1. Introduction

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. It has acquired a gigantic dimension in the wake of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation especially in the developing countries such as India. It is attributed to exploitative socio and economic structure, lopsided development and inequitous 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. Consequently children are forced to live on the street, and earn livelihood for themselves and also in support of their families losing valuable time in life and forgoing all the opportunities for development in life. The risks of children living street life are great and their vulnerability to exploitation is enormous. In India, the seventh largest country in the world, the country future depends upon the quality of present day children. Hence, there is every need to attend to this problem.

The Institute of Psychological and Educational Research (IPER), Kolkata study of 5 major cities in India (Mumbai, Chennai, Kanpur, Bangalore and Hyderabad) recorded 314,000 street children (IPER 1991), another study in 1997 estimated 500,000 street children living in seven large cities (CRIN).  

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The complex situation of street children makes it difficult to get an accurate number of street children populations. In India, there have been various estimates of street children population. The 1991 Census recorded 18 million children. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) in 1993 had reported that India had the largest population of street children in the world. In 1999, R. Agarwal estimated that India was home to about 20 million street children, i.e. approximately 7% of the total child population of the world. Big cities draw in larger numbers of street children. India has the highest concentration of street children. In most third world cities, they are the shadowy presences who fill the background of daily life, doing odd jobs, scavenging for food, begging and stealing (Lalor et al., 2000).

India with a population of more than 1 billion in 2000 AD has the largest population of these street children in the world. The period immediately following the First World War, posed a variety of challenges to Britain and other countries of Europe and North America. These were mainly connected to the question of how they could create a society which would preclude the cataclysm of violence and upheaval through which they had just passed. It would be worthwhile to

for Street Children, in partnership with Child Hope and Protecting Environment And Children Everywhere (PEACE).


mention that partly as a result of the ravages of war on the civilians in affected countries, and partly in response to the growing concern in most countries of Europe and North America for the protection of children, the newly formed League of Nations established a Committee on Child Welfare in 1919 (Lundy, 1997). Ayaya and Esamai (2001) outlook the rapidly escalating number of street children in cities of both developing and developed countries, as a matter of grave concern. The United Nation’s Department of International Economic and Social Affairs estimated the population of street children worldwide at 150 million, with the number rising daily (PANGEA, 2000). It is also envisaged by Action International (2000) as cited by Goyal (2005), that by the year 2020, the number will increase to 800 million. Surveys on street children usually suggest that their ages range from 8 to 18 years with the average age on entering the street being 10 years (Johnson, 2001). Agarwal (1999) estimated that India was a home to about 20 million street children (approximately 7% of the child population). There is, however, no census data available for street children since they constitute a floating population (Adeyinka, 2000) Ayuku et al., 2003).

Every child during the span of development runs several risks to his/her healthy development. It is the duty of significant adults to be mindful of these

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8 Lundy (1997), *Human Behavior and the Social Environment: Macro Level, Groups, Communities, and Organizations*, Published by Oxford University Press New York.
barriers to development and enable the child to experience and enjoy the process of growing up. After all, childhood is meant for growing, learning and developing into all that one is meant to be. When the developmental process is hindered, a child is in a situation of risk in such situations; and the complexities of the situations must be understood and relevant efforts must be made to rescue these children. (Hanna Anand Raj, 2007).  

Children are cherished treasures of mankind. There is no doubt in the fact that the complete growth of future society lies in the manner in which we care for children, they are our wealth. Happiness is an innate and natural characteristic of children. A society that denies a child its happiness is a lifeless society. A family that gives regard to the happiness of children is one that strives for true joy. All the signs of happiness that a child reflects are in fact its needs for being happy. When happiness is denied to children, their needs are denied and when needs are denied their rights are also denied. Hence the study of the prevalence and magnitude of street children is very important. It elicited emotive public concern. It has been given considerable media coverage, and in the late twentieth century, it has become a matter of priority for national and international child welfare organizations.

