

Perceptions of street children towards the nature of the parents and their interaction pattern

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ABSTRACT

The paper aimed at studying the perceptions of street children towards the nature of their parents and their interaction pattern with parents, siblings and friends. The study was conducted on a sample of 160 children (9-12 years) equally distributed over gender. The sample was selected from different crowded places of Ludhiana city viz railway station, bus depots, traffic lights, markets places, temples, etc using a snowball sampling technique. The criteria used for sample selection was that children being home based but engaged in street life for economic reasons. Data were collected by administering a Self-structured Interview Schedule pertaining to the nature of parents as perceived by the child and different interaction pattern with parents, siblings and friends. Results revealed that major proportion of the children (28.13%) perceive their mothers as mostly caring and sometimes neglecting while major proportion of them (31.88%) perceived their fathers to be very strict. Generally girls were found to be more interactive with parents and siblings while performing various activities like playing, watching television, chatting before sleeping, doing household work and cooking as compared to boys because they score higher mean score whereas boys were found to be more interactive with friends as compared to their parents or siblings.

KEYWORDS:

Interaction pattern, Nature of parents, Street children

INTRODUCTION

Family is the foundation of human society. Children who are rejected by their parents, who grow up in homes with considerable conflict, or who are inadequately supervised are at the greatest risk of becoming delinquent street children. Sibling relationship also affects the children in one way or another. Siblings imitate each other and that most of the time it is the younger children who imitate their older siblings. Sibling influence is much stronger than parental influence and might be equal to or greater than peer influence. Because of these strong influence related to sibling dyad it is important to study the sibling relationship in the families with a child on the street. It is suggested that siblings of abused and neglected children are at risk of maltreatment (Hamilton-Giachritsis & Browne 2005). Family of street children are often using alcohol or drugs and are illiterate and have experience of physical abuse and have gone through many difficult situations (Abdelgalil et al, 2004; Aderinto, 2000). Many street children are orphans, or abandoned, or come from desperately poor families. They are part of a vast population of children worldwide who live in abject poverty and are particularly vulnerable to abuse. In many developing countries, there is a widespread belief amongst the public, policymakers and social workers that children 'abandon' their families and migrate to the street because of economic poverty. However, some researcher argued that economic necessity is not only the cause of move to children in street. Understanding the nature of relationships within the family, i.e. family adaptability, cohesion, and satisfaction, provides more information for understanding a child's behavior (<http://naggaddycissy.ohlog.com/family-roles-and-the-social-behavior-of-children-the.oh213623.html>). It is also important to explore how the other children in the family relate to the child on the street and how they react and cope with it. Thus the study was planned with the following objectives:

1. To study the interaction pattern of street children with parents, siblings and friends.
2. To determine the perceptions of street children towards the nature of their parents.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in various crowded places of Ludhiana city. The sample comprising of 160 home based street children (9-12 years) equally distributed over gender was purposively selected using snowball sampling technique from various crowded places such as railway station, bus depots, bus stops, traffic lights, market places, temples, etc. A Self-structured Interview Schedule was administered to study the interaction pattern of street children with their parents, siblings and friends and their perceptions about the nature of their parents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Perceptions of street children towards the nature of parents

A perception of street children as per the nature of their parents is presented in Table 1. The nature of parents was categorized as very loving, caring and affectionate; mostly caring and sometimes neglecting; sometimes caring and mostly neglecting; very permissive (lack of rules, little or no discipline, too lenient); very strict (restrictive, physical punishment, expect much of their child, compliance to parental rules and directions) and aggressive (short tempered, scolding, hostile or destructive behavior or actions). Major proportion of the children (28.13%) perceive their mothers as mostly caring and sometimes neglecting followed by very strict (23.75%), very loving, caring and affectionate and aggressive (14.37%) respectively, very permissive (11.25%) and sometimes caring and mostly neglecting (8.13 %).

Table 1: Per cent distribution of street children on perceptions towards the nature of their parents (n=160)

Nature of parents	Mother	%	Father	%
Very loving, caring and affectionate	23	14.37	28	17.50
Mostly caring and sometimes neglecting	45	28.13	33	20.62
Sometimes caring and mostly neglecting	13	8.13	14	8.75
Very permissive (lack of rules, little or no discipline, too lenient)	18	11.25	14	8.75
Very strict (Restrictive, Physical punishment, Expect much of their child, Compliance to parental rules and directions)	38	23.75	51	31.88
Aggressive (Short tempered, Scolding, Hostile or destructive behavior or actions)	23	14.37	20	12.50

Major proportion of the children (31.88%) perceived their fathers to be very strict followed by mostly caring and sometimes neglecting (20.62%). However, 17.50 per cent children perceive their father to be very loving, caring and affectionate while 12.50 per cent children perceive them to be aggressive. Furthermore, 8.75 per cent children perceive their fathers to be very permissive while 8.75 per cent reported to be sometimes caring and mostly neglecting.

