

# STREET CHILDREN IN BHADRAK CITY: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

The first four decades of India's independence witnessed a significant increase in the pace of urbanization characterized by a strong concentration of urban population in a primate city, the emergence of slums and the urban poor and the increase in population of children and young under fifteen years of age. This sort of urban growth proved obnoxious for children; they became the most vulnerable group to the ills and risks wrought by urbanization. Many problems specifically concerning children assumed epidemic proportions. This desperate situation of the poor families forced children to live and work in the streets and supplement the family income in order to save themselves and parents from starving. Trapped in poverty, parents often neglected their youngsters or even abandoned. The aftermath is that all sorts of children-children with continuous family contact, with occasional family contact and without family contact- ventured on to the streets in search of shelter, food and family and in the process, got embroiled in risks hurled by both the society and the nature from which it has now become difficult for them the escape (Pandey, 1991 : 1). There are a number of studies e.g. Joe Arimpoor: 1992, Rita Panickar: 1992, Phillips: 1992, N Reddy : 1992, Rajendra Pandey: 1991, A Ghosh: 1992, Hazel D' Lima: 1992 dealing with the situational analysis of street children of nine metropolitan cities of India with the help of UNICEF and Ministry of Welfare, Government of India, but not many concerning the different regions or states in India. That has been almost at one time. Thus, for sociologists studying the problem of street children is an important issue. But empirical studies about this issue are very less, therefore to undertake a study of street children in a specific region or a specific area is very needed to update about the existing problems of the upcoming generation

**Key Words:** Street Children, Abandoned Children, Bhadrak City.

## 1 THE PROBLEM

The Phenomenon of street children is global problem and exists in both the developed as well as developing countries with a difference in its size and magnitude. Estimates of the global figures of the street children range 30 to 200 million in the world and 25 to 30 million street children in Asia.

In India there is no census of street children. But UNICEF states that “The number of street children is 11 million which is still conservative estimate if seen in the context of steadily grouping numbers of street children especially in metropolitan cities in India.”

The phenomenon of street children has existed for some time, but come to the more fully noticed in the 1980s and has drawn the attention of UNICEF. And in India until 1993, the term ‘street children’ did not figure in the ‘official vocabulary’ of post independence India. Under pressure from NGO’s in the field of assistance of street children, both local and international, the Government of India, set up a ‘Scheme for assistance to street children’ under the Ministry of Welfare which was launched in February of 1993. The scheme was to be implemented in only six major cities (Delhi, Chennai, Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Kanpur) initially. Thus it is very serious topic for research.

The aim of the present study is to know about some facts about street children in Bhadrak City of Odisha. The following specific objectives have been presented in the beginning of this study named “Street Children in Bhadrak : A Sociological Study”.

## 2. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE :

Street children have been popularly labeled by various terms, runaways, out of school youth, homeless kids, and vagrants. In developing countries they may be called by various labels like parking boys in Kenya, pogeys boys in Phillipines, pivots in Brazil, rag-pickers in India, gamines I Bagota or a variety of other names (Chaturvedi, 1994:22)

Like the names street children have been defined in many different ways, for example Neela Shroff writes in an article – “ They are our Children Too : The Vagrant Children’s Project”, Street Children are those young people who live and or work on the streets of the world’s cities” (Phillips, 1992:4-5)

The definition of UNICEF refers, “street children as those for whom the street (in the widest sense of the word i.e. unoccupied dwelling, waste land etc.) more than their family has become their real home, a situation in which there is no protection, supervision or direction from responsible adults”. In other words –“A street child or street youth is any minor for whom the street has become his or her habitual abode and who is without adequate occupation.” This seems to be a very widely accepted definition.

Many of the street children represent the ‘visible child labour force, but not all-street children may be working. Street children include also the orphans, some of whose parents have died of AIDS, and abandoned children who made the streets their home in conditions of acute social distress. Research and studies also show that the majority of street children live at home (Chaturvedi, 1994:22)

Thus street children means, those who live and or work on the streets of the cities of the world. They represent the visible child labour force without adequate occupation. But not all street children may be working street children it includes also the orphans, runaways, refugees and displaced persons or any individual upto 18, whose behaviour is predominantly at variance with community norms. Thus the term street children presents a certain set of working and living conditions rather than personal or social characteristics of the individual children themselves.