1.1 The Phenomenon of Street Children

The phenomenon of street children is not a recent issue worldwide. It has attracted attention of humanitarian aid agencies and governments for more than thirty years. The term was first used in 1951 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to refer to vagrant children

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16 Devasahayam, I. (2004), Child Rights Students Module - Part II
following World War II. The phenomenon of street children was ardently discussed in the wake of the International Year of the Child (1979) and resulting in the formation of the Inter- NGO Program on street children and street youth in 1982 (Lalor 1999). In 1986, the United Nations Children’s Fund’s (UNICEF) executive board approved priority measures on behalf of “children in special difficult circumstances”, and special emphasis was placed on street children and on “developing strategies… which would defend their rights, avoid their exploitation, and respond to their personal, family and community needs” (PanterBrick 2001).

During the last decade, there has been much scientific discussion on the issue of the street children phenomenon and children’s rights among academics from many different fields. Researchers such as Aptekar (1988), Swart (1990), UNICEF (2001), De Moura (2002), Kerfoot et al. (2007), Lam & Cheng (2008), Mathur, Rathore & Mathur (2009), amongst others,

have been puzzled by the issue, focusing their concern on how to develop strategies for child protection, social reintegration and social well being among street children, and on how to reduce the push and pull factors of the phenomena locally and globally.

1.2 Definition of Street Children

The term ‘street children’ is hotly debated. Some say it is negative that it labels and stigmatizes children. Others say it gives them an identity and a sense of belonging. It can include a very wide range of children who: are homeless; work on the streets but sleep at home; either do or do not have family contact; work in open-air markets; live on the streets, railway platforms with their families or alone; live in day or night shelters; spend a lot of time in institutions (Consortium for Street Children).

According to UNICEF (as cited by Nandana Reddy in Street Children of Bangalore: A Situational Analysis (NOIDA: Government of India, 1992), street children are those for whom the street (in the widest sense of the word, i.e. unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) more than their family has become their real home, a situation in which there is no protection, supervision, or direction from responsible adults.

**The operational categories of street children given by UNICEF**

1. **Children on the Street:** Forming the largest category, these are children who have homes, and most return to their families at the end of the day.

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27 Nandana Reddy (1992), Street Children of Bangalore: A Situational Analysis, National labour institute (NLI), NOIDA.
2. **Children of the Street**: These children choose the street as their home and it is there that they seek shelter, livelihood, and companionship. They have occasional contacts with their families.

3. **Abandoned Children**: These children have severed all ties with their families. They are entirely on their own, not only for material survival but also psychologically.

A Street child is a minor for whom the street (in the wide sense of the word, including un-occupied dwelling, waste land etc.,) has become his habitual abode and who is without adequate protection.\(^{28}\)

Street children are distinctly different from children of pavement dwellers and slum dwellers by the fact that they have chosen to leave their families “Sadak Chap” is a term by which children refer to themselves “Chap” means stamp and “Sadak” is street. The term partly describes those who carry, “The stamp of the street.”\(^{29}\)

The reality of the street child is the naked and vicious face of poverty, sickness and exploitation. The tragedy is that those who bear it are themselves innocent, lonely and frightened young children.

Street Children are those unfortunate children who basically:

1. Have only intermittent contact with parents or family (usually mother or sisters) but live most of the time with other street children in the city streets, or are on the move.

2. Have been literally abandoned by their parents/relatives, found themselves on the street from the beginning because of family problems, or have chosen to leave home due to some kind of constant abuse.


The majority of street children tend to be in contact with their families and/or extended families.

Many of them work on the streets in order to contribute to their family’s income. Those who run away often do so because of family problems. They are unable to bear physical, psychological and/or sexual violence, alcoholism, or abuse at home. Family breakdown is also common in the case of re-marriage and problems with step-parents. Their tolerance level exhausts far exceeded, leading to the drastic decision to leave their family.

Delinquency or the lure of enjoying unbridled freedom in the glitterati of city life, glamorized by magazines and movies with option to earn liquid cash also drag out children from their home. Yet street children are rarely alone, even if they have no family contact, they have a kind of blood relation with each other without any name for our relation and they live together like a family. they are all actually members of street family. [Street Diary, Save the Children (UK) Nepal, 2001]

1.3 Categories of Street Children

Street children can be categorized under different heads. A report on the status of street children in the major cities in India (IPER, 1991)\textsuperscript{30} indicated that the majority of identified street children in the cities were on the street category of children. Within the “of street category, most of the children had family contacts and most of their families were natives of these cities or neighbouring areas. However, only a few of the children within the "of the street" category have no contacts with any family members, and live on their own in these cities without any supervision.

