

The Forgotten Category of Urban Children: A Study from the Streets of Bareilly, India

¹Shailendra Singh Rana, ²Dr. Shashi Lata Singh,

¹Ph.D Research Scholar, ²Associate Professor,

^{1,2}Department of Economics, Lucknow University, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India

Email - ¹shailendra.rana1983@gmail.com

Abstract: Use (abuse) of children for work is as old as human history. A lot of research has been conducted on the conditions of children working in industrial sector and other formal sectors of an economy but there is a dearth of research on the deplorable conditions of a specific category of urban children- "street children". Street children phenomenon which is a result of rapid urbanization has now become a widespread phenomenon in today's developing and underdeveloped economies. Conditions of street children with regard to schooling, health, living and family situation are pathetic. This study is an attempt to study the conditions of street children of Bareilly district in Uttar Pradesh, India.

Key Words: Abuse, Children, Bareilly, Labor, Street, Uttar Pradesh.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Result of rapid urbanization, poverty and family dysfunction; street children were overlooked till 90s by the policy makers and researchers due to non existence of well defined definition and category of 'street children'. For police and judicial system, they are 'juvenile delinquents'; for general public they are 'bad' examples to the upbringing of their children; for passengers, vendors and passersby, they are beggars; for NGOs they are the past stories of pity, revulsion and disapproval; for policy makers they are 'abandoned' and 'run-away' children.

The most cited definition of street child has been formulated by a group of NGOs at an Inter-NGO programme on street children and youth, 1985-

"any girl or boy who has not reached adulthood, 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 responsible adults".

Hardships street children bear, include but are not limited to – harsh, living conditions, education deprivation, health deprivation, love and affection deprivation, child labor, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, psychological abuse, ill treatment, and violence with the child. The trauma associated with the hardships in their lives results in arrested development as well as a host of psychological and emotional disorders that are difficult to overcome by them throughout their lives. In a civilized society the issue of children living or working on the urban streets needs special attention of policy makers because the growth and development of any community, its welfare depends on the well being of its children.

2. Brief Literature Review:

According to a study of Asian Development Bank (2003), street children are not usually counted, nor subject to census, so their numbers are unknown. Deplorable Conditions in which they live has now fetched the attention of both the researchers and the policy makers. Phenomenon of street children is generally considered as an urban phenomenon. Indian too is not an exception with the widespread sights of children working/living on the streets of its urban cities. According to Bose (1992) the term "street children" made its way in the vocabulary of policy makers in India after 1997 only. Purohit and Singh (2011) stated that Government of India launched the "Scheme for Assistance of Street Children" in 1993 only after facing pressure from NGOs during early 1990s and with this entry of street children in policy arena, they got their way in some other policies and programmes as well. Chatterjee (1992) mentioned the inclusion of 'street children' in the programmes of Indian Council of Child Welfare and the scheme for children in 6 metropolitan cities in the 8th five year plan. Bose (1992) stated that Street children in India are "a manifestation of societal malfunctioning and an economic and social order that does not take timely preventative action". Sarah (2007) in his research study recognized that the belief of many scholars regarding the fixing of the problems of street children depends on addressing the causal factors of their situations. Agnelli (1986) noted that children from the poor families as also of affluent families, on account of different reasons, have come on the streets. While the poor minorities because of inherited deprivation unemployment etc have been compelled to come to the street, the children from affluent families are there because of aimless life style, family disintegration and high divorce rates. UNICEF (1988) conducted a survey title "Situational

Analysis of Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances with the Focus on Street and Working Children in the Union Territory of Delhi". On the basis of this study one could elicit formula for estimating the number of the street children. Many of them who were above the poverty line also worked to enhance their income.

3. Research objectives and Research hypothesis :

This research was conducted with the following specific objectives-

- To understand the socio-economic profile of children on/of the streets in Bareilly.
- To know the activities street children were involved in.
- To study the health issues street children encountered.

Following hypotheses were framed to know if there were- any associations between the age of the child and maltreatment he suffered and any associations between the gender of the child and maltreatment suffered by him.

Research hypothesis: There is significant association between "age" and "ill-treatment" with the children.

