

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITION OF STREET CHILDREN: A CASE STUDY OF COASTAL ANDHRA REGION IN ANDHRA PRADESH

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Abstract: In this paper, an attempt has been made to investigate the socio-economic background of 450 street children from the selected study areas of three municipal corporations in Coastal Andhra region of Andhra Pradesh in India. The cities covered are Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, and Guntur. The focus of the study as pursued in this paper is on the following aspects. Background features of street children such as sex, age, place of birth, religion, community, education level, and main occupation, reason for living on the street, Other socio-economic aspects covered in-depth are as follows: awareness of the right to education, awareness of child rights and good health right, frequency of consumption of food, living pattern, type and means of clothes, awareness of good health habits, habits of drinking alcohol and smoking. It is found that poverty is very high among STs and SCs, and hence they are found in large numbers among street children. Even though there are street children belonging to all communities, their presence is more in STs. The average age of the respondents is 13.6 years with a minimum of 6 years and a maximum of 17 years. The study reveals that these respondents are falling on the roads at a very young age which hinders their social, physical, psychological development. The average period of stay of these street children in the present place is 2.6 years with a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 15 years. It indicates that these children are spending a deprived life for pretty a long time. the religion of the respondents. Out of 450 respondents, majority i.e. 381 (84.7%) are Hindus, another 42 (9.3%) are Christian, and 27 (6%) are Muslims. It clearly shows that dropout rate among the street children at the 5th class level is very high. As compared to normal population, the educational level is very low among street children. This indicates the need for motivating these children to go to school, so that their lives will be better in future. The main objectives of the present study are to examine the Socio-Economic Condition of Street Children: A Case Study of Coastal Andhra Region in Andhra Pradesh.

Introduction: In the present day context across the globe, either at a lesser or greater degree, visibly or invisibly, admittedly or otherwise, street children exist. The phenomenon of street children is an offshoot of complex interplay of various socio-economic and cultural factors, religious, cultural, linguistic and geographical diversity. The large-scale presence of street children is a symptom of social disease. It has acquired a gigantic dimension in the wake of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation especially in the developing countries such as India. It is attributed to exploitative socio and economic structure, lopsided development and inequitable resource ownership, large scale unemployment, rapid urbanisation, rural to urban migration, rapid population growth, extreme poverty, increasing disparities in wealth and income, cutbacks in government social and education budgets, high level child abuse by the parents and society, and the break down of traditional family and community structures etc. the country future depends upon the quality of present day children. Hence, there is every need to attend to this problem.

Objectives

Specific objectives of the paper are as follows:

- To ascertain the socio-economic characteristics of street children in the three municipal corporation limits of Vijayawada,

Visakhapatnam, and Guntur in Coastal Andhra Pradesh.

- To examine the Community of the Respondents and Educational Qualifications of the street children
- To examine the Occupation of the street children in study area and
- To find out the reasons for living on the Street of street children

Methodology

Source of Data: Primary data was collected from a sample survey conducted in Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, and Guntur Municipal Corporations.

Operational Definition of a street child: For purposes of the research study a street child has been defined as one who is 6 years and above and up to 18 years of age, and who has been on the streets for at least a period of three months with the minimal or no contact with family or with any significant other member in the family. The minimal contact with the family is defined as not more than one visit in three months prior to the time of interview, paid mutually by the child or a member of the family including the parent or a significant member of the child's family. A significant other is one who has been taking care of the needs and supervision of the child till the child's last contact with the family. Some street

children may be working during the day, and keep in touch with the family by getting back to the temporary home of parents daily or periodically, such working children are excluded for purposes of this study.

Selection of the Sample Respondents: Selection of the respondents is done through a purposive sample at a few places of concentration of street

Analysis: Age and sex:

children in the selected three cities. For the research study, a sample of 150 street children fulfilling the operational definition mentioned above has been selected from each city. The places of concentration selected are seven in each city these include railway station, bus stand, busy centres, market centres, temples, hotels, and parks. Total sample of the study are 450 samples.

Sl. No	Sex	Number	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
1	Male	393	87.3	87.3
2	Female	57	12.7	100
	Total	450	100	

Source: Primary data

An analysis of table 1 shows the sex of the respondents in the present study. Out of 450 respondents, a majority i.e. 393 (87.3%) are males, and the remaining 57(12.7%) are females. Males are

the bread winners in the Indian family/society and hence, they are found in large numbers in the present study also.