\textsuperscript{30} Institute of Psychological and Educational Research, (1991), A composite Report of Situational Analysis of Urban Street Children in India. (Based on the Study of Reports of Six Major Cities of India), Kolkata: IPER.
1.3.1 Children of Temporarily Migrated Families

Cities are expanding virtually daily, with numerous high-rise buildings, workshops, warehouses etc. They carry out regular construction work like those of bridges, sheds, workshops. They also attract job seekers from different areas of the state as well as from other states of the country. People come with their families and live in temporary hutments erected by them in open space. Almost all of their families expecting the toddlers work as labourers. As they are contract labourers, they go back to their native place after the work is over.

1.3.2 Children of Permanently Migrated Families

Cities are transformed into commercial centres with a large number of factories, workshops, cottage industries, handicraft centres, and small-scale industries warehouses and innumerable offices. Naturally people with inadequate income belonging to the suburbs and surrounding villages are attracted by these vocational prospects. Cities provide hundreds of them with jobs. But there are many also who fall in the way side. They are driven to lead a most precarious existence. The children of these families have no alternative expect spending all their day in the open street. Some times they do some road side odd jobs like rag-picking, shoe polishing or car washing. Quite a good number of these children have never known what a house is. They are subjected to all sorts of hazards of the open streets of a busy city, which they accept as a part of their existence.

1.3.3 Children Travelling Daily to the City

Another group of children come to the city regularly by train or bus to hawk their wares, which are mostly rice and green vegetables. They come early in the morning and take their place near the station or in the open space and sell their
goods. Some also go on hawking their wares from one place to another. After they sell of whatever they have bought, they go back to their homes.

1.3.4 Children of Very Poor Families

The fourth group of children belong to destitute families who are almost permanent residents of the city living in the street often for generations. These children are in dire need for care and protection. Many of them do not even have a memory of their past. They do not know of their roots with nothing to look back at. Many of them are born in the street and brought up there. They are half-fed and ill clothed. Begging and picking, garbage are their main occupations. They are the most vulnerable group of children who are often victims of all sorts of exploitation and abuse. Many of them often take to anti-social activities to support themselves and their families. These children need proper care and parental protection. Under pressure of severe poverty, their parents rarely have the opportunity and ability to take care of them or satisfy their basic needs. These children also do not know anything about human relation or understand social value so necessary for the healthy rearing up of children.

1.3.5 Working Children

Many of the street children are working children compelled by their needs in support of themselves and often their families. These children take-up many different types of work ranging from casual rag-pickers to regular helpers in garages or road side dhabas, tea stalls or shops. Rag picking is the major occupation, which is taken up by many children living in the street because it does not require an employer nor any capital to run it. Many children living in sheltered houses turn into street children because of this profession taken by them.
1.4 Push and Pull Factors

In many cases, children and young people choose to move from a rural area to the city and then find them living on the street because they are unable to live elsewhere. Reasons for such rural-urban movement can be categorized as ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors.

Push factors\(^ {31}\) and pull factors\(^ {32}\) for street life are by definition the main elements that influence the child to decide to take up street life. However, these factors vary from context to context, and they should not be seen in general terms.

According to Ali \textit{et al.} (2004),\(^ {33}\) causes for being on the street differ in developed countries, where the majority of street children leave home to reside or work on the street to escape dysfunctional families, physical battery, neglect, or sexual abuse or out of a desire for freedom, and not because of socio-economic problems.

1.4.1 Factors which ‘push’ children and young people away from the rural areas include

i. Poverty and lack of economic opportunity.

ii. Rural underdevelopment.

iii. Hardships and uncertainties of subsistence farming.

iv. Abuse, violence and family break-up. Many children and young people report problems with step-mothers as a major factor in their decision to leave home.

\(^{31}\) Understood as all external elements to the child, which force the child to abandon the family environment, and decide to live on the streets. These factors may be related to the family, community and societal relationship that s/he has been in contact with.

