

## EDUCATION FOR STREET CHILDREN: A CHALLENGE

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### ABSTRACT

*The issue of 'Street Children' is considered to be an urban problem. Children can be found in railway station, near temples, in markets, under bridges, near bus depots and stops, etc. The 'Street Children' faced to various problems like poverty and illiteracy, discrimination and lack of accessible resources violent environment, lack of adequate nutrition, sexual and reproductive health problems, etc. Improving the education of street Children have the right to be protected from all exploitative and vulnerable situations. But that is possible only if you make yourself aware of the real problems and risks that children face and of the remedies that are available in law and policy to change the situation in the best interest of children. Sometimes they are being trapped in human trafficking and the female children are being forced to enter into prostitution. Though there are many non-governmental organisations to provide helping hands towards them but in maximum times they are not getting proper help. Education of the street children can transform them into useful and responsible citizens and member of the society by way of developing among them awareness about their role in the society, their basic human rights and responsibilities, self-respect and respect for others. There is a Special need of education. . These children have many needs and offer special challenges. Some of these can be addressed through education with a values-based educational approach.*

**Keywords:** Education, Street Children.

### ❖ Introduction:

Street children are minors who live and survive on the streets. They often grow up in public landfills, train stations, under the bridges of the world's major cities. Because of conflict with their family these children don't want or can't return home. The phenomenon of street children is multifaceted. The combination of familial, economics, social and political factors play an important role in their situation. It is there for very difficult to single out one or more causes. However, children who have been questioned say that family, poverty, abuse, war etc are often why they left for the streets. Street children are confronted by a large number of problems. In fact growing up in a environment generally regarded as dangerous, they incur considerable risk. As a consequence some of their rights are very often compromised. Street children often don't have access to a healthy and sufficient diet. Sometimes they don't even have food, because living on the streets they don't have any money to buy. Also these children don't benefit from a balanced diet they eat. Sometimes when they have the choice they even favour unhealthy foods. Their health is also strongly compromised. In fact they don't have access to sanitary facilities. They are often dirty and infested with fleas. Street children are obviously not educated because of this; they don't have the same opportunities as other children. In fact because they don't see a future for themselves and because they have no professional training they are hindered from finding a job.

### ❖ Objectives:

1. To know the background of the street children.
2. To Know different the problems of street children.
3. To aware the education policy of street children.

### ❖ Literature Review:

**Mona Srivastava, Nasra Shareef (2017)** in their studies on **Plight of Street Children: An Explorative Study from Varanasi, India** examine that rapid pace of unplanned urbanization in the developing countries has resulted in a large proportion of children becoming homeless, leading to multiple children living on the streets. These children are highly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Against this background, studies on the situational analysis of street children across India are needed; therefore, a study to assess the condition of street children in the city of Varanasi was planned. Street children registered with a nongovernmental organization were contacted. Four hundred and fifteen children were selected by randomly, and this group was administered a semi-structured interview containing 35 items. It was found that all forms of abuse were common, but physical abuse (74%) was highest and the police (25.5%) was an important perpetrator.

Younger children were much more vulnerable. The sample commonly had boys and between the ages of 10 and 15 years. It was concluded that these children need policies to be incorporated into the mainstream.

**Panel Kevin J Lalor (1999)** in their studies on **Street Children: a comparative perspective** examine that: Following a discussion of the term “Street Children,” comparisons are drawn between Latin American and Ethiopian street children in terms of gender, age, reasons for going to streets, family relation and structure, delinquency, drug use, groups and the outcomes of street life. In particular, the victimization of street children in Ethiopia is examined that widespread abuse of street children was reported. More than half of the street boys questioned reported being “regularly” physically attacked. Street life is also highly a dangerous place for street girls. Sexual offences, in particular, were widespread. 44% percent had been raped and a further 26% had been sexually attacked. Similarities between Latin American street children and their Ethiopian counterparts regarding gender, background and street life experiences are noted. Comparison concerning the victimization of street children was not possible, as this is an issue that is relatively unexamined in the Latin American context. Also, issues such as the developmental outcomes of street life and the process of leaving street life remain to be examined.

