



A Study On Street Children in Bihar: A Fast-Rising Societal Concern

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Abstract: *Because their parents are destitute, orphaned, or have run away from home, many children find themselves living and working on the street. A lack of appropriate feeding, drinking, health-care and hygiene, toilets/bathrooms/suitable housing is a constant problem for them. Another problem is that they lack the emotional and moral support that comes from having parents to look up to and rely on. Many circumstances contribute to children being forced to live on the streets. Poverty has been cited as a contributing factor. Apart from having to deal with unhealthy living and working conditions, street children must also face with necessities of life issues like hunger, clothing, shelter, and restricted access to education, health care, and other social services. It was determined that street children in Bihar spend a large portion of their time engaging in streets activities. An interview schedule was administered to 160 street children aged 9-12 years, evenly divided between sexes in a good manner. The research was carried out at a variety of sites around Bihar, including the train station, bus stops, intersections, and markets nearby. Snowball sampling was used to choose youngsters living on the streets of their homes. The study's findings revealed that guys labour for longer periods of time than girls.*

Key Words: *Homeless/Street Children, Child Labour, Child Abuse, Vulnerable Children, Orphaned.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Hundreds of thousands of youngsters live in poverty in Bihar. Countless numbers of these children - many of whom are hungry, unwell, and illiterate – are left in the hands of relatives that cannot afford to feed them. At a time when kids should need to be growing, caring, learning to read and write, million and more are being driven into the workforce. Millions of people are still forced to live on the streets by the death of a loved one, the dissolution of a family, or the abuse they suffered at the hands of their parents, relatives, or employers. Economic development in Bihar has resulted in a widening gap between the affluent and the poor, resulting in a more uneven distribution of income. Poverty has not decreased at all as a result of this expansion, which affects hundreds of millions of people (Care and Share, 2019). There are a huge number of street children in Bihar compared to any other country. As per the report of United Nations number of street children in India is the biggest number of the world. However, according to independent estimates, the number of people affected is far higher. According to research published in the journal Paediatrics. An estimated one million and or more street children from Bihar are home to street of Kolkata, New Delhi, and Mumbai. There are substantial problems in estimating the number of street children and the degree of their issues since these groups are not fully covered by the national census, and educational and health statistics (Deb, 2017). The average age of street kids is fourteen, with males predominating (Naik et al., 2019).

Many cities of Bihar are fastest rising to the number of street children and the issue of street children has become a major societal concern. Because they have no one to educate them, such youngsters are particularly susceptible in our culture, where they pick up bad habits from the people around them and are often the first to engage in them. They are also exposed to additional dangers as a result. Economic exploitation, such as excessive hours and poor salaries, is common. At the same time their schooling is at danger and adolescents may be exposed or actively engaged in high-risk scenarios, such as drug use or distribution or gang involvement. Children may leave their families for a variety of reasons, including being abused by their dads or stepfathers or the loss of a parent, according to a UNICEF report. Because the family's financial position was bad, several of them opted to quit family. Several others departed for the simple reason that they want greater freedom from their family (UNICEF, 2021). They engage in a variety of occupations, such as selling newspapers, food, flowers, begging, and rag-picking, among others (Masud et



al., 2019). Some of the street children are also known for their aggressiveness, constant rebellion against competent authority, mistrust of others, lack of concentration, unstable emotional and abuse behaviour against other children. (Al-Zaqazik University)

2. OBJECTIVE:

- To determine the personal social economic environment of street children while involved in the street activities. To determine the kind of accidents encountered by street Children.
- To know the gender discrimination and the access of education and employability of the street children.

3. RESEARCH METHODS :

Location:

The research was carried out at a variety of sites around Bihar, including the train station, bus stops, intersections and markets nearby. 160 sample of street children between the age of 9 years to 12 years were included in the study, with the distribution of genders being equal. The selection of street children living in their own homes was made with the intention of utilizing the snowball sampling method.

Tools

Studying the socio-personal profile and the amount of time spent on the streets each day as well as what sort of accidents they encountered while out in public was done using a self-structured "Interview Schedule.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Under the following headings, we've compiled our findings and related thoughts from this research.

Background information of the respondents:

Table 1 provides detailed information about the respondents' backgrounds in relation to a few

Table-1: - Personal Social Economical Profile of the Children's Sample (N=160))			
Variables	F	%	
Sample's Location:			
Patna	64	40.00	
Motihari	37	23.13	
Chapra	22	13.75	
Samastipur	11	6.88	
Saharsa	11	6.88	
Bhagalpur	7	4.37	
Hajipur	5	3.12	
Siwan	3	1.87	
Gender:			
Male	80	50.00	
Female	80	50.00	
Age Group (Yrs.):			
9 -10 Yrs	55	34.37	
10 - 11 Yrs	57	35.63	
11 - 12 Yrs	48	30.00	
Birth Order:			
1st Born	19	11.88	
2nd Born	36	22.50	
3rd Born	41	25.62	
4th Born	64	40.00	
Family Size:			
Upto 5	20	20.00	
6	28	17.50	