From a careful canvas of sociological literature on street children, there appears to be consensus on the following distinguishing attributes of street children (Pandey, 1992 : 19-20)

1. Place of Residence : Place of congregation is street, unoccupied dwelling, waste land, public place etc.
2. A Set of Working Conditions : Streets is the workplace, the work they do is of very low status and bad taste and return is paltry.
3. A Set of Living Conditions : They live most of their life in the street as if it is their real home.
4. Time Spent in the Streets : They spend all their days and nights or some nights on the street or in the public places.
5. Protection, Supervision and Direction: There is lack of, or inadequate, protection, supervision and direction, they find for themselves.
6. Family Relationship : There may be street children with continuous family contact, occasional family contact and without family contact.
7. Vulnerability : They are vulnerable to all sorts of ills of urbanization.

### **3.STATEMENT OF PROBLEM :**

The present investigation may be stated as **“Street Children in Bhadrak City :A Sociological Study”**.

### **4.OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

In the light of the importance and scope of such research, the present study has been done to look into the following specific objectives relating to the issue of street children.

1. To know the social background of street children in Bhadrak City.
2. To know about the family background of street children in Bhadrak City.
3. To know about causes/reasons, which compel children to be on the street.
4. To know about other aspect of street children ambitions, expectations, life planning etc.

## 5. OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF THE TERMS

### 1. The Children on the Street :

The children on the street are by far the largest of the three categories and consist primarily of working children who still have family connections of a more or less regular nature. Their focus of life is still home. A few attend school. Most return home at the end of each working day and most will have a sense of belonging to the local community in which their home is situated.

### 2. Children of the Street :

The second group is smaller but more complex children in this group see the streets their home and it is there that they seek shelter, food and a sense of family among companions. Family ties exist but are remote and their former home is visited infrequently.

### 3. Abandoned Children :

This third group may appear to form part of the second group and in daily activities are practically indistinguishable. However by virtue of having severed all ties with a biological family they are entirely on their own, not just for material but also for psychological survival and therefore require a different approach (Phillips, 1992 : 4-5).

The vocational reasons in street, street children cover a wide range of activities. Few of them are as follows:

1. Service workers in congested areas, e.g. shoe-shiners, car washers, carwatchers.
2. Collecting and selling waste paper, plastic, scrap metal etc.
3. Selling water, sweets, biscuits, clothes etc.

The issues or aspects of street children have been studied in city of North India, namely Bhadrak. The basic features of the area of study would be described in the chapter of empirical inquiry.

1. Making and selling flower garlands.

2. Selling newspapers and flowers on streets.
3. Begging, pick pocketing stealing.
4. Bus conductors, rickshaw pullers, vendors at bus stations.
5. Working in roadside stalls or small repair shops e.g. automobile repair.
6. Coolie work or working in small hotels or dhaba.

With the above activities, these children are seen rag picking, selling lottery tickets at traffic light, shining shoes, hawking newspapers, padding various items on the pavements or guarding parked cars. Others street children make their living through petty theft, prostitution, begging, selling sundry items of spurious origins on the pavements, padding drugs or just hanging around in India.

If one adds to the number of “Children of the Street” (those who actually live on the streets), the number of “Children on the Street” (those who maintain contact with their family, but spend a majority of their time on the street), the figure is likely to be closer to with 150 million. Their numbers are the greatest in the huge fast growing cities of South Asia and Asia but the problem is increasing reported from all continents and current estimates put the world population of abandoned and street children at between 100 and 200 million ([www.seekgod.org](http://www.seekgod.org)).

The stories of their brutal exploitation and inhuman treatment and abuse by the adults on the street and the conditions in which they live will put any civilized society to shame. Because the rigours of street life expose children to serious health hazards, risks, violence, physical abuse and exploitation by adults including their own parents, or organized exploitation by a syndicate or gangs that use children to beg, steal or traffic drugs. Other offenses included pick-pocketing and vandalism.

The majority of street children are over eight years of age have never attended school and have parents who have low paid unskilled jobs. Destitute and orphaned children are another group about which very little is known. Thus phenomenon of street children is a global phenomenon and require a different approach to treat them.

## **6.AREA OF STUDY :**

For the purpose of the study the city of Bhadrak district of Odisha has been selected as the area of study.