\(^{32}\) Seen as all those elements which attract the child to street life.

v. Due to parental death. Many children and young people living on the street are ‘double orphans’. In some cases, these children were first taken in by an adult relative who then himself died. This reason and others provide a link between street children in cities and child-headed households in rural areas. Factors causing children and young people to live on the street in cities are also causing them to live as child-headed households in rural areas.

However, it is important to keep in mind that, in the same way, due to the multi-dimensionality and heterogeneous character of street children, there is little possibility for generalization. There are many complex aspects to be taken into account for a child to decide to abandon the family settings and live on the streets.

1.4.2 Factors which ‘pull’ children and young people towards cities include:

i. Improved job opportunities
ii. Leisure and entertainment
iii. Reports from peers of positive experiences
iv. A sense of adventure

1.4.3 Street children face a wide range of problems on the street. They are as follows:

- Work-related problems, long-hours, low pay and dangerous conditions
- Poor diet
- Lack of shelter, poor hygiene and overcrowding
- Poor access to health care and education
- Harassment from the authorities, adults and other children and young people. Street children are often in conflict with the law. They risk arrest and imprisonment.
• Sexual abuse. They may engage in sexual activities for money or simply to survive. They are vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.
• Substance use - including glue sniffing, illegal drugs and alcohol.

1.5 The Street Child Image

Children and so called street children seem to have the very opposite of a childhood. Many adults ignore them or think of them as a social nuisance (Govt. Gazette, 1960). Others want to rescue them. They are certainly mythical figures, either because they seem to be romantically free from adult worries, or because they appear to be particularly immoral or usually pathetic victims. But they are not just outlaws or waif figures photographed as part of the urban scenery (ICIHI, 1986). Some popular perceptions about street children concerning their families, future and the children themselves are noted here (NISD, 2002).

1.5.1 About Their Families

- They have been abandoned by their families
- They have run away from home because of sexual abuse
- They are the result of the breakdown of the family
- Their families have disintegrated because of poverty
- Their fathers have disintegrated because of poverty
- They come from mother-headed families

34 Govt. Gazette (1960), The Orphanages and other Charitable Homes (Supervision and Control) Act, .


They have no contact with their families

1.5.2 About their future

- They will grow up to criminals
- They will not survive to adulthood
- They cannot be rehabilitated
- They turn into terrorists and revolutionaries

1.5.3 About the Children

- They are victims of starving
- They are thieves
- They have no choice but to be prostitutes
- They are uncontrollably violent
- They have lost all ability to feel emotions such as love
- They do not know how to play
- They have no morals
- They are drug addicts
- They have AIDS

1.6 Challenges of Working Street Children

Street children live in corrupt gangs for security and survival. They face society as gangs. It is very difficult to isolate one member, since group pressure is so strong that they are soon threatened, forced, and blackmailed to return to their old habits. They soon become dependent, both physically and mentally, on their readily available addictions, enabling them to forget for a while their pitiful existence. This
is a huge problem, and expert help is needed to treat their physical and psychological dependence and addiction.

Integration of street child into the society is very difficult, as the public have preconceived ideas about them. Also government employment schemes are not tailored to them, and all efforts of the government failed in this regard.

1.7 Short Term Measures and Long Term Solutions

1.7.1 Short Term Measures

(a) Essential to know the precise numbers of street children in each city and to know their lifestyles and (b) Basic amenities. Short term measures suggested are as follows:

1. Safe drinking water, toilet and bath room
2. NGO’s like Sulabh International to be contacted to do these works and also work together with Govt. agencies
3. Methodologies need to be developed to determine various aspects of problem
4. Child participation- using discussion and interviewing, questionnaires have been found to be innovative, fun, suitable for children and easy to manage.
5. NGO’s and Government agencies working among street children need to have more interaction. They should involve street children and law enforcement authorities to work out realistic solutions.

1.7.2 Long Term Solutions

- Socio-economic reasons such as poverty, urbanization and outdated primary education that force children on street, must be addressed.
- Child labor must be abolished
• Families must be offered soft loans for setting up small enterprises, and given opportunities for vocational training
• Schooling must be made compulsory and accessible.
• Promote rural development.