Sl. No	Age	Number	Percentage
1	6-10	73	16.2
2	10-15	291	64.7
3	16 +(<18)	86	19.1
	Total	450	100

Source: Primary data

An analysis of table 2 shows the age of the child at the time of the survey. Out of 450 respondents, a majority i.e. 291 (64.7%) of them are between the age of 10-15 years, 86 (19.1%) are above 16 years of age, 73 (16.2%) are between 6 -10 years. The average age of

the respondents is 13.6 years with a minimum of 6 years and a maximum of 17 years. The study reveals that these respondents are falling on the roads at a very young age which hinders their social, physical, psychological development.

Sl.No	Age	Habit of Alcohol		
		Yes	No	Total
1	6-10	41(13.90)	32(20.30)	73(16.30)
2	11-15	197(67.20)	94(59.90)	291(64.70)
3	> 16	55(18.80)	31(19.70)	86(19.10)
	Total	293(100)	157(100)	450(100)

Source: Primary data

Note: Figures given in parentheses indicate percentage to column total

An analysis of cross table 3 shows the relationship between age of the child and the habit of taking alcohol. Out of 450 respondents, 293 (65.1%) consume alcohol. Among the persons consuming alcohol, those in higher age group of 11 and above

constitute 86%. The proportion of the others is low. The table reveals that more the age that higher the habit of consuming alcohol. There exists a positive relationship between age and habit of taking alcohol by the respondent.

Table - 4 Age and Habit of the Smoking by the Respondent

Sl.No	Age	Habit of Smoking		
		Yes	No	Total
1	6-10	42(14.60)	30(19.0)	73(16.20)
2	11-15	192(66.90)	99(60.70)	291(64.70)
3	> 16	53(18.50)	33(20.20)	86(19.10)
	Total	287(100)	163(100)	450(100)

Source: Computed

Note: Figures given in parentheses indicate percentage to column total.

An analysis of cross table 4 shows the relationship between age of the child and the habit of smoking. Out of 450 respondents, 287 (63.8%) are smokers. Non-smokers constitute 36.2%. Among the smokers, Hindus constitute 86%. The others are of small proportion. The table reveals that more the age the higher the habit of consuming smoking. It shows the

positive relationship between age of the respondent and the habit of taking smoking by the respondent. **Duration of Stay of the Respondent:** An attempt is made to know the duration of stay of the migrants. The duration of stay has a bearing on assimilation the respondents.

Table -5 Duration of Stay in the Present Area

Sl.No	Years	Number	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	1-5	411	91.3	91.3	91.3
2	6-10	36	8	8	99.3
3	11-15	3	0.6	0.6	100
	Total	450	100	100	

Source: Primary data

An analysis of table 5 shows the duration of stay of the respondents at the present place. Out of 450 street children, a majority i.e. 411 (91.3%) have been staying in the present place for about 1 to 5 years and another 36 (8%) have been staying in the present place for about 6 to 10 years and remaining 3(0.6%)

of the respondents have been staying in the present place for about 11-15 years. The average period of stay of these street children in the present place is 2.6 years with a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 15 years. It indicates that these children are spending a deprived life for pretty a long time.

Religion:

Table - 6 Religion of the Respondents

Sl. No	Religion	Number	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	Hindu	381	84.7	84.7
2	Muslim	27	6	90.7
3	Christian	42	9.3	100
	Total	450	100	

Source: Primary data

An analysis of table 6 shows the religion of the respondents. Out of 450 respondents, majority i.e.

381 (84.7%) are Hindus, another 42 (9.3%) are Christian, and 27 (6%) are Muslims.

Community of the Respondent:

Sl.No	Community	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
1	OC	95	21.1	21.3
2	OBC	110	24.4	24.7
3	SC	113	25.1	25.3
4	ST	128	28.5	28.7
	Total	446	99.1	100
5	Not responded	4	0.9	
	Grand Total	450	100	

Source: Primary data

An analysis of table 7 shows the Community of the respondents. Out of 446 respondents, the table reveals that majority i.e. 128 (28.7%) are STs followed by 113 (25.3%) SCs, 110 (24.7%) OBCs, and 95 (21.3%)

OCs. Poverty is high among STs and SCs, and hence they are found in large numbers among the street children.