**Md. A. Hakim & A. Rahaman (2012)** in their studies on **Healthy and Nutritional Condition of Street Children of Dhaka City: An Empirical Studies in Bangladesh**, examine that: The study was conducted at the seven areas in Tejgaon, known as centre of Dhaka city, the capital of Bangladesh, which consist of 41 police stations. Street children are very common in this part of Dhaka city. A well structured questionnaire was developed containing both the close and open ended questions to collect data through face-to-face interview with the respondents. A sample of 80 street children with a ratio of 90% boys and 10% gaminers was collected through the simple random sampling method from the selected areas. Results reveal that about 65% street children are underweight. Nearly 77.5% children take their meals three times and 22.5% children eat only two times in a day. Most of the study children (85%) have developed the habit to wash their hand before taking meal that is good for their health. Findings also demonstrate that about 60.5% street children are able to take bath on a daily basis and almost 61.3% of them have been suffered from different diseases during the last 3 months prior to the commencement of the study.

#### ❖ **Definition of Terms:**

**Education:** education is a continuous process of adjustment. This is an individual perspective; where the main aim of education is all round development of man. **Education** is that process by which an individual freely develops his self **according** to his nature in a free and uncontrolled environment.

**Street Children:** A Street child may be: a ‘child of streets’, having no home but the streets. The family may have abandoned him or her or may have no family members left alive. Such a child has to struggle for survival and might move from friend to friend, or live in shelters such as abandoned buildings. The child might even return every night to sleep at home, but spends most days and some nights on the street because of poverty, overcrowding, sexual or physical abuse at home.

#### ❖ **Analysis the objectives:**

##### **Background of the street children:**

A street children may be: a ‘child of the streets’, having no home but the streets. The family may have abandoned him or may have no family members left alive. Such a child has to struggle for survival and might move from friend to friend, or live in shelters such as abandoned buildings. A child ‘on the street’, visiting his or her family regularly. The child might even return every night to sleep at home, but spends most days and some nights on the street because of poverty, overcrowding, sexual or physical abuse at home. A part of a street family, some children live on the sidewalks or city squares with the rest of their families. Families displaced due to poverty, natural disaster, or wars may be forced to live on the streets. They move their possessions from place to place when necessary. Often the children in these ‘street families’ work on the streets with other members of their families. In institutionalized care, having come from a situation of homelessness and at risk of returning to a homeless existence.

❖ **Causes of the origin of the Street Children:** The age of the street child varies from place to place. In developing countries children as young as eight live completely on their own. In developed countries, street children are usually over the age of twelve. The proportion of girls among street children is reported to be less than 30% in developing countries and about 50% in many developed countries. There are a number of reasons why there are fewer street girls:

##### **I. The typical age and gender of a street child:**

Fewer girls may be abandoned by their families. Girls are often socialized (taught by their families and

culture) to be submissive and caring therefore they tend to have fewer behavioural problems as compared to boys. Since girls have fewer behavioural problems, they have less conflict with their families and do not need to live their home. Families might get rid of girls by other names, e.g. 'marrying them off' when they are as young as 13. The girl would then have another family.

The authorities or individual members of the community may pick up girls on the street more quickly. For example, girls may be recruited to do domestic work in private households or to work in the commercial sex industry.

Street girls may be less 'visible' to researchers or educators. Some street girls disguise themselves as boys to protect themselves from harassment by the police, welfare workers, employers and other street children and other may only appear on the street at night.

## II. The importance of identifying street girls:

Girls on the street have more difficulties and are often overlooked by street educators. Street girls are looked down upon in many societies and are easily exploited. They usually have less economic opportunities than boys and are given less money than boys for similar activities:

- Ensuring that young girls and boys have equal opportunities
- Boosting their low self esteem. They may then participate in income generating activities and thus break the pattern of vulnerability.
- Ensuring that street girls have improved nutritional status.
- Helping minimize the possibility of early unwanted and high risk pregnancies by providing them with information about sexual and reproductive health.
- Ensuring the return in investment into future generations, as young women, with some education tend to ensure that their own children are educated.