1.8 Statement of the Problem

The World Health Organization in its recent survey of street children in 10 major cities of the world revealed that around 100 million children live in streets worldwide. There are about 40 million children in Latin America alone and 25 to 30 million living in the other industrialized countries of the world (2003). According to the Human Development Report of the UNDP (2000), our country has the greatest number of street children. It is reported that New Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta have around two lakh street children each and Bangalore has about 45,000 street children. Another estimation (UNICEF – 2001) reveals the fact that in six major cities of India – Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Hyderabad, Bangalore and Kanpur – there are about 4,14,700 street children and of these about 48 per cent spend their nights on the open street. Thus the phenomenon of street children with all its magnitude and dimensions is a challenging social problem of urban India.

1.8.1 The Main Problems of Street Children are

• They do not enjoy parental love, affection, protection and guidance.
• They are deprived of the basic needs of food, shelter and clothing.
• They have no access to school education.
• They are misused by anti-social elements.
The families do not give the feeling of security and love so essential for their normal growth and development.

- They are looked down upon by society as unwanted elements.
- They are given denied medical services when needed.

1.8.2 The Problems of Street Children

Street children have a greater burden than other poor children who are supervised by adults. Their problems could be grouped into three classes: social, physical, and psychological.

1.8.2.1 Social Problems

i. **Poverty and illiteracy:** They lack basic resources to sustain a healthy living. They usually have no financial means to buy food, which is crucial for their development. Street children cannot afford to go to school unless supported by non-formal services provided by NGOs, etc. Even where schools are free, many children cannot afford to buy uniforms, shoes and books. Since they live in places where they are not adequately protected from the environment, they rarely have access to facilities that they need for hygiene and sanitation, such as toilets and clean and safe water supply. They are, therefore, more vulnerable to health problems resulting from poor sanitation.

ii. **Discrimination and Lack of Accessible Resources:** When civic authorities plan towns, cities, etc. street children’s plight tends to be excluded from the planning process resulting in their not having facilities to get medical, educational, recreational and vocational resources. They face
problems such as lack of vaccinations; poor health, illiteracy, and they cannot acquire skills needed for finding jobs.

iii. **Violent Environment:** The Street is an unprotected environment and street children are exploited frequently. In some places, street children may even face the possibility of physical injuries or death from violence. Common sources of violence are: the police, gangs, drug peddlers, pimps, other street children, families and sexual partners.

iv. **Stigmatization:** Society usually perceives street children as difficult children who are out there to cause trouble. In general, the public thinks that street children are uncontrollable and violent, have substance use problems, have no morals, have lost all the ability to feel emotions such as love and that they turn into terrorists and revolutionaries. They tend to be unsympathetic to the street children’s plight. This negative attitude may be a result of the society’s inability to care for its people.

### 1.8.2.2 Physical Problems

- **Lack of Adequate Nutrition:** As street children do not get enough to eat, they are malnourished, anaemic and suffer from vitamin deficiencies.

- **Injuries:** Injuries may be caused intentionally (including injuring self while intoxicated or when depressed) and unintentionally, e.g. due to use of tools which have been designed for adults. The rate of injuries is usually higher for male than for female street children.
• **Sexual and Reproductive Health Problems:** Sexual and reproductive health problems affect both girls and boys. However, street girls are more vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse and exploitation. Common sexual and reproductive health problems include sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS and unwanted pregnancies.

• **Common diseases:** Street children experience many common diseases such as tuberculosis; skin diseases, dental problems and parasitic diseases which can be prevented easily if these children have enough resources and their basic needs are met.

1.8.2.3 Psychological Problems

• **A Stressful Past:** Many situations and events that pushed these children onto the street in the first place (like natural disasters, manmade disasters, exploitation and conflicts) may have a lasting impact on their well-being. For example, the family conflict that pushed the child onto the streets continues to deprive the child of emotional and material support for years afterwards.

• **A Transitory Lifestyle:** Street children in some large cities move frequently from district to district or between cities. Sometimes they do this by choice, but at other times they are forced to move to hide from the police, welfare authorities, gangs, and drug peddlers. This type of lifestyle leads to problems of social isolation and loneliness and difficulties in developing emotional attachments to special individuals.
• **Mental Health:** The stress that street children experience makes them vulnerable to emotional problems, psychiatric disorders and learning difficulties. They do not receive adequate care for these conditions.