Table 2: Gender differentials (Mean±SD) in the perceptions of street children towards the nature of their parents (n=160)

Nature of parents	Boys (n=80)		Z-values (using Mann Whitney test)	Girls (n=80)		Z-values (using Mann Whitney test)
	Mother	Father		Mother	Father	
	Mean±SD	Mean±SD		Mean±SD	Mean±SD	
Very loving, caring and affectionate	0.45±0.84	0.53±0.89	0.55	0.31±0.47	0.23±0.42	1.24

Mostly caring and sometimes neglecting	0.25±0.44	12±0.33	2.02**	0.13±0.49	0.30±0.72	1.79*
Sometimes caring and mostly neglecting	0.41±1.04	0.34±0.95	0.48	0.08±0.47	0.19±0.73	1.16
Very permissive (lack of rules, little or no discipline, too lenient)	0.65±1.48	0.25±0.97	1.99**	0.29±0.97	0.45±1.27	1.12
Very strict (Restrictive, Physical punishment, Expect much of their child, Compliance to parental rules and directions)	0.75±1.80	1.94±2.45	3.38***	1.63±2.36	1.25±2.18	1.05
Aggressive (Short tempered, Scolding, Hostile or destructive behavior or actions)	1.12±2.36	1.05±2.29	0.20	0.60±1.81	0.45±1.59	0.56

*** p < 0.01; **p < 0.05; *p < 0.10

Gender differences in the perception of street children towards the nature of parents is presented in Table 2. Boys perceive their mothers to be mostly caring and sometimes neglecting and very permissive compared to their fathers because they score higher mean score. Whereas they perceive their fathers to be very strict as compared to mothers. Statistically also significant differences were found in the nature like mostly caring and sometimes neglecting (Z-value=2.02, P<0.05), very permissive (Z-value=1.99, P<0.05) and highly significant differences were found in father being very strict (Z-value=3.38, P<0.01). While girls perceive their fathers as very permissive and aggressive while mothers are very loving, caring and affectionate. However, the girls also perceive their mothers to be very strict compared to fathers. Statistically significant differences was found in the nature of mostly caring and sometimes neglecting (Z-value=1.79, P<0.10). Thus, it is evident from the data that nature of mother and father differed significantly.

Interaction pattern of street children with parents, siblings and friends

It could be envisaged from Table 3 that girls generally interact more with parents while performing various activities like playing, watching television, chatting before sleeping, doing household work and cooking as compared to boys because they score higher mean score. However, statistically significant differences were found only in doing household work (Z-value = 3.16; P<0.01) and cooking (Z-value = 3.08; P<0.01). Whereas boys interact more with their parents while eating since they scored higher mean score in eating (mean score=2.36) but the difference was found to be statistically non-significant. Similarly girls share a special bond with their siblings as compared to boys. They interact while playing, watching television, eating, doing household work and cooking and it was only girls who chat before sleeping, smoke, play cards and even eat gutka and tobacco with sibling. Statistically significant differences were found in performing activities like playing (Z-value=2.14; P<0.05), eating (Z-value=2.49; P<0.05), doing household work (Z-value=1.92; P<0.10) and highly significant difference in cooking (Z-value=3.55; P<0.01) and eating gutka and tobacco (Z-value=2.27; P<0.05).

However, boys were found to be more interactive with friends as compared to their parents or siblings. They have reported of spending most of the time with friends. They play, eat, chat before sleeping, smoke, drink and eat gutka or tobacco with friends more than the girls do

since they score higher mean score than girls and the results were found to be highly significant in playing (Z-value=2.34; P<0.05), and highly significant differences were found in smoking (Z-value=3.35; P<0.01) drinking (Z-value=3.35; P<0.01) and eating gutka and tobacco (Z-value=1.67; P<0.10). However, girls watch television, do household work and play cards with friends more than the boys do because they score higher mean score in those activities but the results were found to be statistically non-significant. Overall, girls are more interactive with their parents and siblings as compared to friends whereas boys interact more with their friends than they usually do with their parents and siblings. Bhan (1994) also studied the daily life activities in the physical and social milieu of street children using a recall method and self reports/diary method and it was found that activities of household chores, leisure and eating showed differences across gender and living conditions affected the number and type of personal care, household and leisure activities undertaken. Basic activities of daily hygiene such as brushing teeth, combing hair and bathing were not reported done daily. Chatting, roaming around and playing games with friends emerged as the predominant leisure time activities while leisure