Null hypothesis: There is no significant association between "age" and "ill-treatment" with the children.

Research hypothesis: There is significant association between "gender" of the child and the "ill-treatment" he/she suffers.

Null hypothesis: There is no significant association between the "gender" of the child and the "ill-treatment" he/she suffers.

4. Research Methodology:

Following research methodology was used-

Research method- Since the present study was conducted on each subject only once, it was a cross sectional study. Field investigation was conducted by the field investigators from 2nd August 2019 to 2nd October 2019.

Area of study- This research study was conducted in Bareilly, a district located in Uttar Pradesh, India. Bareilly is also known as Nath nagri due to seven Shiva temples located in this region and is famous for bamboo products, surma¹ and zari² work. According to Census 2011 Bareilly had a population of 898167 and a literacy rate of 58.5%. Census 2011 revealed that in Bareilly there were 669,681 children under age six (352,479 boys and 317,202 girls).

Characteristics of the respondents and their inclusion criteria- In the absence of unanimity among the scholars regarding who exactly is a 'street child' and this term reflecting many categories of children such as- a child who is begging, a child rag picker, a child who is vending on the streets, a child performing acrobats etc. any child falling under the categories of street children defined by UNICEF had been included in the research study. These two categories of street children given by UNICEF are "children on the streets" and "children of the streets". These two categories are 'children of the street' and 'children on the street'. These two categories include but not limited to children roaming/working at religious places, vending on the streets, living/roaming around railways vicinity, bus stations/stops etc. Children falling in the age group of 5-18 years and found on the streets only were included in the survey.

Sampling technique and sample size- Since there is no reliable secondary source containing information associated with street children and/or their families therefore a blend of snowball and convenience sampling was used for selecting the respondent child. The study was conducted on 50 children who were selected for interview from Bareilly railway station area, Qutubkhana, Near Hanuman temple and Chowki Chauraha in Civil Lines area.

Data collection tool- Data from the children was collected using a schedule. Questions were explained to the children by the field investigators.

Data entry and analysis tool- Data was tabulated and analyzed using SPSS-16.0 software

¹ surma' is a medicated powder used for beautifying human eyes.

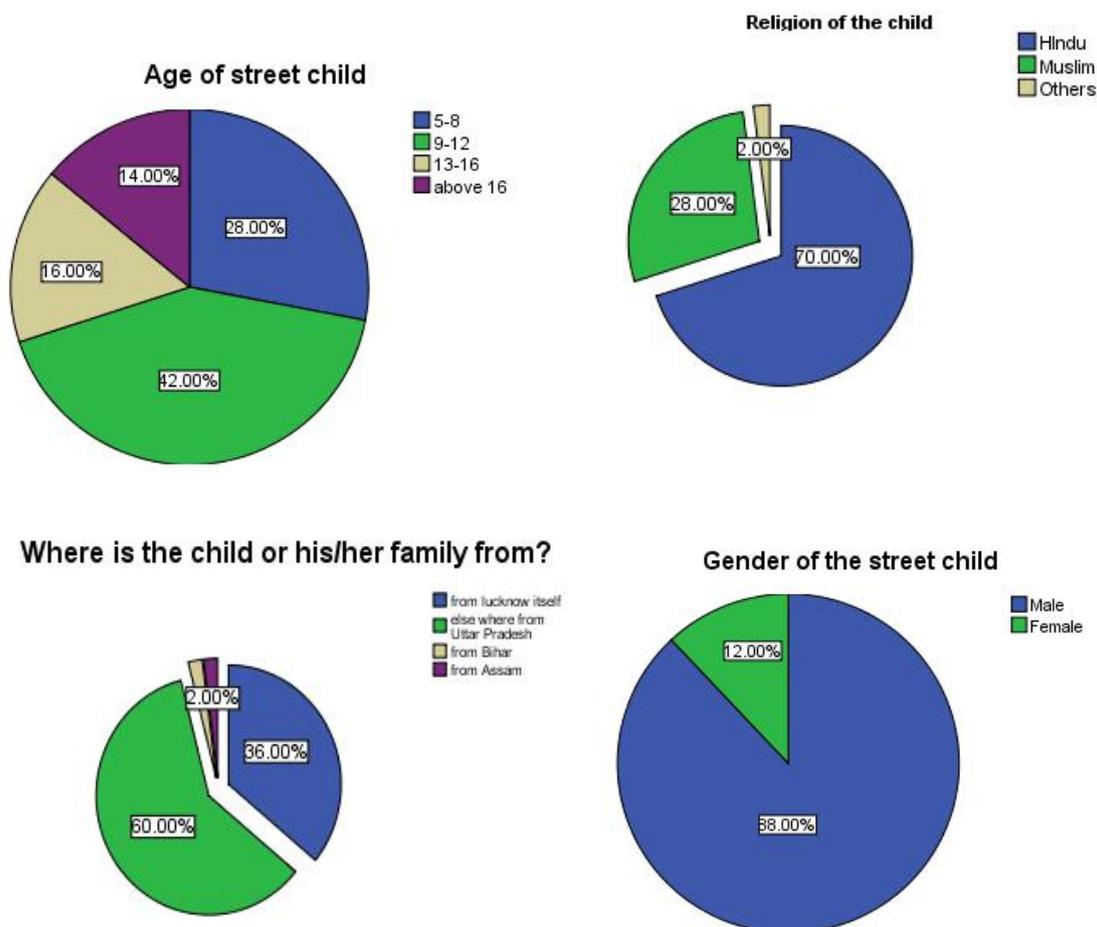
² zari work is the art of weaving threads traditionally made up of gold or silver.

