



A Comparative Study on Street Children of Two Cities in Bihar- Bhagalpur and Patna

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Abstract

Condition of street children may be well-thought-out as worst condition. Their visibility in the streets was more, or spend a larger part of their lives in the streets. They may even get money and live off the streets. Often orphaned of their families and home, accessing to basic needs and comforts of life negligible, these are the most marginalized lot of all the children in the urban areas. Hence, it was deemed necessary to make an assessment of the condition of such children of two cities, i.e., Bhagalpur and Patna. A purposive sample had been collected of one hundred and ninety-seven of street children was taken for this study. The results of this study had been presented in various heads like attributes, pattern of street living, family connections, and attitudes and perceptions.

Keywords: Street Children, Patna, Bhagalpur

Introduction

In the world today, it is estimated 100 million children living in the streets. The children living on the streets are particularly vulnerable to victimization, exploitation, and the abuse of their civil and economic rights. Worldwide indifference is the main problematic, and it has led to frequent neglect and abuse of these children. "Street Children" had defined in different settings. Indicating the fact that street children are not a homogeneous group and that the certain circumstance commands the different definition.

There are many definitions on "Street Children", but the description presented by Inter-NGO Programme (cited in UNCHS, 2000, p.73) covers important dimensions, "Any child, girl or boy for whom the street (in the wide-ranging sense of the word, it included unoccupied houses, wasteland, etc.) has converted his or her habitual abode and/or source of livelihood; and who is incompetently protected, supervised, or directed by responsible grown-ups. Street children face difficulties in fundraising themselves with good sources of food, clean drinking water, health care services, lavatory and wash amenities, and acceptable housing. They also suffer from absence of parental protection and security due to the missing connection with their families. In addition, there is a lack of any kind of moral and emotional support (Lugalla and Mbwambo, 1999). The average age at which street children start living on the streets is between 9 and 12 years old, and they keep living on the streets until they reach the

age of 15 to 16. When they became older they start to look for stable jobs with better remunerations (Rizzini et al., 1994, Abdelfatah, 2012)".

Connotation & Description of the Street Children :

There are numerous main characterizations of street children that are known internationally.

The UNICEF Definition: According to UNICEF, it has been defined and segregated street children into three categories:

- i. Street Living Children: kids who have route away from their families and live on their own on the streets.
- ii. Street Working Children: kids, who devote maximum of their time on the streets, fending for themselves, but returning home on a regular basis.
- iii. Children from Street Families: kids who live on the streets with their families.

In the word of Inter-NGO:

According to Inter-NGO the 'street children' is defined, in which it states that a street child is any girl or boy who has not reached majority, for whom the street (in the broadest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) has become her or his habitual abode and/or sources of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, supervised or directed by accountable grownups.

Street children; homeless youths who wander the streets by day and sleep in tunnels, empty constructions and vacant lots at night (Drake, 1989)

Street children comprise a group of poorly socialized children, failing to develop commitments and attachments within society (Cemane, 1990)

In the widest sense a street child is one who has accepted the street his real home those who have abandoned (or have been abandoned by) their families, seminaries and immediate communities before they are sixteen years of age and have drifted into a nomadic street life (Gebers, 1990)

A street child is any girl or boy who has not reached majority for whom the street (in the broadest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) has become her or his habitual residence and or source of livelihood and who is inadequately protected, supervised or directed by responsible grownups (Swart, 1988).

The term "street child" refers, more exactly to children of the streets. These children come from homes where there is violence, overcrowding, drug and alcohol abuse or from communities divided by political forces into war zones. Many have been abused and hope to find a better life in the city (Bernstein & Gray, 1991) throwaways and runaways' children whom families and communities have failed (Richer, 1988).

In brief, street children defined to those children who are without family or whose family ties are so weak that they are only infrequently to be found at home. The children who have been abandoned, work and live on the streets, have no permanent home and stray in public places, earn a living on the street. Those who live without family support; who frequent the streets either to beg or to earn a living; who belong to household headed by women and lack attention and care; tend to be victimized by criminals to commit crimes. In reality, the condition

of any street children cannot be understood apart from such factors as their individual characteristics; living conditions; life choices and backgrounds; families.

Future of nation lies in children but the growing population of the street children needs an immediate attention worldwide and needs a collective effort to protect the future of the nation.

Objectives

The objective of this paper is to compare the two cities of Bihar (Bhagalpur and Patna), and also to study the patterns, characteristics and problems of street children.