Educational Qualifications:

Sl.No	Education	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
1	Primary (I-V)	196	43.6	71.2
2	UP (VI and VII)	72	16	26.2
3	Middle (VIII and IX)	3	0.7	1.3
4	High school	3	0.7	1.3
	Total	274	60	100
5	Illiterate	176	40	
	Total	450	100	

Source: Primary data

An analysis of table 8 shows the literacy and educational status of the street children. Out of 450 respondents 274 (60 %) are literates and 176 (40%) are illiterate. Out of 274 respondents majority i.e. 196 (71.2%) studied primary (1st to 5th) classes and another 72 (26.2%) studied between 6th-7th class. However, 3 (1.3%) studied Middle (8th and 9th) classes, 3 (1.3%) studied at high school level. It

clearly shows that dropout rate among the street children at the 5th class level is very high. As compared to normal population, the educational level is very low among street children. This indicates the need for motivating these children to go to school, so that their lives will be better in future.

Educational	Annual Income (Rs.)					Total
	< 5000	5000-10000	10000-15000	15000-20000	20000-25000	
Primary(1st -5th)	7(58.30)	95(80.50)	78(66.10)	12(60.0)	4(66.70)	196(71.50)
UP(6th and 7th)	4(33.30)	22(18.60)	38(32.20)	8(40.0)	0	72(26.30)
Middle (8th and	1(8.30)	0	2(1.70)	0	0	3(1.10)
High school	0	1(0.80)	0	0	2(33.3)	3(1.10)
Total	12(100)	118(100)	118(100)	20(100)	6(100)	274(100)

Source: Primary data

Note: Figures given in parentheses indicate percentage to column total.

An analysis of cross table 9 shows the relationship between educational level and the average annual income of the respondents. Out of 274 who have studied, those with primary education constitute 71.5%, up to 26.3% of other classes is very low (2.2%). Among those who studied primary, the dominant groups are of Rs.5,000-10,000 and Rs.10,000-15,000 (48.5%, 39.8% respectively). Among children of UP,

out of 72 respondents, the dominant groups are of Rs.10,000-15,000 and Rs.5,000-10,000 (52.8% and 30.6% respectively). Out of the literate respondents of 274, Rs.5,000-10,000 and Rs.10,000-15,000 are equal in representation (43.1%). In various levels of education, the two income groups noticed prominently are of Rs.5,000-10,000 and Rs.10,000-15,000.

Table -10 Educational Qualifications and Habit of Taking Alcohol of

Sl.No	Educational	Habit of Alcohol		
		Yes	No	Total
1	Primary(1st-5th)	115(71.0)	81(72.30)	196(71.50)
2	UP(6th &7th)	43(26.50)	29(25.90)	72(26.30)
3	Middle(8th & 9th)	1(0.60)	2(1.80)	3(1.10)
4	High school	3(1.90)	0	3(1.10)
	Total	162(100)	112(100)	274(100)

Source: Primary data

Note: Figures given in parentheses indicate percentage to column total.

An analysis of cross table10 shows the educational qualifications and habit of taking alcohol of the respondents. Out of 274 literate children 162 take alcohol. Among those who consume alcohol, those in the primary level constitute 71%, next comes UP level with 26.5%.

taking alcohol comes down. Perhaps with higher education, the child shows greater awareness of social responsibility, and hence tries to avoid bad habits. It implies that higher the educational qualification of the child less the habit of taking alcohol.

The table reveals that as the educational qualification of the child increases, the habit of

Table - 11 Educational Qualifications of the Respondent and frequency of Bathing

Educational	Frequency of bathing							Total
	Daily once	twice a day	once in 2 day	Once in 3 days	Weekly once	Occasionally	Never	
Primary(1 st)	74(71.20)	35(61.40)	9(64.30)	34(69.40)	25(83.30)	17(94.40)	2(100)	196(71.50)
UP(6 th and	28(26.90)	22(38.60%)	4(28.60)	14(28.60)	3(10.0%)	1(5.60)	0	72(26.30)
Middle(8 th)	2(1.90)	0	1(7.10)	0	0	0	0	3(1.10)
High school	0	0	0	1(2.0)	2(6.70)	0	0	3(1.10)
Total	104(100)	57(100)	14(100)	49(100)	30(100)	18(100)	2(100)	274(100)

Source: Primary data

Note: Figures given in parentheses indicate percentage to column total.

Cross table 11 shows the relationship between the educational qualification and frequency of bathing of the child. Out of 274 literate children, those taking bath daily and going upto once in 3 days constitute

82%-. Those taking bath as shown in subsequent columns is only 18%. Those with primary and UP education generally take bath regularly as falling in the first three categories.

