neighbours posed a problem to them, while a few of them considered their employers a problem. The remaining felt that it is their parents or relatives who were a real problem to them. It must be noted that they perceived more than one problems in the society as their prime issues.

Tortures By Police and other Law enforcement Officials

Children frequently experience violence at the hands of police and other law enforcement officials. Street children are especially easy targets because they are poor, young, often ignorant of their rights, and lacking adults to whom they can turn for assistance. They are beaten by police in order to extort money, and street girls may be forced to provide sex to avoid arrest or to be released from police custody. Seen as vagrants or criminals, street children have been tortured, mutilated, and subjected to death threats and extrajudicial execution.

Children are often detained by police without sufficient cause, and then subject to brutal interrogations and torture in order to elicit confessions or information. Once placed in juvenile and criminal correctional institutions, children are frequently mistreated and abused, enduring severe corporal punishment, torture, forced labor, denial of food, isolation, restraints, sexual assaults, and harassment. In many instances, children are detained with adults, leaving them at increased risk of physical and sexual abuse.

Violence against Children in Schools

In schools, intended to nurture the development of children, violence may be a regular part of a child's experience. In many countries, corporal punishment is still permitted as part of school "discipline". Children are subjected to caning, slapping, and whipping that result in bruises, cuts, and humiliation and in some cases serious injury or death. Girls are at particular risk of sexual violence from both teachers and male students, and may be fondled, verbally degraded, assaulted, assaulted and raped. Students may also be targeted because of their gender, race ethnicity, religion, nationality, caste, sexual orientation, social group, or other status. Students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender have been beaten, kicked, spit on, cut with knives, strangled, thrown against lockers, and dragged down flights of stairs.

Suffering of child laborers

Child laborers often endure long hours and grueling labor under difficult and harmful circumstances. For many, physical abuse is another feature of their daily lives. Child laborers are often beaten for working too slowly, making mistakes, arriving to work

late, appearing tired, or simply as a means intimidation. Those who attempt to escape such abuse and seek protection from the police may be returned directly to their employers.

Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of children who have been orphaned or abandoned are place in orphanages and other non-penal institutions. Dependent on the state for care, many instead experience shocking and sometimes deadly levels of abuse and neglect. They may be beaten, sexually abused, restrained in clothes sacks or tethered to furniture, and subjected to degrading treatment by staff. In some facilities, mortality rates have been staggering.

There are several reasons for such impunity. Children-particularly those most vulnerable to abuse-have few mechanisms for reporting violence. They may be reluctant to speak out for fear of reprisals. And because they are children, their complaints are often not taken seriously.

Even when children do make reports or abuse is exposed, perpetrators are rarely investigated or prosecuted. Those in a position to take action may be complicit in the abuse, reluctant to discipline or prosecute a colleague, or fearful of negative publicity. Adults who witness abuse by their own colleagues and attempt to report it may be fired for speaking up.

The convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by nearly every country in the world, obliges governments to protect children from all forms of physical or mental violence. Yet, millions of children continue to suffer violence and abuse. These acts of violence are often seen as lamentable yet solated incidents rather than as global phenomena demanding a concerted international response.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ford (1936), Pill and Arokiasamy (2000) Defined a slum areas as, "A residential area in which housing is so deteriorated, so substandard, so unwholesome that it is a menace to the health, safety, morality or welfare of the occupants".

Udhay Shankar (1958) In his study of 140 delinquents in the children's home, the district jail and women's colony in Delhi, states that 60 percent of the boys are truants or run away boys from homes or schools and these children are found begging individually or collectively.

Sikka, K.D (1981) Children who reach the remand homes are deprived of proper diet, proper medical care and proper clothes. Even though, the home provide these services, they are found to be inadequate. Hence, he observes the institution acts as a local parent' this is an important responsibility, they should be helped and encouraged to present a good

appearance dignified clothing, appropriate grooming; food cannot be carefully cooked and decently served.

Agnelli et al (1986) and Tom Morgthau et al (1989) The content as well as the form of education is inappropriate and unsuitable for the children of deprived classes who become frustrated and "reject the entire system, and seek refuge among those already in the street as disaffected as themselves". The introduction of the illicit drug trade in Bangalore as in other parts of India has added to the problem. Though not yet that visible or as yet affecting very large numbers, the population of street children used for 'pushing' and those that are 'hooked' is growing. These children are the most severely affected of all and their lack to access to help of any kind renderness the situation hopeless. we may soon find ourselves facing a situation like that of the children of the American underclass.