5. Analysis and Findings:

Demographic characteristics of the children

Distribution of the age group children is presented in the pie chart below. It can be seen that the sample consisted mostly the children belonging to the age group of 9-12 (42%) followed by 5-8(28%). Mean age of the street children was found to be 10.44 years and it ranged between 5 and 17 with a standard deviation of 3.2. It was further revealed that only 88% of the children were males. Majority (70%) of them were Hindus, while 28 % were Muslims. No child was found to be migrated from other state. All of them had family ties in Bareilly itself and no one was found to be totally cutoff from his/her family.

Figure- 1



Source: field data

Family situation of the street children

Out of all the respondents of the study, fathers of 22% were not alive, 4% were without mothers, which made a total of 26% with single parent. 4% had no parents.

Further study revealed that 70% and 18% of the children living in the households headed by father only and mother only status respectively giving a total of 88 % of mono-parental households. 10% were living in the household headed by the members of extended family and 2% were living in the household having one step parent.

Involvement of Street children in economic activities

It was not surprising to found all the respondent children to be involved in some type of work for fetching money. The average age at which these children started working was found to be 7 years and ranged from 5 to 11. The cumulative frequency curve presented below shows the distribution of age at which a certain proportion of the children had started to work. Children between the age of 14 and 18 are considered as adolescents in the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, amended in 2016 ("CLPR Act"). The employment of adolescents is allowed under this law except the employment in the listed hazardous occupations and processes. It is worrying that despite of existence of such laws it was found that the children in this study had started working even before reaching the age of 12 years. At the time of interview, all the children were involved in some type of work which fetched them money. Maximum number of children (42%) were found to be involved in street vending of petty items such as balloons, small

toys, bubble soap and even guthka; 22% were part time beggars, 22% were working in dhabas, small proportion was rag pickers (6%) on occasional basis and rest of them (8%) were found to be involved in miscellaneous types of work such as- occasionally assisting mothers who worked as cleaners and maids, and sweeping in trains.

Table-1 Cumulative percentage for the age at which children started to work

Age of child when he/she started work	Cumulative %
5	16
6	42
7	70
8	86
9	90
10	96
11	100

Source: field survey

Reasons for coming on the streets to work

Reasons due to which children had to start working at the tender age were found to be broadly associated with pull and push factors, for instance factors like death of parent/s, poverty of the household, violence/abuse in the family pushed the children to work while freedom, child seeing attractiveness in the life on the street, persuasiveness by peers pulled these children to streets. % children were found to be on streets due to push factors and % was on streets due to pull factors.