## **7. UNIVERSE, SAMPLE AND RESPONDENTS :**

Administratively, Bhadrak City is divided into wards by Municipal Corporation. These wards are universe of the present study. By random sampling procedure investigator selected 16 wards. Since street children keep on moving from place to another, it would have been very difficult to prepare any sampling frame out of which to select the desired samples applying principles of random method. Instead through the knowledge about the city of Bhadrak the places where the street children are commonly found were selected. The investigator was to go to these place to collect information from where the street children are located by them during their visit which was about 2-3 times a day. In this way about 210 street children were covered in the study. The places visited by the investigator for locating the street children were railway platforms, bus stand, parking places in the main market, footpaths, tea stalls, hostels, garages etc

## **8.METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION :**

Both qualitative and quantitative techniques are used for data collection from street children of Bhadrak City in this enquiry. An information techniques, investigator used in this enquiry for persons, who related to the street children of Bhadrak City ( If available)

## **9.TOOLS OF THE STUDY**

1. Questionnaire for the street Children
2. Observation Schedule for the street Children

## **10.METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS:**

The analysis of data collected through observations and interviews of respondents have been presented in tabular form. It means that this data has been analyzed quantitatively. Simple statistical techniques in terms

of analysis of classification, of percentage and some co-relations have also been attempted. Univariate and bivariate analysis of the various aspects of the problems have been undertaken. However, qualitative analysis of significant events has also been undertaken. The data collected through case studies have been analyzed qualitatively.

## 11.FINDINGS:

On the basis of the analysis of the data collected from 200 respondents we have arrived at the following findings:

**SOCIAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION :** On the first question of social background of street children in Bhadrak City we find that:

- 1.The number of boys (107 out of 200) is much more than girls (93 out of 200).
- 2.The majority (106) of respondents belong to 11 to 15 years age group.
3. The majority (152 out of 200) of respondents belong to Hindu religion.
4. The most (82 out of 200) of respondents come under the category of scheduled castes.
5. The majority (134 out of 200) of respondents were educated. In which most (116 out of 200) of respondents has primary education.
6. The majority (124 out of 200) of respondents dropout their education. In which a large number (44 out of 124) of respondents dropout their education due to low economic status of their family.
7. The majority ( 80 out of 200) of respondents were street vendor by occupation.
- 8.The majority (112 out of 200) of respondents have no satisfaction with income.
- 9.The most (62 out of 200) of respondents works on street in Bhadrak from 4 to 6years.
- 10.The majority ( 136 out of 200) of respondents born in Bhadrak city.
- 11.A large number (24 out of 64) of respondents come in Bhadrak city due to poverty.

12.The majority (116 out of 200) of respondents were dweller of Utter Pradeshstate.

13.The majority (175 out of 200) of respondents come under the category of children on the street, because they live with their families.

**FAMILY BACKGROUND INFORMAITON :** On the second question of family background of street children in Bhadrak City we find that

1. The majority (116 out of 200) respondents have medium size families.
2. The majority (186 out of 200) of respondents come from nuclear families.
3. The majority (116 out of 200) of respondents have (1-3) male member in theirfamilies.
4. The majority (120 out of 200) of respondents have (103) female member intheir families.
5. The most (74 out of 200) of respondents father do other work such as rickshawpuller, rag picker etc.
6. The majority (122 out of 200) of respondents have unemployed mother. The majority (118 out of 200) of respondents have other earning member, except himself and father.
7. The large number (54 out of 118) of respondents other earning member do otherwork such as maid servant, rag-picker etc.
8. The majority (92 out of 200) respondents have monthly familial income in between Rs. 1000/ to 2000/- (There is uncertainly in income so further inquiry willbe needed)

#### **CONTRIBUTING FACTORS INFORMATION :**

There are several socio-economic psychological factors which compel a child to be on the street. After analysis of factors behind street children in Bhadrak city and compared with social background of street children we find that :

1. Majority (104 out of 200) of respondents work on street due to poverty.
2. The majority (106 out of 200) of respondents belong to 11 to 15 age group, in which a large number (58 out of 106) of respondents work on street due to poverty.

3. The Majority (152 out of 200) respondents belong to Hindu religion, in which a large number (86 out of 152) of respondents work on street due to poverty.
4. The most (82 out of 200) of respondents belong to scheduled caste in which a large number (46 out of 82) of respondents work on street due to poverty.
5. The majority (118 out of 200) of respondents were primary educated in which a large number (84 out of 118) of respondents work on street due to poverty.
6. The majority (80 out of 200) of respondents were street vendor by occupation, in which a large number (40 out of 80) of respondents work on street due to poverty.