7	43	26.88
8	37	23.12
9 and Above	32	20.00
Family Type:		
Nuclear	121	75.62
Joint	39	24.38
No. of Siblings:		
Upto 3	46	28.60
4	48	30.00
5	35	21.70
5 and Above	31	19.70
Monthly Income (Rs.):		
>2000	52	32.50
2001-3000	54	33.75
3001-4000	18	11.25
4001-5000	18	11.25
>5000	18	11.25
Parent's Occupation:		
Mother:		
Housewife	14	8.75
Domestic worker	46	28.75
Street vender (selling low paper, eatables, toys, etc.)	29	18.12
Beggar and ragpicker	28	17.50
Labourer	19	11.87
Father:	24	15.00
Driver	28	17.50
Labourer	49	30.62
Rickshaw puller	36	22.50
Street and vegetable vender	19	11.87
Beggar and ragpicker	22	13.75
Stay idle at home	6	3.75

A family's socioeconomic status and the number of children it has are all taken into account when calculating the average monthly income of its members.

According to a survey of the sample children, the majority (40.00 percent) were from Patna, followed by Bihar (23.14%), Chapra (13.75%), Bhagalpur (4.37%), Hajipur (3.12%), and Siwan (3.10%). (1.87 percent). Boys and girls made up an equal number of those who responded (80 each). Furthermore, the majority of the respondents in the sample (51.87 percent) were between the ages of 11 and 12, while 48.13 percent were between the ages of 9 and 11. Most (40.00%) of the sample children were first born, followed by second born (25.62%), third born (22.50%), and fourth born (11.88%) and more than twenty-eight per cent of children had five or more siblings, followed by those (28.23%) with four or fewer brothers and sisters.

Table-2: - AGE & Gender Differences of Street Children (N=160)

Working hours	Age distribution of street children		Gender distribution of street children		Z-values (using Mann Whitney test)	
	9-11 years (n=77)	11-12 years (n=83)	Male (n=80)	Female (n=80)		
	Mean± S.D.	Mean± S.D.	Mean± S.D.	Mean± S.D.		



1-6 hrs	0.58±0.50	0.35±0.48	2.97**	0.38±0.49	0.55±0.50	2.21*
6-9hrs	0.52±0.88	0.63±0.93	0.75	0.68±0.95	0.48±0.86	1.39
9-12hrs	0.47±1.10	1.01±1.43	2.64**	0.86±1.37	0.64±1.23	1.09

* and ** indicate the significance of values at P=0.05 and 0.01, respectively

The percentage of people with three siblings was 27.50 percent. Only a small percentage of children (15.62%) were discovered to have two sets of parents. The majority (74.37%) of the children in the sample came from nuclear families, while roughly 26% (25.63%) came from joint families, according to a breakdown of family types. Most children (268.8%) had seven or more family members, followed by 6 (33.12%), up to 5 members (20.00%), eight or more family members (17.50%), and even nine or more family members (10.10%). (12.50 percent).

More than 33% of the households (33.75%) had monthly incomes of Rs. 3000-4000, followed by Rs. 4001-5000/month (32.50%), Rs. 5001-7000/month (32.50%), and Rs. 7001-9000/month and above, respectively (11.25 percent). There were still a few youngsters who came from a household with a monthly income of Rs. 3000 (11.25 percent)

Only 8.13 percent of the dads were educated up to the primary school level and only 6.87 percent were educated beyond the primary school level, as seen in Table 1. Moreover, ninety-five percent (95.63 percent) of the mothers were illiterate, with only 2.50 percent of them having studied up to primary school, and just 1.87 percent having studied up to primary and above. Street children's parents were employed in a variety of jobs, including 45.00 percent of the dads working as labourers, 16.88 percent working in street and vegetable selling, 11.87 percent of beggars and rag pickers, rickshaw pullers, drivers, and approximately six percent of the fathers staying at home. In addition, 35.63 percent of mothers were housewives and domestic workers, 15.00 percent were beggars and rag pickers, 7.50 percent were labourers, and 6.24 percent were street vendors (selling low price items such as tissue paper, eatables, toys, etc.)

Working hours of street children

Table 2 suggests that older children (11-12 years old) are more likely to labour for a longer period of time than younger children (9-11 years old) because they have a higher mean score. Younger children worked fewer hours than older ones, with the difference between the two is statistically significant ($Z=2.64$, $p<0.01$) in the 9-12-hour range ($Z=2.97$, $p<0.05$). This suggests that older children work longer hours than younger ones.

Around 1500 child beggars work full-time in the city of Chennai. Child beggars earn more than 60% of the Rs 30-100 a day that the average laborer makes. There are just a limited number of juvenile beggars who make more than Rs 100 every day (Velayutham, 2021).

