
ABSTRACT

The risks of children living street life are great and their vulnerability to exploitation is enormous. Children facing anxiety may withdraw from situations which have provoked anxiety in the past. The present study was conducted on selected street children belonging to the age group of 4 to 16 years segregated into three age groups 4-8, 8-12- and 12-16 through random sampling from urban areas of Lucknow. Screen for Child Anxiety Related Disorder scale by Birhamer & Khetarpal (1995) to assess the level of anxiety was administered and compared across gender. The data was collected, coded, tabulated and analyzed using chi square test and the statistical significance of data was assessed. It was found that there was significant influence of occupation of the respondent's father and also mother's occupation on the anxiety level of street children. The results of the study confirms that differences in level of anxiety are due to parents occupation.

KEYWORDS: Anxiety, street children.

INTRODUCTION

India is a developing country, there has been increasing international concern over the number of children who are living on street. This global challenge affects both developed and developing countries. 'Street Child' is 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. They are either children on the street or children of the street (Commission on Human Rights, 1994).

Majority of the street children are boys (Mufune, 2000; Volpi, 2003) as either the parents fears the dangers of street life to females (Veale, 1993). Their emotional and cognitive development also is seriously affected as they experience hostile, rejecting, and/ or abusive behaviour from their home and/or the public (Ward, 2007). Therefore, their basic emotional security and trust is affected profoundly (Ward, 2007).

Family poverty is widely recognized as one of the specific determinants. Most research with working children has so far been on the underpinning socio economic factors (Ali 2004; Ferguson 2005). Despite the multitude of risk factors involved, there has been limited research on these children's health, even less so on their mental well-being (Nuwayhid et al. 2005; Khan et al. 2007).

A study in Lebanon investigated the children who are exposed to solvents, and found significantly higher rates of light headedness, fatigue, impaired memory and depression, compared with a non exposed group (Saddik et al. 2003).

India is a developing country; faces many problems exploitative socio and economic structure, lopsided development and ubiquitous resource ownership, large scale unemployment, rapid urbanisation, rural to urban migration, rapid population growth, extreme poverty, increasing disparities in wealth and income, cutbacks in government social and education budgets, high level child abuse by the parents and society, and the breakdown of traditional family and community structures etc. Due to these problems these children are in very undesirable conditions. These problems cause different physical and psychological problems e.g. depression, anxiety, stress, child abuse etc. and children

attempting suicides are also reported. They lose basic parental affection (UNICEF, 2001; Ward, 2007) and suffer from low self-esteem, apathy, fatalism, anxiety, depression, and regressed behaviours (Richter, 1991; Mufune, 2000).

Street children who are physically and sexually abused are affected from anxiety, depression, stress (Beitchman *et al.*, 1992; Finkelhor, 1990; Gold, 1986; Lisak, 1994) and are vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse and exploitation (Asia Child Rights, 2005) and they cross all borders (The Velvet Blouse, 1997). Again those who are physically and / or // sexually abused in their younger age and exposed to family violence experience more stress, anxiety and depression than others.

The phenomenon of street children is an offshoot of complex interplay of various socio-economic and cultural factors, religious, cultural, linguistic and geographical diversity. The large-scale presence of street children is a symptom of social disease.

Anxiety can be appropriate, but when experienced regularly it may lead to disorders. Children facing anxiety may withdraw from situations which have provoked anxiety in the past. Existential anxiety can occur when a person faces angst, an existential crisis, or nihilistic feelings. People can also face mathematical anxiety, somatic anxiety, stage fright, or test anxiety. Social anxiety and stranger anxiety are caused when people are apprehensive around strangers or other people in general. Childhood is an integral part of human life. Street children due to various reasons do not enjoy this happy period of their life and moreover they have to face acute trauma and hence the present study was taken up to study the level of anxiety among these children.

(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anxiety>)

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Children on the street come to the streets to work in order to supplement their family's income. They return home to their families at night time. The largest group in this typology is the 'children at risk' category. These are the children of the urban poor and they form the reservoir from which street children emerge (UNESCO 2009; UNICEF 2009; Ali 2004; Baybuga and Celik 2004).

Asha Rane and Neela Shroff (1994) has conducted a study that is based on the UNICEF sponsored research studies in seven major cities and their practical experiences of working with street children, in their paper presented a profile of street children in terms of age, sex, family background, living and working conditions, and health conditions. The major problems encountered by street children in India include harassment by the municipal authorities and the police, exploitation by employers, and a general lack of recreational facilities.

Desai (1995) has conducted a study on parents, who play a vital role in child behaviour. Prolonged breaks or conflict (in the mother-child) during the first three years of life leave characteristic impression on the child's personality. As per his observations while dealing with child behaviour, clinically, such children appear emotionally withdrawn and isolated. They fail to develop individualities with other children or with adults, and consequently have no relationships worth the name.

There is a specific connection between prolonged deprivation in the early years and the development of an affectionless psychopathic character given to persistent delinquent conduct and extremely difficult to treat.

Scanlon (1998) states that millions of children throughout the World live on the street. These children are among the most deprived, they usually have no access to health care or education and some of them have been victims of violence even before taking to the street. Street children are seen by many as worthless, and many countries have used violent and punitive measures to remove them.