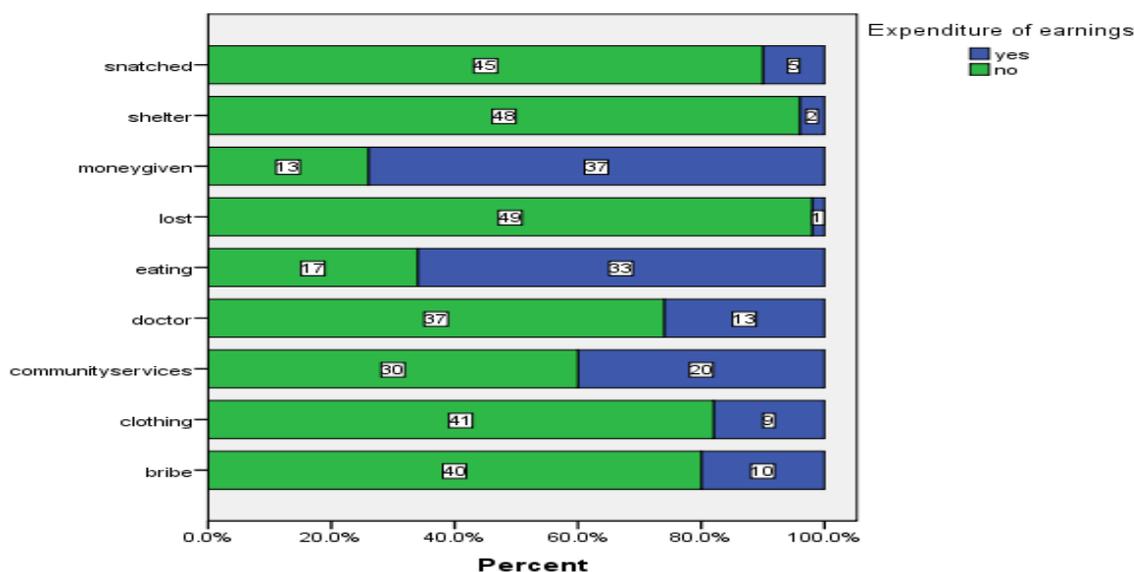
How they get paid?

Except those involved in street vending not all children were directly paid in cash. 16% children which included mostly those children working in repair shops dhabas got their earnings paid to their parents, % were getting in cash and meal. The average monthly earnings of these children were found to be Rs. 2142 with a minimum and maximum of Rs.1484 and Rs.3554 respectively.

What they do with their earnings?

Children revealed to spending their earnings on the following- eating out, community services, clothing/cosmetics, and entertainment. Few also revealed that their money was snatched, money was given to others and sometimes money was lost also. There were multiple responses of this question. Detailed picture is presented in the following chart.

Figure -2 Stacked bar chart showing the count and percentage of children spending their earnings on various items



Source: field survey

Condition of housing and access to basic utilities

Out of all the respondents, 34% were living in a family owned/rented house, 34% were staying at their places of work. 8% respondents revealed to be staying at pavements/parks/places of worships, 10% in railway vicinity in temporary shelters using tarpaulins, 10% were staying in deserted buildings and 4% found to be living in places which are not considered fit for human habitation.

Very small (4%) proportion of respondents was found to have access to all the three basic utilities water, toilet and electricity. 18% were living in the places lacking all the utilities. Remaining respondents were either lacking one or two of the utilities.

Table -2 Places where the child stays at night

	During night child stays at	Percent
	Family owned or rented house	34.0
	Place of work(shops/dhabas/construction sites)	34.0
	pavements/parks/place of worships/	8.0
	Any other place unfit for human habitation	4.0
	railway station/railway vicinity	10.0
	in a deserted/under construction building	10.0
	Total	100.0

Source: field survey

**Table-3
 Availability of the utilities within the places where child lives**

	Utilities	Percent
	Toilet, water and electricity	4.0
	Toilet and water	8.0
	Electricity only	2.0
	Water only	40.0
	water and electricity	28.0
	None	18.0
	Total	100.0

Source: field survey

Health issues encountered by street children

Researchers also inquired into the health problems of street children and the figures revealed that more than % of the children suffered injuries and/or sickness in the last six months, 52% had sickness during the last six months. Detailed picture is presented below.