Methodology

Questioner had been floated in Bhagalpur and Patna district. A purposive sample of one hundred and ninety-seven had been received of street children. Out of which seventeen was either incomplete or obsolete and these questioners were cancelled.

Table 1: No of Questioners Received

City	No of Questioner & Percentage	
Bhagalpur	90	45.6852792
Patna	90	45.6852792
Incomplete Questioner	17	8.62944162
Total	197	100

Data Collection

For collecting data, a questionnaire was developed. The face-to-face interview was conducted with the respondents. Main objective of questionnaire was to obtain the relent information regarding the personal data, household data, dietary consumption form of target children & Inter relationship between different variables.

- Personal data: Personal data such as name, age, address, etc of the street children was collected.
- House hold data: house hold data such as whether they were alone or living with family, came from single or extended families etc., were also collected.
- Dietary consumption form: Dietary consumption form such as how many times they took diet, menus of diet etc., were included in the study.
- Relaxation time activities: we collected the data about their leisure time activities.

Analysis of Data

Attributes of Street Children

A gender wise distribution of the street children in Bhagalpur and Patna city showed that a majority of them were male and Patna is superseding Bhagalpur in terms of male. The share of girls was only 20% to 30%. Here, Bhagalpur is superseding Patne. This tendency only underlines the finding of other comparison in the study.

A male-dominated society, a division of labour which allocates the household chores to the womenfolk and girls seem to account for this, and also apprehension for the security of the female children, (Table 2).

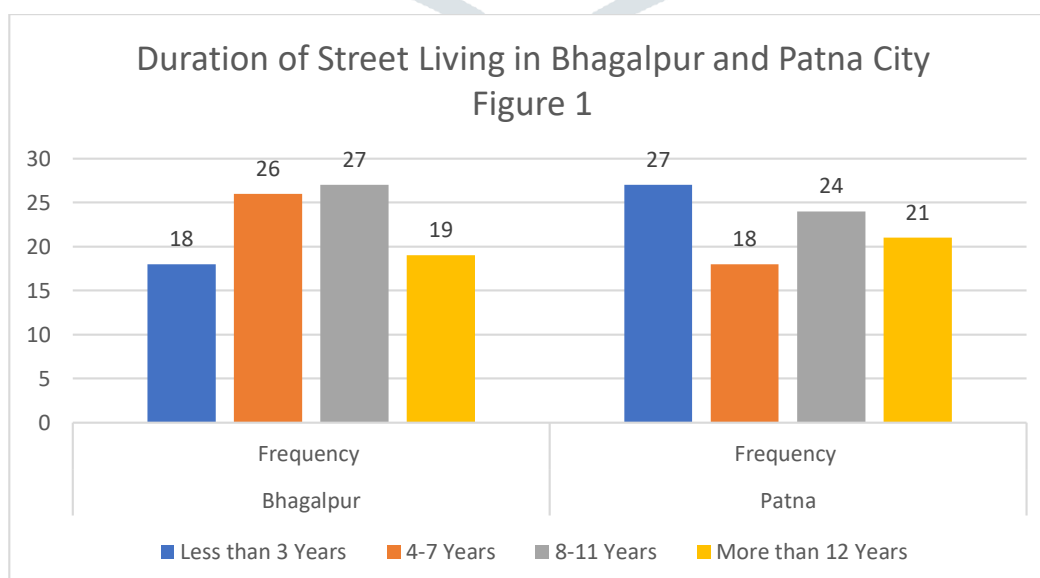
Table 2: Gender of Street Children in Bhagalpur and Patna City

Gender	Bhagalpur		Patna	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Male	63	0.7	72	0.8
Female	27	0.3	18	0.2

As per the survey of street children in Bhagalpur and Patna city, it was observed that in Patna more children are on street under the duration of less than three years on street in compare to Bhagalpur. 26 children from Bhagalpur have spent duration of 4-7 years while in Patna it is 18. Those having spent more than 8-11 years were around 27 in Bhagalpur and 24 in Patna (Table 3 and Figure 1).

Table 3: Duration of Street Living in Bhagalpur and Patna City

Duration	Bhagalpur		Patna	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 3 Years	18	0.2	27	0.3
4-7 Years	26	0.288888889	18	0.2
8-11 Years	27	0.3	24	0.2666667
More than 12 Years	19	0.211111111	21	0.2333333
Total	90		90	



Nature of Living Environment

According to place of living, from Bhagalpur a large chunk of about 70 percent street children belonged to the category of “children from slums”. They remaining were found to live in street like living areas, or on the empty lots of the city (Table 4). In Patna a large chunk of about 54 percent street children belonged to the category of “children from street”.