Reddy (1992) has conducted a survey in Bangalore City in India. He revealed that Bangalore had about 45,000 street children and out of them approximately 25,000 were said to be homeless. The phenomenal increase in the economically marginalized migrant population from rural areas to the city, in recent times, has led to this type of situation. Railway station and bus stand are the places, which provide them with night shelter. They get daily-wages jobs or contract jobs, for first few days. However, they are soon disillusioned. Their hopes and aspirations scattered

by the cruelty of society which chooses to ignore their plight. In cities, these children are seen at places such as airport, railway stations, bus stands, markets, shopping areas and also in residential areas. Street children are deprived of the basic needs such as shelter, nutrition, medical care, education, recreation, and immunization, and they have no access to water, bathing facilities or toilets. Almost all these children suffer from scabies, chronic dysentery, lung, ear, nose and throat infections. A large number of them are anaemic and are malnourished.

Methodology: Past researches, majorly focused on the physical and health related aspects, among street children and very few have concentrated on their psychological aspect. Hence the present research was taken up to study the level of anxiety among street children with a sample of one hundred twenty street children. The study was conducted in Lucknow district which is purposively selected to conduct the study, as it is the capital city and largely inhabited. Sampling technique adopted in the present study is simple random sampling. Information was collected through interview method. The derived sample size of 120 respondents were equally divided into three age groups. For assessing the anxiety among street children, Screen for Child Anxiety Related Disorder scale developed by Birhamer and Khetarpal, (1995) was used. Cross sectional study was conducted to examine the level of anxiety among street children. The data collection was done through interview method, to elicit the required information from the sample. The data collected was coded, tabulated and analyzed using PAS software. Chi square test was used to interpret the result.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table.1 level of anxiety according to respondent's father occupation.

Level of anxiety	Rag picker (N=60)	Construction labour N=60	χ^2	df	Conclusion (N=120)
Low	21(25.0%)	10 (27.0%)	0.047	1	26.4%
Moderate	63(75.0%)	26 (72.2%)			73.3%

Fig.1. level of anxiety according to respondents father occupation.

It was revealed from table 1 that a significant influence of occupation of the respondent's father on the anxiety level of street children is the evident children of rag pickers have showed low level of anxiety (26.4%) . where as the children of construction labour have showed moderate level of anxiety (73.3%). The data clearly indicates a significant difference between anxiety level of street children on the basis of occupation of their father. It can be interpreted that children of rag pickers have showed moderate level of anxiety and comparatively children of construction labour have showed low level of anxiety. The findings of the study clearly indicates that there is significant impact of occupation of father over the anxiety level of street children.

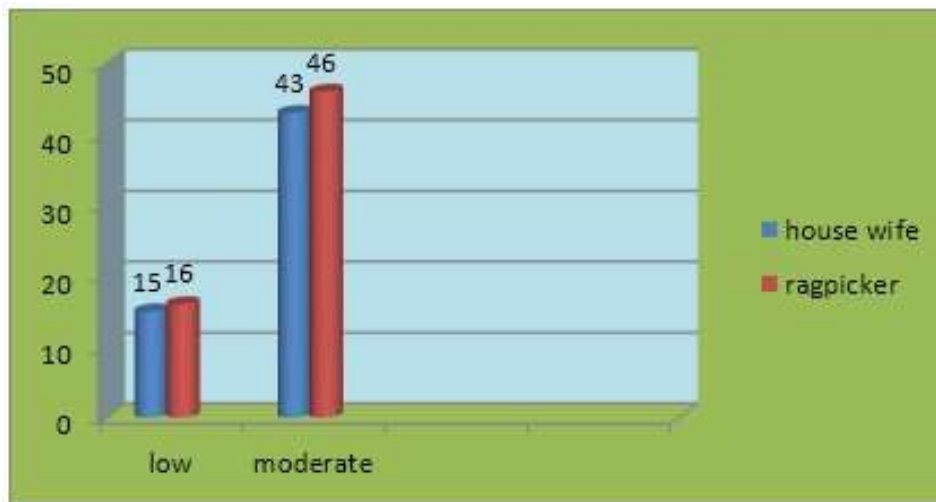


Table.1.1 level of anxiety according to occupation of mother.

It was revealed from table 1.1 that a significant influence is seen over the anxiety level of street children due to mothers occupation Children of rag pickers have showed moderate level of anxiety (74.15%) where as the children of housewives have showed low level of anxiety (25.85%).

The data clearly indicates a significant difference between anxiety level of street children on the basic of occupation of their mother. Children of rag pickers have showed moderate level of anxiety and comparatively children of housewives have showed low level of anxiety indicating non-working women plays better role in the nurturing the children.

CONCLUSION

Each child has a different family background, a different reason for being on the street, a different education level, and different requirements to be filled. An effective categorization will bring a better understanding of the problems and the needs of each group of street children. Even though the country has progressed significantly in the areas of child survival and child development, there is still a long way to go for ensuring child protection. The findings of the study clearly indicates that a significant impact of occupation of the respondents father on the anxiety level of street children. It also clearly indicates that there is significant influence of occupation of mother on the anxiety level of street children. The occupation of parent, henceforth has a significant influence on the anxiety of children, which indicates that the nurturing and values of children are greatly influenced by parents and the amount of attention they pay towards children and their development.

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