

# Basic human rights of the street children-a special reference to Bhubaneswar city

## Abstract

This paper deals with the situation of street children in Bhubaneswar town of Odisha. A street child is “any boy or girl for whom the street has become his or her ordinary home or source of sustenance”. According to the United Nations Children’s Fund, around 4,00,000 street children are living in different parts of India, wherein living conditions are vulnerable. Bhubaneswar is one of Odisha State’s fast-growing cities. The researcher selected Bhubaneswar city as a research framework and collected data on the socio-economic and living conditions of 20 street children using the targeted sampling method. The survey revealed that respondents were on average 14 years old. Approximately 82% of street kids have dropped out of school. The main job they do for their sustenance is to collect old papers, coolie work, begging, shoe shining, flower selling, etc. A small percentage of street children, according to key informants, are implicated in thefts, sex work, drug cases, whistle-blowers, etc. This study suggests that street children should receive thoughtful care, emotional support, and nutritious nutrition so that they are not at risk for their health and work. The concept of street education must be developed for the street children by that they could be easily integrated into other public schools later on as a means of mainstreaming them into society. Apart from that, the media must publicize the success stories of the restoration of street children with their family members or to mainstream society.

**Keywords:** street children, child abuse, children safety, welfare

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Tulishree Pradhan,<sup>1</sup> Tarini Prasad Sahoo<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>KIIT School of Law, KIIT Deemed University, India

<sup>2</sup>PG Department of Law, Utkal University, India

**Correspondence:** Tulishree Pradhan, KIIT Deemed University, KIIT School of Law, India, Tel 7744978720, Email rainy94@gmail.com

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## Introduction

An estimation by the United Nations Children’s Fund and the Government of India reveals that there are roughly 4,00,000 street children living in the cities of Mumbai, Kolkata, Delhi, Hyderabad, Bangalore as well as in the rest parts of India. Moreover, as per the United Nations Children’s Fund, street children means “any girl or boy for whom the street has become his or her habitual abode and/or source of livelihood; and who is inadequately protected, supervised, or directed by responsible adults”. Children on the streets of India are especially vulnerable. According to Rose (2010), labour conditions for street children are commonly abhorrent due to their being confined to the unorganized field. Due to low earnings, street children found in the streets of India usually prefer to be independent or to work in different numbers of works. Street children, particularly those who have been residing on the streets for more time, sometimes engaged in activities like theft, pickpocketing, drug trafficking, and prostitution. The majority of street children do work for an average of 8 to 10 hours per day in different activities for earning their livelihood.

## Literature review

A number of researchers have investigated the problems of street children in India. Present health problems have been estimated to be 78%, out of which 43% have been reported to be sustaining or serious. All the children were not all homeless, but two-thirds of them were but they choose to live on the streets instead of permanently residing with their families. A study called “Street Children Exposed to Numerous Sexual Hazards” reveals around 70% are on the streets during the daytime and return home during the night time and around 20 to 25% of children know where their families are but they prefer to stay on the streets. Only 5 to 10% are homeless and live on the street. Somewhere between 25% and 33% are girls. These children are plagued by diseases like infections of the lungs and skin, gastrointestinal issues, sexual violence, harassment, unintended

pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, distress. The study shows that a model program is being implemented to provide health, nutrition, counselling, and guidance. A study was also conducted on the topic “mental health condition of runaway adolescents”. Findings suggest that around 20.7% of children had a high level of despair and 8% of children had depression. Approximately 38% of children have a history of physical maltreatment. Approximately 69.33% of children suffer from behavioral problems and 7.8% are neurotic. The study found that runaway adolescents suffer from a wide range of mental health problems and that a comprehensive psychosocial intervention program is required. Beyond academic studies and social literature highlighted global problems of street children but could not fully describe the base cause of the phenomenon. This study summarises the identified characteristics of street children in the city of Bhubaneswar as well as the way of life of street children for the health and development of children.<sup>1-5</sup>

## Research methodology

Bhubaneswar possesses one of the largest railway branches in Odisha. Many NGOs and newspaper reports show that many street children live and stroll by the railway platforms. It is also noted that street children cannot remain in a single location. The present study identified 20 people for assessing the plight of street children in Bhubaneswar city. The study assesses the status of street children in the fields of education, psychology, health, and ill-treatment. It is the need of the hour that, the problems of street children are dealt with in warfare means in Bhubaneswar city and in India as well. Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation has a high density of street children than the other cities of Odisha. A wide range of researchers, officials, and social workers work directly with disadvantaged children in urban areas. Numerous studies have also been conducted and published reports on the issue for a wide range of purposes and methods. The researcher examined the problem of street children based on these previous works and studies, with a particular focus on diverse effects.