Further research into the variations between the sexes indicated that women work less hours than men. The statistically significant difference between 1-6 working hours was also discovered. As a result of the table, it is clear that boys aged 11-12 years worked the longest hours.

Recent research by Ali et al. (2017) supports the results of this study, which found that 81% of the children in this study were boys, with an average age of fewer than 10 years when they first began living on the streets, earning an average of Rs 40–60 per day while doing so. Food and entertainment account for the majority of the money that street kids make. As a result of their parents' poor education and lack of work experience, their social milieu is rife with adult males engaged in drinking, gambling, and other harmful activities. Nigam (2020) discovered that 90% of Bihar's street children were working children with normal family links who were living on the streets because of poverty and their parents' unemployment. His findings corroborate those of the previous research. Of the remaining children, ten percent were either street kids who had no family connections and considered the streets their home or children who had been abandoned and were no longer cared for by their parents. With certain income-generating activities, they are able to exist on the streets. They have to deal with numerous dangers as well, however (Aderinto, 2016). Cities are rife with child prostitution. For the kid beggar, temples are the most profitable places to work, since devotees are filled with a sense of spirituality and are eager to donate money in order to get more blessings. Increasing numbers of child beggars have been seen across bridges and traffic lights, putting people at risk.

There were 54 (33.75 percent) of the 160 street children who were attending school, according to the statistics of Table 4. 33.75 percent of them said they went to a public school.



Table-3: - Percentage Distribution of School Attendance (N=160)

Type of school	Boys	%	Girls	%	Total	%
Government School	22	40.74	32	59.26	54	100
Fees/ charges						
Exempted	2	9.10	1	3.12	3	5.56
Fee paid by the students	4	18.18	3	9.38	7	12.96
Free education	16	72.72	28	87.50	44	81.48

Street children attending school:

The number of girls in school compared with males It was found that 72.72% of boys attended a school where fees are not required, while 18.18% of boys paid fees and 9.10% were excused from the cost of schooling. There were also 59.38 percent of females in free education, followed by 37.50 percent who paid tuition, and 3.12 percent who were excluded. According to the results, there is no evidence of sexism in education.

However, it was discovered that the proportion of males who pay for school is higher than the proportion of girls who pay for school. Further, it was reported that the monthly price varied from Rs. 20 to 60. As a result, the charity has been able to give major money and technical assistance for educational programs that benefit children in challenging situations via its Bihar education program for street and working children. As part of an international effort to guarantee that all children, particularly girls and children from ethnic minorities, have access to free and compulsory primary education by 2015, UNESCO will play a crucial role in coordinating policy planning at the national and regional levels (UNICEF, 2016).

Children who attend school and those who live on the streets or in the workforce were compared in terms of civic involvement, feeling of community, and adaptability. Street and working-class children benefit from both a formal and non-formal schooling system, according to the research. Studies show that children who are part of a formal education system do better in both their home and school environments. Garg (2018) examined the resilience, well-being, and long-term planning of school- and non-school-going street children and found that schools play an important role in helping children overcome and empower themselves in the face of the risks they face as a consequence of living in poverty. Resiliency, well-being, and future life planning were shown to be higher in school-aged children than in non-school-aged and non-formal education children, respectively, in the research. Consequently, the school was considered to be one of the most essential sources of self-esteem for children. Mental and physical health issues may be alleviated, which allows children to plan for their future and create objectives that will benefit them in the long run. As Aderinto (2016) found in his comparative research of street children in South-Western Nigeria, most of the children in the study were boys with poor levels of schooling who came from households with five or more siblings. In many cases, the parents of street children had little or no formal education and worked mostly in low-skilled jobs, which contributed to the formation of polygamous unions.

Marital problems are also common in these cases. Children on the streets often leave their homes for a variety of reasons, prominent among them the failure of their parents to live up to their high expectations.

5. CONCLUSION:

The issue of street children is a complex one, and it must be examined as a whole. Street children begin working at a young age, and the research found that males often work longer hours than girls. Because of poverty and the related socidisarray, street children's income-generating activities begin. Young people in this program come from a wide variety of backgrounds, including a wide range of racial and ethnic origins as well as different socioeconomic classes. Because they live, work, and walk the streets, street children run a greater risk of injury or death than other children. Their daily activities on the street, such as begging or selling low-priced goods and washing automobiles, sometimes result in their being injured in various ways, including being struck by a vehicle or falling from a bus. They had reported minor injuries like bruising and blood from the collision, but none of them had reported being treated by the individual who struck them or the spectators. It didn't matter who they were with; they were taken care of by their parents, siblings, or friends. It has been demonstrated via comprehensive study that the education of street children in Bihar is substandard to non-existent throughout this process. However, the survey found that some of the children were attending adjacent government schools, and it was clear that more girls than boys were enrolled in school. As a result, social work intervention techniques are required to meet their needs and



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