**OTHER ASPECTS AND FUTURE PLANNING INFORMATION :** On the fourth question of other aspects and future planning of street children in Bhadrak City we find that :

1. The majority (122 out of 200) of respondents have friends.
2. A large numbers (52 out of 122) of respondents have 1-3 friends.
3. The majority (108 out of 200) of respondents take holidays from their work.
4. A large number (54 out of 200) of respondents take rest in their holidays.
5. The majority (122 out of 200) of respondents have future plans in their minds.
6. A large number (52 out of 122) of respondents want better job in their life.

### **CASE STUDY FINDINGS :**

On the basis of ten case studies the following findings are :

1. Most (8 out of 10) of the respondents are boys.
2. Most (9 out of 10) of the respondents are Hindu by religion.
3. Majority (4 out of 10) of the respondent are Valmiki by caste.
4. Majority (6 out of 10) of the respondent are primary educated.
5. Majority (6 out of 10) of the respondent drop their education due to different reasons.
6. Majority (6 out of 10) of the respondent belong to 13 years age group.
7. Same number (2, 2, out of 10) of respondents are mechanic and beggar by occupation.

8. Majority ( 6 out 10) of the respondent have father, in which a large number( 4 out of 6) of father do different type of work with street children.
9. Most (8 out of 10) of the respondent are not satisfied with life.
10. Most ( 8 out of 10) of the respondent have some future plan in minds.
11. Contributing factors which lead children on street of Bhadrak City for work or other activities are different in every case of street children.

## 12.BEARING OF RELATIONSHIP WITH EARLIER FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The selected studies show that among street children in the world the number of boys was much more than girls (93 out of 200). Thus our present study also confirms this fact. Actually girls also form part of the same group (street children) except that may not be visible as boys into everyday street life. They are great number there in and in rising so in Bhadrak city. But in this research the most of the girls in Bhadrak have no trust on outsiders so they did not involve in this study.

The select studies show that majority of the street children were Hindu by religion. Rest was belonging to other religious. The present study also reveals this fact because in this study 152 respondent out of 200 was Hindu and 48 out of 200 respondents were Muslims by religion. Among Hindu most of respondent 82 out of 200 belong to schedule caste. This data also shows the same finding of select studies.

In this study the most of the street children (175 out of 200) come under the category of **Children on the street** because they live with their families on the slum or pavement established at railway station or road side places. In other words these working children who spend most of their time on the street for survival their families and for themselves but returning home on regular basis. And 25 respondent out of 200 respondent come under the category of children of the street. These children in Bhadrak City live on street on roadside dhabas on rickshaw or bus station or railway station etc. Actually these children have families but they do not live with their families due to some reason such as work maladjustment or other family tensions etc. They see the street or

work place as their home. A majority of these children 12 out of 25 respondent have no ties with their families even if they do have sometimes their rapport and contracts or visits to or from the family are rare. Thus most of the street children in Bhadrak City were children on the street (175 out of 200). Select studies also reveal that most of the street children come under the category of children on the street. Thus the above hypothesis gets confirmed in the present study.

The select studies shows that most of the street children never attended schools but this study show that majority (134 out of 200) of respondents were educated, in which one hundred sixteen (116 out of 134) respondents were primary educated children. They were dropped out school children of Bhadrak City, they left their education after passing or failing primary classes. The reason behind their dropping out education was low economic status of families, cruel behaviour of teachers, lack of proper environment of school or have no interest in education. Though this study showed that a large number (54 out of 200) of respondent dropped their education due to low economic status of their families. Yet there were other reasons also founded for dropping out education by children in Bhadrak City.

These select studies show that father of most of the street children have been found to be doing some kind of work but our study shows different findings. This study shows that father of most (74 out of 200) of respondents do different types of works in Bhadrak City.

Select study shows that living in a most impoverished condition and hard pressed by hostile circumstance, street children have not last hope for their future. The same finding found in this study. In this study majority (122 out of 200) of respondent have future plans in their minds, in which a large number (52 out of 200) of respondents want better job in future. Like this select studies showed that all street children are not recent migrants. Our study also show same findings. Parents of most of respondents were dweller of Bhadrak City and in Bhadrak City street children take 2 meals with breakfast in a day but only ragpicker children take 2 meals in a day. Select studies shows that street children takes 3 meals in a day only

at Calcutta. Study shows that street children take only one meals in a day. In this matter our findings are different from select studies

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