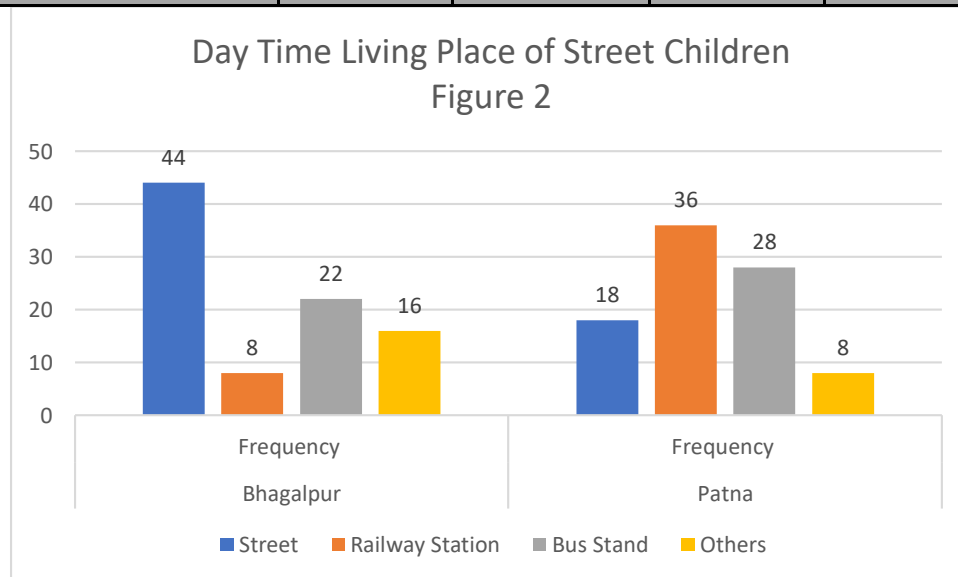
Table 4: Place of Living of the Street Children

Living Place	Bhagalpur		Patna	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Street	27	30	54	60
Slums	63	70	36	40
Total	90		90	

Street children don’t devote their day time in schooling or playing. They may somewhat work, do rag-picking, and even beg rather than studying, or playing. Hence, most of the day time of street children is devoted to these activities, which are generally performed in the streets. Hence, more than half of the street children of Bhagalpur city were found to spend their day time in the streets, rather than Railway station, Bus stand or other places. In Patna, more than 70% devote their time around railway stations and bus stands and in street and other place they are less than 30%. (Table 5 and Figure 2).

Table 5: Day Time Living Place of Street Children

Day Time Spent	Bhagalpur		Patna	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Street	44	48.88888889	18	20
Railway Station	8	8.88888889	36	40
Bus Stand	22	24.44444444	28	31.111111
Others	16	17.77777778	8	8.8888889
Total	90		90	



A night shelter (a home to sleep), and with whom they stay, can be the indicators of the children’s vulnerability (safety) and probable link with their families. Maximum from Bhagalpur and Patna spends in Empty Lot/ Slum, i.e., around 42% and 40% respectively followed by the children spend their nights in the streets, i.e. 36% and

37%. Nearly less than 1/5th spends their nights in parks Thus, these vulnerable children are directly exposed to the extremes of weather (Table 6).

Table 6: Place of Sleeping of the Street Children in Bhagalpur and Patna City

Place of Sleeping	Bhagalpur		Patna	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Street	36	40	37	38.23
Empty Lot/Slum	38	42.22222222	40	41.17
Park	16	17.77777778	13	20.58

In order to show the interrelationship of type of work done to the place of living in street children in two cities, table was calculated. Those working as labourers are staying in street in Bhagalpur is higher with compared to Patna, while in Patna Labour stays in slum/empty lot. Both cities living in park had lowest proportion of children are working as labour. Such children had greater probability of living in slums/empty lot are higher in both cities. On the other hand, rag-pickers and, especially those doing "others" work had greater probability of living in the street (Table 7).