D'Lima, and Gosalia Rima (1992); Basic Needs- Shelter, safe drinking water and toilet facilities are still the basic issues faced by children in their everyday lives on the street. Due to lack of permanent place for residing, children find it difficult to keep their belongings. It is the reason why street children of Mumbai spend their entire days of earning each day.

Christopher Williams (1993) "Street children" have come to public attention again as they did in the guise of the "Street Arabs", "blackguards", and "War vagrants" at periods of European history. Is this classification useful when considering education/welfare policy, or does it artificially mark a group for special attention in a manner that is misleading? There are two perspective: (a) that classification is imperfect, which leads to incorrect intervention; or (b) that unclassified can mean unrecognized and that labels are a prerequisite of motivating a response. From a comparative analysis, this paper proposes a working compromise based on a hierarchy of street use, from minimal to total dependency on the street. Four overlapping levels are discussed: (a) beneficial street use; (b) an "assumed adult" status; (c) those who suffer school exclusion; and (d) a state of "degenerative estrangement". The hierarchy is to demonstrate the need for different types of education/welfare intervention at different levels. Intervention need to emphasize three types of change: (a) in awareness of street life for those making little use of the streets; (b) in the capabilities of those using the street as a major resource; and (c) of the condition of those totally dependent on the street environment.

Aptekar 1994, 2004: Most of these children work because there is not enough food at home. Among these children some stop living at home and become street children. some poor children come from abusive families, but more after they do not cross-cultural

comparisons tell us it would be a mistake to assume that abuse is more likely in lower than in higher in come families.

Brigitte Matchinda(1999) In his study sets out to investigate the phenomenon of street children and its relationship to their home background. The project stemmed from the fact that there is an enormous increase of children nowadays roaming the streets. Our primordial aim here is to investigate whether misunderstanding between parent and their children resulting from home-rearing patterns can influence children to run away from home.

Laine Byrne(1999) Children who live and on the streets or work in commercial situations at a young age, are subjected to gross injustice and are frequently neglected by national law. Despite the fact that almost every country has signed and ratified the other UN convention on the rights of the child. This is a one stop guide both for experienced advocates and for non specialists in the field. It explains how to use regional and international treaties and mechanisms for the protection and defense of street and working children went national law fails.

WHO (2000): The WHO street children project aims at improving the health, welfare and quality of life street children. The focus of the project is on developing the capacity of local organization to prevent, access and manage psychoactive substance use problems among street children. Through extensive research and training activities and as a contribution to local capacity building, WHO developed a training package for street children. The contents of the package constitute an inventory of basic factors that are key in implementing interventions targeting street children in relation to substance use, sexual reproductive health and HIV/AIDS, AND STDs.

Parakonath (2000) Slum dwellers are not merely from the lowest rung of the economic hierarchy, but also usually belong to the lowest caste group. Their results in a complex array of economic and social advantage are distinguishing feature of slum children as compared to street children, it that stay with their families in temporary shelters. On the other hand, street children frequently comprise runaway and therefore do not usually maintain constant contact with their family. They have little or no supervision from elders and caregivers and often stay on the street or pavements, with no roofs over their heads. As a result, in the absence of a support system, street children are more susceptible to exploitation than are slum children show quite good level of group cohesiveness.

Joe.L.P.Lugalla and Kibassa (2003) They examined the dynamics of urban life and street children's health context of globalization and structural adjustments in Tanzania. They

discussed the factors that push children out of their homes, how children survive in streets. The hardships and violence they endure, and show this affects their health. Also examined are colonial policies, globalization, and structural adjustment and HIV/AIDS in Tanzania.

Francis A. Kombarakaran(2004): Using a multi-method approach, this study identifies the stresses and coping strategies of street children in Bombay, particularly of the 'children of the street'. Semi-structured in-depth interviews, focus group discussion, informal interviews and a case study were used to collect data from 73 street children, five agency social workers and three street workers. The results suggest that children face several challenges in their search for food, safety, employment, shelter and medical care. They commonly depend on their peers, non-governmental agencies, and own resourcefulness to survive on the streets. While the majorities use positive mechanism to cope with their daily stresses, some children also employ maladaptive strategies such as using alcohol, drugs, and visiting prostitutes. The study also reveals that these 'children of the street' are not entirely on their home but depend on various connections with substitute family member and/or their families and work on the streets. Agencies that work with street children may need to recognize these challenges and strengths to provide needed services to improve their condition.