Table – 12 Educational Qualifications and Frequency of Washing of Clothes of the Respondents

Educational	Frequency of Washing Cloths							Total
	Daily once	twice a day	once in 2 days	Once in 3 days	Weekly once	Occasionally	Never	
Primary (1 st -5 th)	43(58.10)	9(69.20)	31(100)	24(80.0)	49(70.0)	34(73.90)	6(66.70)	196(70.80)
UP(6 th -7 th)	30(40.50)	4(30.80)	0	5(16.70)	19(27.10)	11(23.90)	2(22.20)	71(26.0)
Middle (8 th -9 th)	1(1.40)	0	0	0	0	1(2.20)	1(11.10)	3(1.10)
High school	0	0	0	1(3.30)	2(2.90)	0	0	3(1.10)
Total	74(100)	13(100)	31(100)	30(100)	70(100)	46(100)	9(100)	273(100)

Source: Primary data

Note: Figures given in parentheses indicate percentage to column total

Table 12 shows the relationship between the educational level and the frequency of washing clothes. Out of 273 literate respondents, those washing clothes once in 3 days, once in a week, occasionally amount to 146 (53.4%). Others

who wash clothes regularly account for 46.6%. Those with low level of education wash clothes regularly. Those with higher education do not wash clothes that regularly.

Occupation:

Table – 13 Main Occupation of the Respondents

Sl.No	Occupation	Number	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	Begging	91	20.2	20.2
2	Begging-Cum-Collecting Garbage	74	16.4	36.7
3	Begging and Cleaning vessels in Hotels	27	6	42.7
4	Begging and Shoe Polishing in Train Bogies	70	15.6	58.2
5	Paper Picking	13	2.9	61.1
6	Working in Auto Industry	50	11.1	72.2
7	Working in Service Sector	31	6.9	79.1
8	Working in Trade	45	10	89.1
9	Working in Manufacturing	45	10	99.1
10	Prostitution	4	0.9	100
	Total	450	100	

Source: Primary data

An analysis of table 13 shows the occupational pattern of the respondents. Out of 450 respondents, majority i.e. 91(20.2%) are engaged in begging, followed by 74 (16.4 %) begging-Cum-collecting garbage, 70 (15.6%) begging and shoe polishing in train bogies. Another 50 (11.1%) are working in Auto Industry, 45 (10%) are working in Trade, 45 (10%) are working in manufacturing, 31 (6.9) are working in service sector, 27(6%) are begging and cleaning vessels in hotels, 13 (2.9%) are paper picking, 4 (0.9%) are Prostitutes. On the whole, majority i.e. 280 respondents are in the begging profession. There is no any agency in begging profession An analysis of

table 14 shows the reasons for children leaving their house even though parents are alive. Out of 450 respondents, 9 (2%) did not answer this question. Out of 441 (98%) respondents who answered this question, a majority i.e.151 (34.2%) revealed that the reason for leaving their house is disputes in the house, 86 (19.5%) answered the reason as less care and lack of protection from their parents. Another 76 (17.2%) answered the reason parental poverty and 61 (13.8 %) answered the reason as pressure from their parents to continue the education. Surprisingly 40 (9.1%) answered that they have faced harassment from their parents..

Reasons for Living on the Street:

Table - 14 Reason for Living on the Street				
Sl.No	Response	Number	Percent	Valid Percent
1	Pressure from parents to continue the education	61	13.6	13.8
2	Harassment from Parents	40	8.9	9.1
3	disputes in the house	151	33.6	34.2
4	Poverty	76	16.9	17.2
5	Less care from parents	86	19.1	19.5
6	No parents	27	6	6.1
7	Total	441	98	100
8	Not responded	9	2	
	Grand Total	450	100	

Source: Primary data

Suggestion:

1. Government and NGOs can and must work together more effectively to give street children the services and attention needed to reconnect them with their families, and their communities, and lead a productive life.
2. Advance understanding about what works in positive youth developments.
3. There are many NGOs to address street children problems but most of them are increasingly isolated.
4. Provide family based internal educational physiotherapeutic services.
5. Protection and care are necessary. Governments are required to do every thing possible to protect a child from abuse and negligence.
6. Brief brochure indicating the data variables (items) collected during the surveys /censuses need to be published / publicised and may be widely disseminated. This is in addition to the detailed reports of surveys/censuses.
7. Data tables may be posted on the websites in forms compatible to data sheet management programmess like MS Excel to facilitate further usage and analysis of the data.

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