Table 7: Inter-Cross Tabulation of Type of Work and Place of Living in Street Children

Type of work	Bhagalpur				Patna			
	Street	Slums/Empty lot	Park	Total	Street	Slums/Empty lot	Park	Total
Labour	20(60.61%)	10(30.3%)	3(9.09%)	33(36.67%)	5(22.73%)	16(72.72%)	1(4.55%)	22(24.44%)
Rag pickers	6(22.22%)	16(59.26%)	5(18.52%)	27(30%)	15(40.54%)	18(48.65%)	4(10.81%)	37(41.11%)
Others	10(33.33%)	12(40%)	8(26.67%)	30(30.33%)	17(54.84%)	6(19.35%)	8(25.81%)	31(34.45%)
Total	36(40)	38(42.22)	16(17.78)	90	37(38.23)	40(41.17)	13(20.58)	90

Note: Figures in parenthesis are in percentage.

To know the interrelationship of reasons of street living and place of living of the street children in Bhagalpur and Patna, this information was cross-tabulated. Those citing poverty as the reason had lower tendency to live in the streets and slums / empty lot. On the other hand, those street children who were forced by their familial circumstances and who cited "other mixed reason" had greater propensity to live in the street (Table 8).

Table 8: Cross Tabulation of Reasons of Street Living Versus Place of Living of Street Children

Type of work	Bhagalpur				Patna			
	Street	Slums/Empty lot	Park	Total	Street	Slums/Empty lot	Park	Total
Poverty	15(44.11%)	18(52.94%)	1(2.95%)	34(37.78%)	14(41.18%)	19(55.88%)	1(2.94%)	34(37.78%)
Family forced	9(33.33%)	16(59.26%)	2(7.05%)	27(30%)	12(38.71%)	17(54.84%)	2(6.45%)	31(34.44%)
Other mixed	12(41.37%)	4(13.79%)	13(44.84%)	29(32.22%)	11(44%)	4(16%)	10(40%)	25(27.78%)
Total	36(40)	38(42.22)	16(17.78)	90	37(38.23)	40(41.17)	13(20.58)	90

Note: Figures in parenthesis are in percentage.

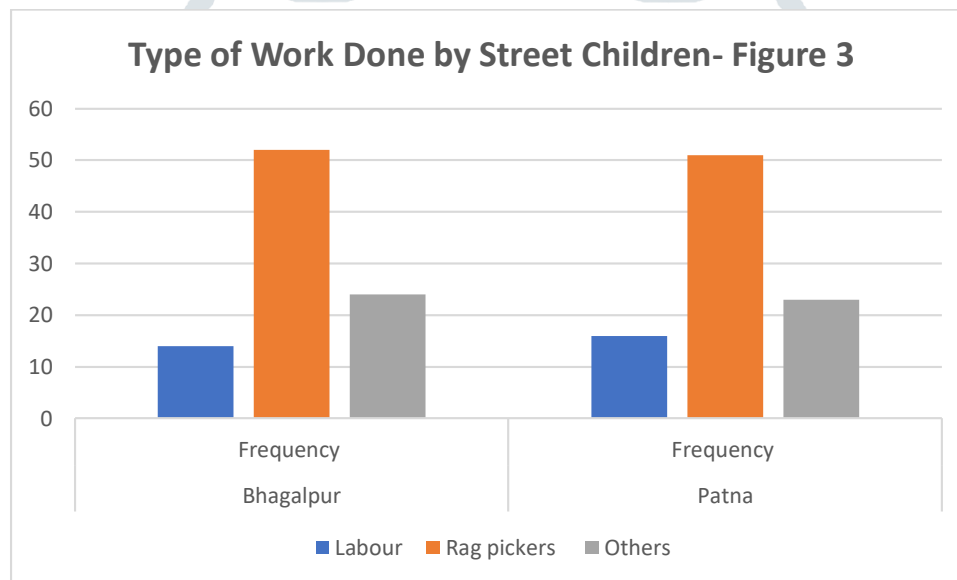
Patterns of Street Living

Earning in one way or the other is crucial for natural life. Relaxation and comfort is not made for the street children, but they work hard for their bread. The nature of jobs done by these children in Bhagalpur and Patna are expressive of their overall circumstances. On an average, the street children execute inconsequential jobs demand's physical labour, repossessing recyclables from the wastes (rag picking) for sale to the scrap dealers, or

even begging in the markets or residential areas. Around as an average in both cities are 15 percent street children informed doing labour-based jobs like shoe shining or working in repair shops, roadside dhabas and hotels. However, a vast majority, more than 55% of the total, were engaged in rag picking. There was another, as an average in both cities more than a quarter of the children (around 25 percent), who were engaged in begging or small-time manufacturing activities (Table 9 and Figure 3).