### ❖ Why children are on the street?

The reasons why street children live on the street vary. However, there is one explanation that holds true for both developed and developing countries poverty. Most street children go onto the street to look for better way of life. The following are some of the common reasons:

- i. **To earn money for them and support their families:** Street children work on the streets to earn money for themselves. Some children need to work to support their families. Some children may have been denied a chance to go to school or have dropped out of school and have nothing to do. They can earn money beginning, carrying or bearing car washing, drug trafficking, juggling, performing music, running errands, scavenging, sex work shoe shining or vending.
- ii. **To find shelter:** In overcrowded households, children decide to leave home to make room for younger siblings and elderly family members. Others are on the streets because they do not have alternative. They may have become separated from their families during civil unrest their parents/care takers may have died from illness such as AIDS or killed during armed conflicts. Other children may have nowhere else to go when they are released from institutions such as jail or a detention centre.
- iii. **To escape from family problem including rejection:** Many children feel that living on the streets is better than coping with problems in their houses. These problems can include conflicts with parents, physical or sexual abuse or neglect (that is an abandoned disabled child). Some children are forced to leave home by their families because the family does not approve of a child's behaviour or its consequence such as pregnancy, homosexuality or substance abuse.
- iv. **To escape from work demands in the home:** In many cultures children are expected to participate in routine family tasks. At times the demands on children may be more than they can take. This leads to the child feeling that he or she is a slave or a servant. Such children leave home in search of freedom from adult demands.

### ❖ The problems of Street Children:

Street children have a greater burden than other poor children who are supervised by adults their problems could be grouped into three classes: social, physical, and psychological.

✚ **Social problems:** The social problems of street children are:

#### i. Poverty and illiteracy:

They lack basic resources to sustain a healthy living. They usually have no financial means to buy decent clothing (which may be necessary in cold places), and no money to buy food, which is crucial for their development. Because of the costs of services most street children cannot afford to go to school. Even where schools are free, many children cannot afford to buy uniforms, shoes and books. Street children live in places where they are not adequately protected from the environment. They rarely have access to facilities that

they need for hygiene and sanitation, such as toilets and clean and safe water supply. They are therefore more vulnerable to health problems resulting from poor sanitation.

**ii. Discrimination and lack of accessible resources:**

When the community makes plans, it does not take into consideration the street Children's plight. Street children tend to be excluded from participating in most of the activities and facilities of other children. This is one reason why street children often do not have access to medical, educational, recreational and vocational resources. They face problems such as lack of vaccinations; poor health, illiteracy and they cannot acquire skills needed for findings jobs.

**iii. Violent Environment:**

The street is an unprotected environment and street children are exploited frequently. In some places, street children may even face the possibility of physical injuries or death from violence. Common sources of violence are: The police, gangs, and drug syndicates, those who operate commercial sex businesses, death squads, other street children, families and sexual partners.

✚ **Physical problems:** There are many physical problems of street children are:

**i. Lack of adequate nutrition:**

Even though some street children can usually get enough to eat, they do not have nutritious diets. This leads to malnutrition, anaemia and vitamin deficiencies.

**ii. Injuries:**

Injuries may be caused intentionally (including injuring self while intoxicated or when depressed) and unintentionally, e.g. due to use of tools which have been designed for adults. The rate of injuries is usually higher for male than for female street children.

**iii. Sexual and reproductive health problems:**

Sexual and reproductive health problems affect both girls and boys. However, street girls are more vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse and exploitation. Common sexual and reproductive health problems include sexually transmitted disease, HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions (details are provided in module 4). Pregnant street girls do not receive adequate antenatal care.

**iv. Common diseases:**

Street children experience many common diseases such as tuberous sclerosis, skin diseases, dental problems and parasitic disease which can be prevented easily if these children have enough resources and their basic needs are met.

✚ **Psychological or Mental problems:**

Psychological and Mental problems of Street Children are:

**i. A stressful past:** Many situations and events that pushed these children onto the street in the first place (like natural disasters, man-made disaster, exploitation and conflicts) may have a lasting impact on their well being. For example, the family conflict that pushed the child onto the streets continues to deprive the child of emotional and material support for years afterwards. When the child has his or her own baby, neither the new parent nor the baby will have the benefit of the previous generation's support.

**ii. A transitory life style:** Street children in some large cities move frequently from district to district or between cities. Sometimes they do this by choice, but at another times they are forced to move to hide from the police, welfare authorities, gangs, and drug syndicates. This type of life style leads to problems of social isolation and loneliness and difficulties in developing emotional attachments to special individuals.