Table 3: Gender differences (Mean±SD) in the interaction pattern of street children with parents, siblings and friends (n=160)

Activities	Parents		Z-values (using Mann Whitney test)	Siblings		Z-values (using Mann Whitney test)	Friends		Z-values (using Mann Whitney test)
	Boys	Girls		Boys	Girls		Boys	Girls	
	Mean±SD	Mean±SD		Mean±SD	Mean±SD		Mean±SD	Mean±SD	
Playing	0.11±0.32	0.20±0.40	1.52	0.56±0.50	0.73±0.45	2.14**	0.93±0.31	0.79±0.41	2.34*
Watching television	0.48±0.86	0.68±0.95	1.39	0.55±0.90	0.73±0.97	1.18	0.50±0.87	0.58±0.91	0.53
Eating	2.36±1.23	2.33±1.26	0.19	2.25±1.31	2.70±0.91	2.49**	1.28±1.49	1.16±1.47	0.48
Chat before sleeping	0.65±1.48	1.05±1.77	1.54	0	0.05±0.45	1.00	0	0	0
Doing household work	1.69±2.38	2.94±2.48	3.16***	2.56±2.51	3.31±2.38	1.92*	0.13±0.79	0.25±1.10	0.83
Cooking	1.58±2.66	3.00±3.02	3.08***	1.13±2.36	2.70±3.00	3.55***	0.30±1.32	0.30±1.32	0.00
Smoking	0	0	0	0	0.09±0.78	1.00	1.93±3.15	0.35±1.54	3.85***
Playing cards	0	0	0	0	0.10±0.89	1.00	0.10±0.89	0.20±1.26	0.58
Drinking	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.46±3.34	0.11±1.01	3.35***
Eating gutka and tobacco	0	0	0	0	0.63±2.44	2.27**	1.25±3.33	0.50±2.19	1.67*

*** p < 0.01; **p < 0.05; *p < 0.10 Multiple responses

activities in public places, commuting, earning, eating outside home are predominantly reported done with friends and siblings. Pagare et al (2004) also reported that more than half of the subjects in a study conducted in an observation home for boys in Delhi had indulged in substance use such as inhalants, alcohol and cannabis and maltreatment of the child by family members was found to be a significant predictor of substance use in the study group. Similarly, Mathur (2009) carried out a detailed study with an aim to map the socio-economic realities of street children in Jaipur City, India. The field scenario indicated that gambling, watching films and television smoking and drinking, and taking drugs were common modes of entertainment and relaxation for these children.

The amount of time spent by street children with their family members in a day is highlighted in Table 4. It is evident from the table that major proportion of the boys (45.00%) spent only for 1-3 hours a day followed by 25.00 per cent boys who spent for 3-5 hours a day, 23.75 per cent for 5-7 hours and only 6.25 per cent boys reported of spending more than 7 hours a day. Whereas in case of girls major proportion of girls spent for 3-5 hours a day with their family members, 35.63 per cent could spent only for 1-3 hours a day, 18.75 per cent for 5-7 hours a day and 8.75 per cent girls spent for more than 7 hours a day with their family members.

Table 4: Per cent distribution of street children as their interaction pattern with their family members in a day

Timing	Boys (n=80)	Girls (n=80)	Total (n=160)
1-3 hours	36 (45.00)	21 (26.25)	57 (35.63)
3-5 hours	20 (25.00)	37 (46.25)	57 (35.63)
5-7 hours	19 (23.75)	15 (18.75)	34 (21.24)
More than 7 hours	5 (6.25)	7 (8.75)	12 (7.50)

CONCLUSION

A lack of supervision is connected to poor relationships between children and parents, as children who are often in conflict with their parents may be less willing to discuss their activities with them. Children with a weak attachment to their parents are more likely to offend. The findings of the study show that major proportion of the children (28.13%) perceive their mothers as mostly caring and sometimes neglecting while major proportion of them (31.88%) perceived their fathers to be very strict. Generally girls were found to be more interactive with parents and siblings while performing various activities like playing, watching television, chatting before sleeping, doing household work and cooking as compared to boys. In conclusion, therefore, there are many causes for children on street and involve in anti-social behavior, which includes financial influence, peer influence, hard punishment by parents, the most important cause and one that needs to be addressed and corrected is the breakdown of families. Parents who care responsibly for their children will help them avoid the other causes of delinquency.

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