

Street children: lost joys of childhood

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted in the slum areas of Hisar City, Haryana and a sample of 60 street children engaged in various activities like rag picking, child labour and beggary was taken randomly. Self prepared questionnaire was used to collect the data on different aspects such as education, income, caste and class, living conditions and psycho-social aspect of children the children were personally interviewed. The results indicated that majority of the respondents (78%) were Hindu with low income group and living in a kaccha house with large family. They had no knowledge of medical facilities and even not availing medical facilities. The children not only lived in a harsh, rejecting and uncaring environment, but also had no facilities for a better future.

Key words : Street children, Childhood, Slum area

Children are the most important assets of a country but large number of cities has experienced rapid urbanization and population growth. The over populated country like India failed to create facilities for children for proper development, care and education due to the reason most of the children can't enjoy their childhood. Street children form a significant proportion of the population with their soiled sack hung over their young shoulders engaged in dreadful job. Some of them roam in the market places gathering bits of paper, plastic, rag, and anything that they can collect and which can be sold. Children works as shoe shiners, unauthorized porters, station hands, vendors, helpers at the parking lot, agent for anti-social elements.

In Mumbai nearly 61% children were involved in scrap collection and the main reason behind street children was poverty and starvation, orphans, destitute and ignorance (Manimekalai and Kunjamal, 1999).

Poverty, unemployment, low and uncertain income, large number of dependents, little or no skills of entrepreneurial abilities, lack of capital or productive assets are the factors under which children had to work for their as well as family survival (Kumar, 1999). In keeping above views in mind the present study was conducted to find out the causes, consequences and factors responsible for street children.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted in the slum areas of Hisar City and a sample of 60 street children engaged in various activities like as rag picking, child labour and beggary was taken randomly. Data were also recorded

on factors such as education, income, caste and class, living conditions and psycho-social aspect of children. Self prepared interview schedule was used to collect the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to Table 1 regarding the personal profile of respondents, it was found that 66 per cent were male while 34 per cent were female. Majority (92) of the respondents were migrants, mainly from the neighbouring states of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, though some of them had also come from far off states Bihar. With regard to their religion 78 per cent were Hindus and 12 per cent belonged to other communities. When respondents were categorized according to their family income, it was found that majority of them (87 per cent) belonged to families with earnings in the range of Rs. 500 to Rs. 1000 per month. The family income, along with the size of families, which was generally large, indicates that the per capita income was very low and 88 per cent of the beggars lived in a kaccha house while only 12 per cent lived in a partial pucca house. All of them had no facilities for toilet or bathing and living in unhygienic conditions with inadequate food having only set of clothes even 73 per cent of them were not availing medical facilities. Regarding educational background it was found that majority (97% of the children were illiterate. For endurance of street children, there should provision of food, shelter and protection of them against violence and others forms of abuse, Belman (2000).

Table 2 regarding psychosocial aspects of respondents indicated that a literacy among street children that 76 per cent of them reported that they had no interest