

# **An overview of Socio-Legal issues of Street Children in Bhubaneswar**

**Tarini Prasad Sahoo**

*<sup>1</sup>Ph.D. Research Scholar, P.G. Deptt. of Law, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha*

*Corresponding Author: Tarini Prasad Sahoo*

---

**ABSTRACT:** *This paper deals with the situation of 'street children' in Bhubaneswar town, the capital city 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 United Nations Children's Fund, there are around 4,00,000 'street children' living in different parts of India, whose living condition is vulnerable. Bhubaneswar being one of the fast-growing cities in the State, 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 of average 14 years old and the main job they do for their sustenance is to beg or pick rags and also few adhere to other avocations like collecting old papers, shoe shining, flower selling, etc. This Study suggests that 'street children' should receive thoughtful care, emotional support, and nutritious food 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 which they could be easily integrated into other public schools later on as a means of mainstreaming them to the society. Awareness regarding hazards of HIV, AIDS, early pregnancy, abortion, substance abuse, drop out from school, violence against them, and the related rights should be created amongst them. That apart, media should play a key role by publicizing the success stories of the restoration of 'street children' with their family members or to the mainstream society.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Street Children, Human Rights, Child Abuse, Child Abuse.*

---

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

An estimation by the United Nations Children's Fund and the Government of India shows that there are roughly around 4,00,000 'street children' living in the cities of Mumbai, Kolkata, Delhi, Hyderabad, Bangalore as well as in the rest parts of India. Further, as per the United Nations Children's Fund, 'street children' consists "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 sector. Due to low earnings, 'street children' are found in the streets of India, usually prefer to be independent or to work in different numbers of works. 'Street children', especially those who have been residing on the streets for more times, sometimes engaged in activities like theft, pick-pocketing, drug trafficking, and prostitution. The majority of 'street children' do work for an average of 8-10 hours per day in different activities for earning their livelihood.

## **II. 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 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 day time and return home during the night time and around 20-25% of children know where their families are but they prefer to stay on the streets. Only 5-10% are homeless and are living on the street. Somewhere between 25-33% 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, and 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", where the 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 and approximately 69.33% of children suffer from behavioural 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.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Bhubaneswar possesses one of the largest railway branches in Odisha. Many NGOs and news paper 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 the 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' be dealt within warfare means in Bhubaneswar city and in India as well. Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC area) has a high density of 'street children' than the other cities of Odisha as it is the capital of the state and people from different parts flow here in search of different vocations and opportunities. 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 objectives of this study are:

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

**Universe:** There are an estimated 5000 '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' for the said purpose on random basis. They are from railway stations, bus stands, parks, and other hot spots of the city of Bhubaneswar.

### DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

The age bracket of 'street children' in Bhubaneswar has been depicted in the Table 1. As per the data, majority of 'street children' are between the age group of 11 to 14 years. They've found shelter at bus stops and train stations. 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 table below depicts facts about the types of 'street children' in the city of Bhubaneswar.

**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%

As per the data in Table 2, mentioned below, the bulk of the 'street children' interviewed i.e. 65.00% were children 'of the street', who work and sleep on the streets and 35.00% 'on the streets', who had a place to sleep at night. The bulk remained with at least one biological parent, while others have none and staying with the extended family on the streets.

**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 presents the occupation undertaken by the 'street children' in Bhubaneswar city. The data shows that a bulk portion of the 'street children' are rag pickers in the city and selling in the shops nearby. Remaining 'street children' are begging and doing some other works for their livelihoods. The study confirms that majority of vendors are children on the street followed by those who slept both at home and on the streets.

**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%

As per the data, there are a variety of explanations for why children end up on the streets which ranges from earning money, being orphaned, insufficient treatment and help by parents or guardians, and social pressure etc. The majority of 'street children' cited making money for their families or for their livelihood as the primary explanation for being on the streets.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The above research shows that respondent's average age is 14 years which means that the bulk of 'street children' are in their adolescent stage and the main cause for being on streets is poverty. The street kids participate in a wide range of events starting from collecting old news papers, working as coolie, begging, hawking, shoe polishing, flower selling, and other activities. 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. 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

1. The Department of Child Welfare and the Department of Social Welfare should compile and retain data on 'street children'.
2. For the 'street children', a street-oriented education system must be established, with a goal of mainstreaming them into other government schools.
3. The importance of providing 'street children' with health education and knowledge of personal hygiene cannot be overstated.
4. 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.
5. The government must provide advocacy and defense against this human rights violation against these vulnerable children. The Human Rights Commission should also take *suo motu* initiatives for protecting the rights of these children who are facing violations of their human rights every day.
6. 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.
7. The media should give emphasis to publish success stories of 'street children' reuniting with their families and being the fourth pillar of our democracy, though media has played a significant role in exposing many loopholes in Government mechanisms, yet they should also focus on the rights of 'street children' as well and highlight their issues so that the same can reach to the concerned authorities and agencies in an effective manner.

#### REFERENCES

- [1]. Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Street children, accessed information on 15.03.2021 Available from: URL: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Street\\_children](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Street_children)
- [2]. Street children Organisation (2013). Information about street children in India. UK accessed on 13.03.2021 from the following url <https://www.streetchildren.org.uk/reports/India%20child.doc>
- [3]. Nigam S. (1994). Street Children of India – a glimpse. Journal of health management 1994; 7(1): 63-70.
- [4]. Jayashree Ramakrishna, Mani Karott, and RadhaSrinivasa Murthy (2000). Experiences of sexual coercion among street boys in Bangalore, India.
- [5]. Save the Children (2005), Global & Submission & by the International Save the Children Alliance: UN Study on Violence Against Children, [https://www.crin.org/docs/resources/publications/violence/Save\\_Alliance\\_Global\\_Submission.pdf](https://www.crin.org/docs/resources/publications/violence/Save_Alliance_Global_Submission.pdf)