The objective of the study

- To evaluate socioeconomic patterns of street children.
- To evaluate the psycho-social, economic and educational problems of street children.
- To make suggestions and recommendations for improving the quality of life of Bhubaneswar's street children.

Universe: There are an estimated 5,000 street children in the city of Bhubaneswar. Sample: Purposive sampling method has been used to identify the respondents in the city of Bhubaneswar. The researcher identified 20 numbers of street children who were taken as a sample for this study. They are from railway stations, bus stands, parks, and other hot spots in the city of Bhubaneswar.

## Data collection and analysis

The interview schedule is the data collection tool, and it contains 20 questions about the socioeconomic, educational, and psychological problems that street children face. MS Office Excel 2010 was used to analyze the information. The information was entered into a master document, which was then divided into tables.

**Table 1** Distribution of the Respondents by their age

Age Group	Frequency	Percent
7 to 10	3	15.00%
11 to 14	12	60.00%
15 to 18	5	25.00%
Total	20	100.00%

**Table 2** Categories of Street Children

Sl. No.	Category	Number	Percent
1	Child of the Street	13	65.00%
2	Child on the Street	7	35.00%
	Total	20	100.00%

**Table 3** Occupation of Street Children

Sl. No.	Occupation	Number	Percent
1	Begging	8	40.00%
2	Rag Picking	6	30.00%
3	Others	4	20.00%
	Total	20	100.00%

## Data analysis & interpretation

The age bracket of the street children in Bhubaneswar city is depicted in the graph below. As per the data, the majority of street children are between the ages of 11 and 14 years. They've found shelter at bus stops and train stations. The respondents' average age is 14 years and 8 months. Many children have left their homes and have no contact with their families. While some children have relationships with their parents, they remain on the streets. They pay occasional visits to their families. The graph below depicts facts about the various types of street children in the city of Bhubaneswar.

As per the data in the table below, the bulk of the street children interviewed i.e. 65.00% were children "of the street," who work and sleep on the streets. 35.00% of the children on the streets had a

place to sleep at night. The bulk remained with at least one biological parent, while others have none and stayed with the extended family on the Streets.

The following table presents the occupation undertaken by the street children in Bhubaneswar city. The data shows that a bulk portion of the street children is rag-picking in the city and selling in the shops and nearby. The remaining street children are begging and doing some other work for their livelihoods. The research confirms that the majority of vendors are children on the street followed by those who slept both at home and on the streets.

As per the data, there are a variety of explanations for why children end up on the streets. Earning money, being orphaned, bullying by stepfathers/stepmothers/some friends, insufficient treatment and help by parents or guardians, and social pressure are all examples. The majority of street children cited making money for their families as the primary explanation for being on the streets, according to the report.

## Findings of the study

The above research shows that the respondents' average age is 14 years which means that the bulk of street children are in their adolescent stage. The main causes for being a street child are poverty and bullying from family members. The street kids participate in a wide range of events. Collect old documents, coolie, begging, helper, hawker, shoe polishers, flower sellers, and other activities are frequently listed. Sometimes they are reported to have been engaged in robbery, snatching, pick-pocketing, sex trafficking, drug selling, and informer work. Business hours vary from 5 to more than 12 hours a day. The average working day was calculated to be ten hours long. It seems that job intensity was unrelated to age. The daily average earnings of a street child range between Rs. 200 to Rs. 400. They are unable to save money due to a lack of protection. So that they could use all of the money in one day. Banks and the postal service refused to open accounts for them due to a lack of identity evidence. As per the report, poverty has driven these children to take shelter on the streets. The government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should work together to rehabilitate these children and start college and technical training programs so that they can have a prosperous future. The bulk of street children trusts their friends rather than strangers. It may be for this cause that they spend the rest of their time on the streets mingling with their mates.

## Recommendations

- The Department of Child Welfare and the Department of Social Welfare should compile and retain data on street children.
- For the Street Children, a street-oriented Education System must be established, with the goal of mainstreaming them into other government schools.
- The importance of providing street children with health education and knowledge of personal hygiene cannot be overstated.
- Child protective programs must be funded by the government, and non-governmental organizations should be organized with the Department of Women and Children's Welfare.
- The government must provide advocacy and defense against this Human Rights Violation against these vulnerable children. The Human Rights Commission also takes *suo motu* initiatives for protecting the rights of these children who are facing violations of their human rights every day.

- f) The police department should shield the street children from the street Gundas/ hooligans, instead of ignoring or harassing them while they are on the streets.
- g) The media should publicize success stories of street children reuniting with their families. Also being the fourth pillar of our democracy media has played a significant role in exposing many loopholes in Government mechanisms, likewise, they should also focus on the rights of street children as well and highlight their issues so that the same can reach the concerned authorities and agencies in a very effective manner.

### Acknowledgments

None.

### Conflicts of interest

None.

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