**iii. Mental health:** The stresses that street children experience make them vulnerable to emotional problems, psychiatric disorders and learning difficulties. They do not receive adequate care for these conditions.

❖ **Education for the Street Children's for the Legal Perspectives:**

Like all other children, the street children also ought to be self-sufficient and socially and strongly linked with the society. They need to be motivated to become a productive part of the society. To make this idea come true, the street children need to be educated. They require street education. This education can improve the quality of their life. They would need education, awareness and information through this education to learn the ways that could improve their health condition, alleviate their poverty, take them out of several sorts of threats they face in their everyday life on streets, awareness about child or forced labour, harms of drugs, protection against sexual abuse etc. They also need to be

encouraged to get literate and associate to education system which can in future transform their homeless status and enable them have their own homes.

Street children are the casualties of economic growth, war, poverty, loss of traditional values, domestic violence, physical and mental abuse. Every street child has a reason for being on the streets, while some children are lured by the promise of excitement and freedom; the majority are pushed onto the street by desperation and a realisation they have now here to go. What is obvious is that street children are poverty-stricken and their needs and problems are a result wanting to meet the basic needs for survival. Street children go through the struggle of providing themselves with basic things such as food, shelter, health and clothing.

So, as a researcher I am trying to find out the attitude towards education of street children and whether they will get proper conducive environment for acquiring basic education.

- ❖ **Process of legal action for improving the education of street children:** Children have the right to be protected from all exploitative and vulnerable situations that have been discussed. But that is possible only if you make yourself aware of the real problems and risks that children face and of the remedies that are available in law and policy to change the situation in the best interest of children. Facilitate the process of legal action regarding of street children by taking some of the following:

**I. Child marriage:**

- Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 envisages preventing child marriages with enhanced punishments of rigorous imprisonment for two years and / or fine of INR 1 lakh.
- It defines a child to mean a male below 21 years and female below 18 years. A minor is defined as a person who has not attained the age of majority as per the majority Act.
- There are provisions for maintenance of the girl child. The husband is liable to pay the maintenance in case he is a major. In case the husband is minor, his parents would be liable to pay the maintenance.
- The legal status of a child marriage is a voidable at the option of the parties. However, if the consent is obtained by fraud, deceit or if the child is enticed away from his lawful guardians and if the sole purpose is to use the child for trafficking or other immoral purposes, the marriage would be void.
- The Act also provides for the appointment of a Child Marriage prohibition officer whose duties are to prevent child marriage and spread awareness regarding the same.

**II. Child Labour:**

Children (Pledging of Labour) Act, 1933 declares any agreement by a parent or guardian to pledge the labour of a child below 15 years of age for payment or benefit other than reasonable wages, illegal and void. It also provides punishment for such parent or guardians as well as those who employ a child whose labour is pledged.

Article 24 enshrined in the Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principle of State Policy, lays down that no child below age of 14 years shall be employed to work in any factories or mine or engaged in any other hazardous employment.

List of other labour laws that prohibit child labour and regulate working conditions for child labourers and can be used to book the employers is as follows:

- The Factories Act, 1948.
- The Plantation Labour Act, 1951.
- The Mines Act, 1952.
- The Merchant Shipping Act, 1958.
- The Apprentices Act, 1961.
- The Motor Transport Workers (conditions of Employment) Act, 1966.
- The W.B. Shops & Establishment Act, 1963.

**III. Corporal punishment:**

There is no central legislation in India banning corporal punishment in schools. Different State, however, have enacted laws or made policies to ban it.

**States in India have banned or upheld corporal punishment**

States	Corporal punishment (banned or upheld)	Law or policy
Tamil Nadu	Banned	Corporal punishment was prohibited in Tamil Nadu in June 2003 through an amendment of Rule 51 of the Tamil Nadu Education Rules prohibiting the infliction of mental and physical pain during “corrective” measures.
Goa	Banned	The Goa children’s Act 2003 bans corporal punishment in Goa.
West Bengal	Banned	In February 2004, The Calcutta High Court ruled that canning in state school in West Bengal was unlawful.
Andhra Pradesh (Hyderabad)	Banned	Government order (GO Ms No 16) issue on February 18, 2002 imposed a ban on corporal punishment in all educational institutions, violations of which should be dealt with under the Panel Code.
Delhi	Banned	Petition filed by Parents Forum For Meaningful Education. The Delhi School Education Act (1973) had provision for corporal punishment that has been struck down by Delhi High Court. In December 2000, the Delhi High court ruled that provisions for corporal punishment in the Delhi School Education Act (1973) were in human and detrimental to the dignity of children.
Chandigarh	Banned	Corporal punishment was prohibited in Chandigarh in 1990s.