**Table-4
 Cross tabulation of injury and sickness encountered by street children**

		Any sickness in the last six months?		Total
		Yes	No	
Any injury in the last six months?	Yes	4%	14%	18%
	No	48%	34%	82%
Total		52%	48%	100%

Source: field survey

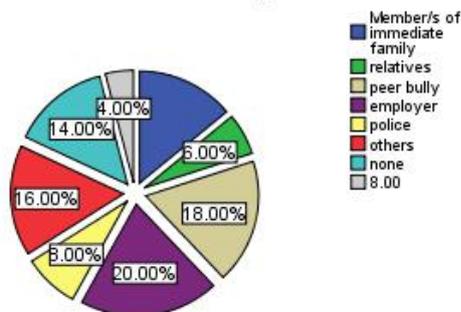
It was further revealed that sickness of 69% got cured but 31% till the time of conducting the field survey % continued to suffer. 10% were disabled children with the disabilities of eyesight and/or walking. They were looking malnourished and the symptoms of skin infections were also visible in few respondents. Signs of bruises were also there. Researchers found unhygienic environment where these children live and work, malnutrition, negligence by the parents or adults with whom children live, and limited or no access to medical care to be responsible for the health related sufferings of street children.

Maltreatment

Street children are often exposed to maltreatment within the family/household and also outside. an attempt was made to know who ill treats the children and whether there is any association between gender of a children and ill-treatment he/she encounters. Similarly an association between the age and the subjection of ill-treatment of children was also analyzed. For analyzing the above associations chi-square test was used. Results are compiled below.

Figure-3

Who among the following ill-treats the child mostly?



Source: field data

Research hypothesis: There is significant association between “age” and “ill-treatment” with the children.

Null hypothesis: There is no significant association between “age” and “ill-treatment” with the children.

Findings: Since p value = 0.526 > $\alpha = 0.05$ so null hypothesis cannot be rejected and there is failure to find any significant association between “age” and “ill-treatment” with the child so it may be concluded that children of all the age groups are equally exposed to ill-treatment.

Table-5
Chi-Square Test

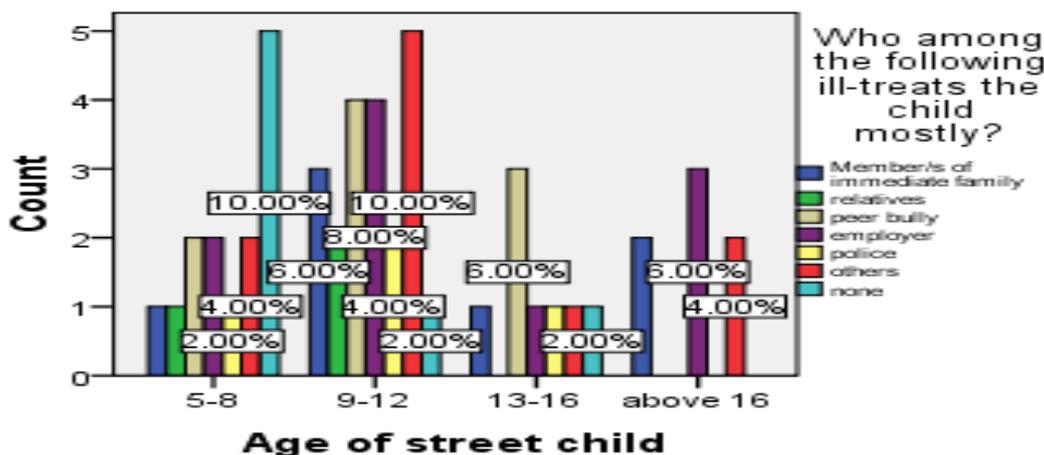
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	16.960 ^a	18	.526
Likelihood Ratio	18.657	18	.413
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.806	1	.179
N of Valid Cases	50		

a. 28 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .42.