Poonam Sondhi Garg (2004) He explained for those concerned about protecting and improving the lives of the street children and it includes information for research and educational pruposes. While street children receive national and international notice, it has been focused largely on social, economic and health problems of the children-poverty, lack of education, AIDS, prostitution and substance abuse. This often neglected side of street children's lives has been the focus of this book and it is in this context that the subject of street child labor and its impact on children's development is investigated.

N.K Behura; R.P Mohenty (2005) Street children is a term used to refer to children who live on the streets of a city. They are deprived of family care and protection. Many children on the streets are between the ages of about 5 and 18 years old, and their population between different cities is varied. Street children comprise a major social problem in India from various viewpoints. It is a despicable problem not only in the developing countries but also in some of the developed countries also. The problem is more seriously in industrialized and urbanized countries of the world.

P.C.Shukla (2005) Street children are the casualties of economic growth, war, poverty loss of traditional values, domestics violence, physical and mental abuse. Every street child has a reason for being on the street. In many countries, street children renamed after their main

survival activities.. They go through the struggle of providing themselves with basic things such as food, cloths and shelter. Estimated that there are between 10 and 100 million street children in the world today. These children live a transitory life style and rare vulnerable to inadequate nutrition, physical injuries, substance use, and health problems, including sexual and reproductive health problems. Improving the quality of life of street children is a difficult and challenging task. Street children as it occur at locations where they live.

Javid, P, Toyama, K. and Biswas, M. (2009) Observed that street children typically live independent of families in makeshift living arrangements, and survive on little. They estimated that there are 100 million street children in the world. To better understand the lives of street children, they conducted 150 days ethnographic investigations in and around Calcutta, with an emphasis on street children who live in train stations.

Prakash, Satya and Singh, Lata (2011) Identified that several of runaway children come to cities mostly through railways. Therefore, the need for special safeguards and care for children around railway station is important. This is the point where they can be contacted, treated with respect and their rights to protection and development guaranteed lest they join the huge numbers of invisible and vulnerable children.

Cook et al., (2005); Cicchetti, (2013) Many maltreated children experience what Cozolino (2016) calls "core shame", which results from early experiences of neglect, abuse, and abandoment. The impact of this early maltreatment become embedded in a range of developmental processes, affecting many aspects of one's physical, emotional, cognitive, and social well-being, including self-image and sense of self-worth.

Cozolino (2016) described core shame as a "deep emotional experience of being ashamed of who and what you are... an inner certainty of being a defective person combined with the fear of this truth becoming public knowledge". The pain of core shame stimulates "the same brain regions activated by physical pain and fear" and is so aversive that we must find ways to avoid, disguise, or burry it.

John Mukum Mbaku (2019): The abuse and exploitation of children is a major public policy priority for all African countries. Throughout the continent, children are routinely abused and exploited as sex objects; tool in the production of various goods, including cocoa, gold, and various minerals, as well as, services, such as pornography and prostitution; and, as child soldiers to fight in sectarian conflicts and civil wars. Children in Africa are exploited and abused by both domestic and external bodies.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To study the socio-economic status of family of street children.

- To find the causes and effects of street children.

- To bring out the problems faced by street children.

4. RESEARCH METHOD:

The study has made use of various anthropological methods like collection of primary data through observation and case study. The study has also made use of secondary data collected from various sources like libraries, net sources and local NGO sectors working on the street children.

Systematic thinking and consistent rigor were put in to bring about an appropriate methodology for the study that would fulfill the objectives of the study. To grasp their life experience through the lens of the identification of the problems they face and their survival and qualitative data seemed inevitable approach to undertake. Case study method were applied in the field of investigation in that particular place with an intention to find out the problems faced by the street children.

The research has done in slum area at Chennai nearby Harbour, the respondent were taken under the study through simple random sampling method. It comes under descriptive method. The researcher has spent long time to get the information from respondents because they were children the researcher has restricted to very small sample because of limited time and also the scope of the study is limited.

5. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

CASE -1

The respondent's name is Revathy. She is 15 years old. She resides in slum area nearby Chennai harbour. She is taken care by her maternal grandmother. Her parents both mother and father left her due to extra marital affair. She hasn't got any formal education due to poor family situation. For the past four years, she is being under the care of her grandmother.

The respondent's grandmother works as a domestic help. After some years, she fell ill and could not able to support the family. She is the "only bread winner" of the family. At this time, the respondent with the help of her friends started to involve in beggary. The family as a social institution performs several functions.

According to Ogburn and Nimkoff have mentioned six major functions: i) Affection ii) Economic iii) Recreational iv) Protective v) Religious vi) Educational. In this case, the

respondent without a proper family background, missed out Affection, Economic, protective, and Educational aspect of a family.

The respondent's economic insecurity has faced her to beggary. Beggary is a case of socio-economic problem and also a individual or personal disorganization. There are various types of beggary. The respondent belongs to the category of Able-bodied child beggars. They are those child beggars whose parents are incapable of earning by any means and may also forced to beg due to family disorganization.

The child was begging with her friends. Through her friends, she also got involved into a kind of prostitution. Once, her friend was called up by a man, who gave her 1000 rupees, in return which she had to satisfy his sexual favor. The child without knowing the seriousness of the problem involved fulfilled his desire. This happened repeatedly without the knowledge of their guardians. Sometime later, our respondent was also trapped into it to earn this money. The children for the sake of money lost their life. Their childhood has been lost.

While the researcher talking with the respondent, she says, last week some volunteers came from child welfare organization to our slum area. They said about the significance of the education and significance of the life, after finished their speech they asked us to join in their organization with our parent's permission and even they promise to satisfy our basic needs like food, Cloths, shelter, education and all and even they guaranteed to take care and support us.

Finally the volunteers said, those who are willing to join in our organization, please be ready we will come after a week and pick you all with your parent's permission with proper procedure. So that, the respondent thought of plan to go with that organization, because after her grand-mother's death, No one to take care of her and even the respondent afraid about her future life so that, she planned to join in that organization.

The researcher is also suggest to join in that child welfare organization and also suggest to take their friends to join in that organization. Finally, the respondent is also agreed for that and even the respondent realized her mistake and also she is ready to come out and lead a happy life.

6. CONCLUSION

Street children can be seen in many major cities, especially in developing countries and may be subject to abuse, neglect and exploitation. 9th September 2009, the Chennai Corporation inaugurated night shelter for the street children in kodungaiyur in north Chennai. The first of its kind to be run by local body in the country, the shelter, and setup

at a cost of Rs.10.45 lakh is located above a primary school. Chennai mayor M. Subramaniyam (2009): children who are live in the streets are subjected to lot of harassment including sexual abuse. The corporation has taken the lead by setting up such a facility for the welfare of children. As many as 32 children were enrolled in the shelter on the first day. Most of the children are rag pickers. According to Madras Christian Council of social Welfare, (MCCS) executives secretary R. Isabel the children would be brought into the mainstream so on. "We will collaborate with other non-governmental organizations to provide non-formal and continuous education. The older children, who are illiterate, will be given skill training". As part of the contrast, the non-governmental organization will provide dinner at Rs. 10 those children who earn. The corporation's education department is meeting owners of restaurants and philanthropists in the locality, to arrange for food to the remaining children. "Things will be sorted out soon". Non-governmental organization plays a vital role for the street children in the society. Non-governmental organization providing basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter for street children and providing education for their upliftment and to find street children in the society and give proper care for them. These kind of non-governmental organizations are serving for the development of street children in our society. Street children get benefits and get helps from the non-governmental organization. NGO is one of the effective agencies which promote the welfare of the street children in this society. The socio-economic status of the respondent's family is not well, that is the main reason, the respondent comes in contact with other street children and also the respondent didn't get any love, care and support from the family side, that is also main causes to be changed as a street children. In order to eradicate this, social problem of street children to be considered as an important factor in our society. Education plays a major role in handling such issues in the society. Proper counseling initiatives should be taken for street children by NGO's and other organizations. Street children should react in times of any problem faced by them. They should be legally and culturally assisted by the society, so that the respondent ready to come out and ready to lead a happy life.

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