**IV. Caste Discrimination:**

The Constitution of India guarantees

- Equality before the law and equal protection of laws to each and every person in the country (Article 14).
- Prohibits discrimination on grounds of race, caste, sex, descent, places of birth or residence (Article 15).
- Prohibits discrimination on ground of race, caste, sex or place of birth in any public employment (Article 16).
- The first Indian law that came into force to provide for punishment for the reaching and practice of ‘untouchability’ and for any matter connected with it was ‘The Protection of Civil Right Act, 1955.’ Even calling a scheduled caste by his/her caste name e.g. calling a ‘chamar.’ A ‘chamar’ is a punishable offence under this law.

In 1989, the Government of India enacted ‘The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes’ (Prevention of Atrocities) Act’, which recognises various kinds of acts of violence and discrimination inflicted upon the Scheduled castes and the Scheduled Tribes by Non-Scheduled caste and Non-Scheduled Tribes as punishable offences. It also provides for establishment of special courts at district level to try the offences under this Acts, appointment of Special Public Prosecutors for the purpose of conducting cases in Special courts, and imposition of collective fine by the State.

**V. Street and Runway Children:**

**Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2005-** The JJ Act, 2015 provides for strengthened prohibitions for both children in need of care and protection and children in conflict with law. Some of the key provisions include:

- Change in nomenclature from ‘juvenile’ to ‘child in conflict with law’, across the Act to remove the negative connotation associated with the word “juvenile”.
- Inclusion of several new definitions such as orphaned, abandoned and surrendered children; and petty, serious and heinous offences committed by children.
- Special provisions for heinous offences committed by children above the age of sixteen years;

- Separate new chapter on Adoption to streamline adoption of orphan, abandoned and surrendered children;
- Inclusion of new offences committed against children.

#### VI. **Drugs and Substance abuse:**

The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985- This law declares illegal the production, possession, purchase and sale of any narcotic drug or psychotropic substance and makes the person, addict or trafficker liable punishment.

**The Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substance Act, 1988-** Under the law, people who use children for drug trafficking can be booked as abettors or conspirators to the act.

Street children in India are frequently exposed to abuse and extortion. According to UNICEF, violence against children in India includes neglect, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and exploitation. The rate of child abuse increased to nearly 8000 in 2007. An Indian government study in 2017 stated that two out of every three children in India were physically abuse and that 50% of the nearly 12,000 studies children testified one or more forms of sexual abuse. This increase is probably due to increase awareness and reporting of abuse. Other studies include that 7,200 children, including infants, are raped every year in India, and the government refuses to comment on these serial child abuse that continue.

They are basically suffering from nutritious food because many times they are dependent on leftovers small restaurants, hotels, food stalls, or garbage bins. Lack of sanitation in bathing, toilets and water also contributes to poor health. Sometimes they are being affected by the HIV positive virus.

Basically, in their daily life they are experiencing domestic violence which gives a strong negative effect on their lives. Sometimes they are being trapped in human trafficking and the female children are being forced to enter into prostitution. Though there are many non-governmental organisations to provide helping hands towards them but in maximum times they are not getting proper help.

#### ❖ **Conclusion:**

Education of the street children can transform them into useful and responsible citizens and member of the society by way of developing among them awareness about their role in the society, their basic human rights and responsibilities, self-respect and respect for others. There is a Special need of education. The most underserved and vulnerable children would benefit immensely by attainment of educational targets set forth by states in education for all. Education is a fundamental human right that allows all children to develop toward their potential. A lack of education has dire consequences for the child and negative consequences for the society as a whole. In healthy family relationships, children acquire healthy intra personal and inter personal well-being, but also negatively affect later adaptation and contribution to a healthy, productive society. They learn behaviours on the streets that inflict damage on the self; the likelihood of treating others the same way is increased. These children have many needs and offer special challenges. Some of these can be addressed through education with a values-based educational approach.

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