Table 9: Type of Work Done by Street Children in Bhagalpur and Patna

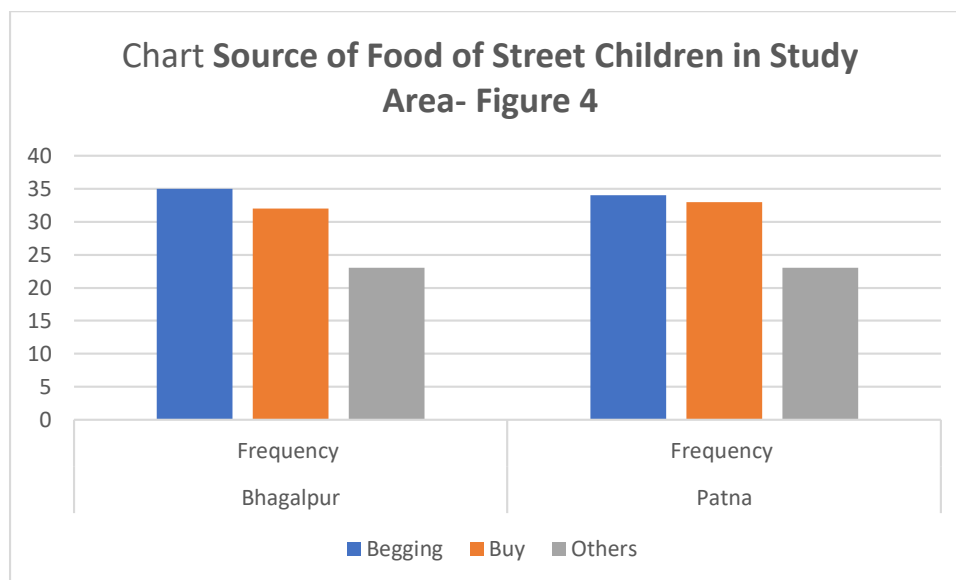
Work done	Bhagalpur		Patna	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Labour	14	15.56	16	17.78
Rag pickers	52	57.78	51	56.67
Others	24	26.67	23	25.56
Total	90	100.00	90	100.00



The street children in Bhagalpur and Patna city as per the data testified a miscellany of sources of their food. The primary category of children was that which reported that they bought food by spending the money earned by them (about 38 and 37 percent). Another big proportion (35 and 36 percent) got their food in exchange for the physical labour-based services provided by them in the houses or the market places. The third, mixed group got left-over food from the restaurants, parties or dust-bins, charities, or they ate from their own home (Table 10 and Figure 4).

Table 10: Source of Food of Street Children in Study Area

Food Source	Bhagalpur		Patna	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Begging	35	38.89	34	37.78
Buy	32	35.56	33	36.67
Others	23	25.56	23	25.56
Total	90	100.00	90	100.00



Food is elementary requirement for natural life. The quality of food is substantial with nutrients to all child, and sufficiency of food is also had a key importance. Only one half of the street children in Bhagalpur and 52% in Patna as per the collected data testified that they ate two or three times a day. Another around 38 and 36 percent children had only one meal a day. The remaining 11 percent and 8 percent testified that they had their meal after a gap of more than a day (Table 11).

Table 11: Frequency of Eating/Day in Street Children

Times/ Day	Bhagalpur		Patna	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Once a day	35	38.89	36	40.00
Twice a day	45	50.00	47	52.22
More than one day	10	11.11	7	7.78
Total	90	100.00	90	100.00

Entertainment, play or relaxation in one or another manner is necessary not only for all the people from all community including children and older individuals. Hence, the data collected for this study, about the way these street children spent their evenings. The respondents were almost similarly divided among their activities. These transpired to be spending time at home with family members, playing with friends, and 'other' activities (Table 12).

Table 12: Utilization of Evening Time by Street Children

Time Utilization	Bhagalpur		Patna	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Spending Time At Home	29	32.22	22	32.35
Playing With Friends	29	32.22	22	32.35
Others	32	35.56	24	35.29
Total	90	100	68	100

According to questioner, the response of elementary motive behind their coming to the streets, received responses was wide-ranging from child to child. Their responses varied from economic, to financial, and to surprisingly enough, even personal. The topmost motive mentioned was economic wherein poverty and lack of resources resulted in the observed condition (around 55 percent in Bhagalpur and 51 percent in Patna). Another main motive belonged to the category of disturbed/disintegrated families (about 31 percent in Bhagalpur and 33 percent in Patna), which was often pigeonholed by violence perpetrated by the step fathers or step mothers and grandparents. A substantial group of respondents (about 13 percent in Bhagalpur and 15 percent in Patna) was purportedly living in the streets because of other reasons - they enjoyed the street atmosphere, or they simply felt like it. Conceivably their life of hardship had made them audacious enough to do this (Table 13).