• **Substance Use:** Many street children are involved in harmful use of psychoactive substances. This can lead to overdose, increase the chance of accidents, violence, unwanted pregnancy and unprotected sex. Over time, the continued use of substances can lead to complications such as brain and liver damage.

### 1.8.3 Occupational Characteristics of Street Children

Typically street children engage in various odd jobs, some of the common ones are described below:

• **Rag-picking:** In many cities, it is a common sight to see children carrying gunny bags on their shoulders, scavenging dustbins, garbage heaps, city dumps to collect waste materials such as papers, tins, plastic material, bottles, etc., which have a recycling value.

• **Porters:** Many street children work in railway stations, bus stands, godowns, wholesale markets carrying heavy loads to earn their living.

• **Hotel Labour:** Street children also work in subhuman working conditions in small hotels, roadside eateries, dhabas, restaurants, etc. earning meagre wages.
• **Begging:** Begging is also a form of earning for street children. Children affected by disease or physical handicap are often forced into begging by antisocial gangs for making money.

• **Prostitution:** Many street children, especially those who are entirely on their own on the street are engaged in or exploited sexually. Both boys as well as girls are engaged in sexual activities, either for material gains, survival needs, psychological needs or peer group pressure.

• **Odd Jobs:** Street children are involved in various other odd jobs such as jobs in parking areas, work as petty-hawkers, peddlers, messenger boys, shoe shines, cleaners, helpers in shops and establishments, gas stations, garages, as labourers in construction sites, small factories and institutions. All these occupations have a destructive effect on their behaviour pattern and social living.

**1.9 Causes of Street Children as a Problem**

It is not difficult to isolate the factors responsible for the prevalence and practice of the phenomenon of street children. Family poverty, family disorganization, maltreatment and abuse of children at home, labour demand suitable to the children in the urban informal and unorganized sectors and the lack of interest in education in these children are the common and specific factors that compel the children to be on the streets. Needless to add, the phenomenon is a product of the larger problem of child maltreatment which includes *inter alia*, child abuse, neglect and a variety of unhealthy patterns of parent-child relations at home. However, the general assumption is that poverty causes their families to disintegrate and these results in street children phenomenon. This cannot be argued with certainty. There are instances to show that those families lacking
adequate food, clothing and shelter, still interact with their children with love, affection and cooperation. Therefore, it is necessary to take the family situation and family dynamics into consideration for understanding the determinants of the problem of street children. The main reason, which prompts these children to run away from home, is their family background, social structure and economic problems.

1. Broken families and irresponsible parents
2. Torture by family members and step parents
3. Excessive control by parents
4. Large family size
5. Poverty
6. Less wages or low income
7. Father’s drunkenness
8. Disinterest in studies
9. Parents’ illicit relationship, actions and practices
10. Anxiety to earn and spend lavishly, according to their whims and fancies.
11. Desire to live in towns and cities
12. Desire to do things independently without restriction

1.10 Strategies to Contain the Problem

There are many social problems which need to be addressed with an approach, a theory and a model. Problem of street children is no exception. The Three models which are popular in dealing with the problem of street children are.\(^{37}\)

(1) **Containment** (Reformation): This usually takes place in closed institutions where children are subjected to repressive correctional measures.

\(^{37}\) Ennew J (1986), Children of the Street, New Internationalist.
(2) **Cure Approach**: This emphasizes on weaning children away from street life, generally providing them education and regular work.

(3) **Prevention**: This implies stopping the children appearing on the streets by eliminating urban poverty, providing free and fair educational facilities to the poor and needy, etc., but the existing and available studies reveal that institutional strategy has largely failed, whereas cure strategy has yielded some positive results. The preventive strategy is the best among them but least tried upon.

### 1.11 Need for the Study.

There is a need to address the issue of street children as a global problem, as almost all over the world, it is possible to find various patterns of street children even though they differ in terms of push and pull factors, lifestyles and social problems.