Source: field survey

Following bar chart displays the age-wise responses of the question “who among the following ill-treats the child mostly?”

Figure-4 Percentage of responses within the age group (who ill-treats the child mostly?)



Source: field survey

Researcher also tested any significant association between the “gender” of the child and the “ill-treatment”

Research hypothesis: There is significant association between “gender” of the child and the “ill-treatment” he/she suffers.

Null hypothesis: There is no significant association between the “gender” of the child and the “ill-treatment” he/she suffers.

Findings: Since $p \text{ value} = 0.378 > \alpha = 0.05$ so null hypothesis cannot be rejected and there is a failure to find any significant association between “gender” and “ill-treatment” with the child. So it may be concluded that children of both the genders are equally exposed to ill-treatment.

Table-6
Chi-Square Test

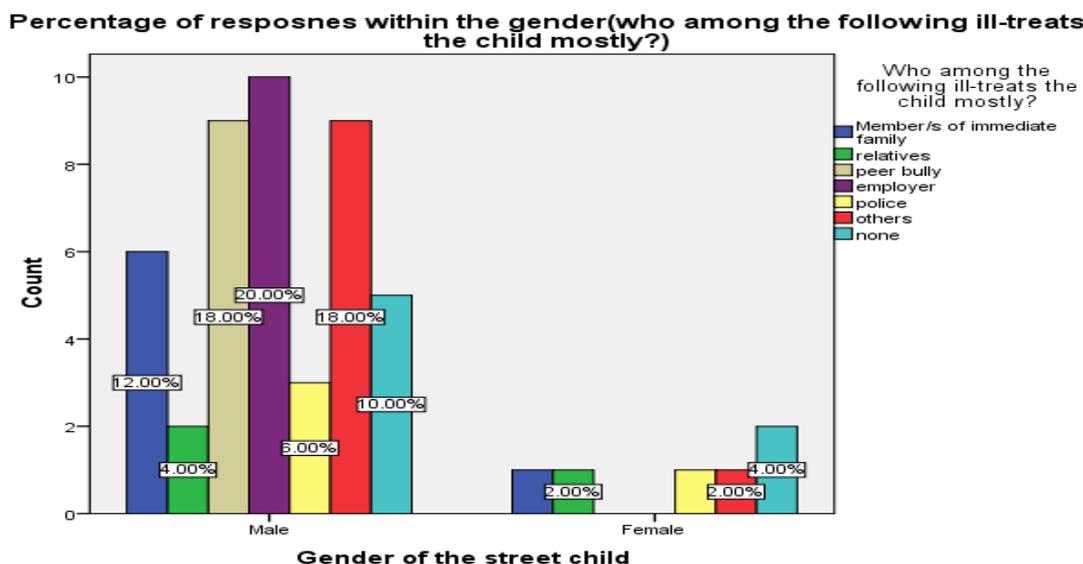
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.417 ^a	6	.378
Likelihood Ratio	7.756	6	.257
Linear-by-Linear Association	.418	1	.518
N of Valid Cases	50		

a. 9 cells (64.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .36.

Source: field survey

Following bar chart displays the gender-wise responses of the question “who among the following ill-treats the child mostly?”

Figure-5



Source: field survey

6. Conclusion

This study presented the socio-economic profile of street children, economic activities they are engaged in and the health issues due to their vulnerability to harsh street conditions. Phenomenon of street children in urban India is a very complex and acute phenomenon, and therefore immediate, suitable, and feasible policy actions are required to bring these children back into the normal system. Plights of street children can be addressed only with the combined efforts of politicians, policy-makers, judicial system, urban planners, NGOs and general public.

7. Limitations of the research study

- Since the results of this research study were based on primary data and the respondents were selected through convenience sampling which is a non-probability sampling so it apparently suffers from all the drawbacks and limitations associated with sampling. A one such limitation which cannot be ignored is the non representativeness of the population by the sample.

- Due to several constraints, numbers of respondents were not very large and due to the small sample size, one must be cautious in generalizing the findings of this study.
- More in-depth funded research studies need to be conducted to fully understand the plights of street children.

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