Table 13: Reason Behind Street Living in Bhagalpur and Patna

Reasons	Bhagalpur		Patna	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Poverty	50	55.56	46	51.11
Family/Disturbance	28	31.11	30	33.33
Others	12	13.33	14	15.56
Total	90		90	

Family Links

Children who are connected to family, will get an atmosphere that is fulfilling for their emotional and psychological development, in simple word versatile development will be there. It is disastrous that street children are found to live away from their families as per the data received. The survey in Bhagalpur and Patna city showed that between 20 percent to 25 percent of these children has either no links with their families, or have only partial connection. Around the average of 76 percent indicated that are directly connected with their families that includes step father or mother (Table 14).

Table 14: Family Links of Street Children in Bhagalpur and Patna

Linked	Bhagalpur		Patna	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	70	77.78	69	76.67
No	20	22.22	21	23.33
Total	90		90	

For a detailed, observe the data given in table 15, to understand the link or connectivity with their families, the children were questioned about the frequency of their home-visits. According to data it is observed that, around 70 percentage of street children testified about going home at the end of the day. About one-tenth go to home only once in a week or month. The remaining, around 15 percent, was not privileged enough to have families or homes (Table 15).

Table 15: Home Visit Frequency of Street Children in Bhagalpur and Patna

Home Visit	Bhagalpur		Patna	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Never	14	15.56	15	16.67
Once in a week or month	10	11.11	12	13.33
Always	66	73.33	63	70.00
Total	90		90	

Street children are often considered as undesirable elements in the society. They all have adverse image, and are considered to be criminals and thieves. This query was made to these street children as how the citizens usually treated them. A big chunk (around 47 percent in Bhagalpur and 46 percent in Patna) felt that they were frequently treated in a bad manner. Nearly 27 percent in Bhagalpur and 25 percent in Patna, however are testified that they were given a nice treatment. Nearly 27 percent in Bhagalpur and 30 percent in Patna, was unable to understand people's treatment towards them (Table 16).

Table 16: Treatment towards Street Children in Bhagalpur and Patna

Treatment	Bhagalpur		Patna	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Good	24	26.67	22	24.44
Bad	42	46.67	41	45.56
No idea	24	26.67	27	30.00
Total	90		90	

Since the street children belong to the underprivileged group, a question was enquired as to what they really wished for in life. The responses primarily specified their preferences for basic material and emotional needs of life like income, food, clothes, house and family. Some children specified towards higher needs like education. As much as 47.78 percent in Bhagalpur and 46.67 percent in Patna children wished for ample income in form of money, about 26.67 percent in Bhagalpur and 25.56 percent in Patna wished rather for food. A smaller proportion wished for ample and better clothing. Among the "other" various wishes can be included those of living with family, having own houses and also opportunities for getting education (Table 17).

Table 17: Wishes of Street Children of Bhagalpur and Patna

Wishes	Bhagalpur		Patna	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Money	43	47.78	42	46.67
Food	24	26.67	23	25.56
Clothes	8	8.89	9	10.00
Others	15	16.67	16	17.78
Total	90		90	

Like everyone wants better life. They want to grow down the life in future. This question is asked from children what they think about an alternative life style in the future, i.e., he or she has some plan, which may be clear or

not so clear, strived for or otherwise. Accordingly, about one third of street children in Bhagalpur had some vision for their future, while the others two third had none of the kind dream (Table 18).

Table 18: Future Plan of the Street Children of Bhagalpur and Patna

Future Plan	Bhagalpur		Patna	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Some	30	33.33	28	31.11
None	60	66.67	62	68.89
Total	90		90	

CONCLUSIONS

The phenomenon of street children was mainly recognized to poverty and disturbed families, while few apparently enjoyed the linked experience. Street children spent most of their time in the streets and public places; they slept in the streets, slums or parks; and worked mainly as rag-pickers and labour. Through work they bought their food, or even nourished with left-overs. Many of the children wished to get money or food mainly.

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