The street children problem is a serious problem at national and state level. It has many dimensions. The reasons for the prevalence are many. They have specific socio-economic background. They have many issues, and there is a need for greater concern for these people. The present survey is an attempt in this direction, which will help understand the socio-economic characteristics of the street children. Publications in both academic and welfare literature have emphasized the sheer scale of the worldwide problem of street children but not able to explain fully the root causes of this phenomenon. The present study summarizes the identified characteristics of street children in coastal Andhra region of Andhra Pradesh, and it also documents the dire consequences of a street lifestyle for children’s health and development. The present study fulfills the gap in literature as it forms the area in specific study.
Street children are not a homogeneous group. 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 children in difficult situations, working children etc. are groups requiring special interventions of protection. Orphans, street children, child beggars, child victims of crimes, child offenders, children of prisoners, prostitutes, children with disabilities, sexually abused/exploited children, children affected by HIV/AIDS etc are some important groups of children in difficult situations. There is a pressing need for specific data depicting the various facets of the lives of children in difficult situations for effective planning and formulation of specially designed interventions to save such children. The study provides an overview of the major forces and social factors that impact the lives of street children.

For many of the categories listed as ‘children in difficult situations’, the data available as on today is virtually nil/ inadequate. Even the results of the nation-wide surveys/reports on some of the related topics like disability, morbidity, violence etc have given under estimates as they are based on the household survey approach/administrative records (eg. police records), and those surveys do not cover vulnerable children who are mostly out of households staying in orphanages, special homes, night shelters, in streets etc. India has the largest number of street children in the world. The number of children living in the streets, railway platforms, bus stations and other busy centers etc, in various large and medium cities, is very large. The large-scale presence of these children has many repercussions on the society. The street children spend a separate way of life. They need to be studied in respect of the family background, parental status, education, health, nature of work, earning, day to day physical and psychological problems
encountered by them. This particular part of the study will provide us with a precise and comprehensive picture of street children of Guntur, Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam municipal corporations of Andhra Pradesh.

Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada and Guntur corporations have a high concentration of street children as compared to other cities in Andhra Pradesh. The main reasons behind the concentration of these people in the these corporation areas are the frequent crop failures due to flood and draught, uneconomic land holdings, dearth of employment, and above all the lure of the city life, which pushed rural people more and more to city. The parents who came with their children to these cities are large in number. The poor parents who could seldom earn enough to feed themselves allowed their children to grow-up unprotected and uncared for.

There is a need to make in-depth study on street children, as they are the most vulnerable group even among child labour category. The present study is in this direction. The present study contributes to an understanding of street children’s lives through the riveting testimonies of the children themselves.

There are many researchers, officials and social workers who work directly with disadvantaged children in urban areas. There have also been many studies and reports on this issue with various purposes and methods. Based on these existing works and studies, the researcher would like to analyze the problem of street children further with a special attention on the dynamic implications of Indian economic growth.
1.12 Objectives

Specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. to ascertain the socio-economic characteristics of street children in the three municipal corporation limits of Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, and Guntur in Coastal Andhra Pradesh.

2. to examine the background of their parents and families, and the reason for children running away from home.

3. to examine the living conditions of street children, and the activities in which they are involved.

4. to examine the health conditions of street children in the study area, and

5. to suggest policy measures and modifications to the existing services and programmes for upliftment of street children.

1.13 Methodology

1.13.1 Source of Data

1). Primary data

In the present study both primary and secondary data are used. Primary data was collected from a sample survey conducted in Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, and Guntur Municipal Corporations.

2). Secondary Data

In consultation with the resource faculty, secondary data was collected from libraries of few universities in Andhra Pradesh, especially from Andhra University (visakhapatnam), Osmania University (Hyderabad), Acharya Nagarjuna
University (Guntur). Recent publications unpublished doctoral theses and articles from journals, edited publications and seminar volumes were carefully chosen for collecting useful information. A few of them are covered in review of literature, and many of them were utilised for formulating the design and methodology of the study and also for findings, conclusions and recommendations.

This is an exploratory study of street children in three municipal corporation areas of Coastal region in Andhra Pradesh. The cities selected for study are Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, and Guntur. Visakhapatnam has Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation, and the other two cities have Municipal Corporations

1.13.2 Operational Definition of a street child

For purpose of the research study a street child has been defined as one who is 6 years and above and up to 18 years of age, and who has been on the streets for at least a period of three months with the minimal or no contact with family or with any significant other member in the family. The minimal contact with the family is defined as not more than one visit in three months prior to the time of interview, paid mutually by the child or a member of the family including the parent or a significant member of the child’s family. A significant other is one who has been taking care of the needs and supervision of the child till the child’s last contact with the family. Some street children may be working during the day, and keep in touch with the family by getting back to the temporary home of parents daily or periodically, such working children are excluded for purposes of this study.
1.13.3 Selection of the Sample Respondents

Selection of the respondents is done through a purposive sample at a few places of concentration of street children in the selected three cities. For the research study, a sample of 150 street children fulfilling the operational definition mentioned above has been selected from each city. The places of concentration selected are seven in each city these include railway station, bus stand, busy centres, market centres, temples, hotels, and parks as mentioned in below tables.

Table 1.1
Selection of Sample of the Cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No</th>
<th>Cities</th>
<th>Samples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Visakhapatnam</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vijayawada</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Guntur</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>450</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary data

Table 1.2
The Places of Concentration are Selected in Each City

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No</th>
<th>Places</th>
<th>Samples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Railway station</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bus stand</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Market centres</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Busy centres</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Temples</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Parks</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Hotels</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>450</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary data

Out of the total sample of 450 street children from three cities 57 are girl children. The street children are scattered over different places pursuing a variety of work activities for their livelihood. They rarely stay for a long period at a fixed
place; as such no official estimates are available about the exact number and status of street children in the selected cities. Major concentrations in the respective cities were identified, and an interview schedule was administered on the children.

It is noticed that street children are involved in various work activities in the three cities. These include rag pickers, beggars, vendors, auto mechanics etc. As many of the street children were less expressive in responding to an interview situation, the researcher developed rapport with the children by observing and interacting with them on a few occasions. He elicited the required information through an observational and participatory field study which was carried out during the months January to April 2010. Perceptions of street children were gathered by regulatory keeping in touch with them over a period, and these discussions were supplemented through the observation and discussion with adult street workers, train ticket examiners, personnel of the railway force, police, scrap dealers, canteen owners and with such other people who generally come into contact with street children.

The interview schedule used for the study covered aspects related to identification data of the street children which includes the children’s family background, parental treatment, reason for leaving home, life on the street, work and earning, peer group, networking, mobility, previous work, past institution’s experience and awareness about institutional facilities for street children. An exploration into the future aspirations and plans of the sample street children was also made.

1.13.4. Analysis Pattern and Statistical Tools Used.

Basic data of street children gathered through the interview schedule administered on 450 children has been analyzed using SPSS 12.0 Software. As
part of the analysis data of respondents was grouped through frequency distribution tables Two-feature. Cross tables were prepared for ascertaining the relationship between the features. Simple statistical tools such as average, percentage, valid percentage and cumulative percentage, graphs, cross tables, and diagrams have been used where was necessary for various features.

Advanced statistical tools such as Chi-Square Test and test of significance have been used for cross tables. Results of the analysis based on the responses of street children are given in chapter six and seven.

1.14 Limitation of the study

There are very few studies conducted on street children in order to understand the magnitude of the problem, causes and consequences of the problem. Therefore, these issues are beyond the confines of the study, which is limited to living pattern of the street children in Vijayawada Visakhapatnam, and Guntur, Further, this study attempts to understand the background street children living on the streets, and families

1.15 Organization of the study

The study is organized into eight chapters:

Chapter 1: It deals with introduction, characteristics, image of street Children, statement of the problem, causes of street children and need for the present study, objectives; sources of data, research methodology.

Chapter 2: It deals with reviews of literature on street children.
Chapter 3: It analyzes the status of street children in India, and including global scenario, covering 14 countries/regions. The chapter also refers to the position in Andhra Pradesh, and in the three cities covered for field study.

Chapter 4: It deals the child rights and service provision for street children in India.


Chapter 6: It deals with analysis of the family background of street children in the study region.

Chapter 7: It deals with analysis of the sample survey data on living conditions of street children in the study area, namely, three cities in Coastal Andhra region of Andhra Pradesh.

Chapter 8: It covers Summary, Suggestions, and Conclusions