

Assessment of Aggression, Exposure to Violence and Abuse among Street Children in Selected Shelter Homes of Hyderabad

Disney Sabatina¹ Anumol Joseph², Sister Mary Rappai³

Abstract

Introduction: Street children are often subjected to abuse and exploitation and they release their aggression through direct and indirect means. The investigators explored aggression, exposure to violence and abuse among street children residing in shelter homes. *Methodology:* A quantitative approach non-experimental descriptive research design was selected. The sample consisted of 60 street children residing in shelter homes. The data was collected by structured interview. A structured tool was developed by the investigator to assess aggression, exposure to violence and abuse. *Results:* 87% of street children were found to have severe aggression, 60% of street children had moderate exposure to violence and 86.6% of street children reportedly were victims of severe abuse. *Conclusion:* Street children should be counselled intermittently and provided opportunity to ventilate their pent up feelings so that prevention can be done at primordial level to prevent further complications.

Keywords: Street Children; Aggression; Abuse; Violence.

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Introduction

Street children are minors who live and survive on the streets. They often grow up in public land field, train stations, or under the bridges of the world's major cities because of conflicts with their families. These children do not want to, or cannot return home. Homeless children are often called street kids, the definition is contestable, but many practitioners and policy makers use UNICEF concept of boys and girls, aged under 18 years, for whom "the street" (including unoccupied dwellings and wasteland) has become home and or

their source of livelihood, and who are inadequately protected or supervised [1].

Street children are also called Gamines, a term used for either street children of either gender. Some street children, notably in more developed nations, are part of a subcategory called thrown away children who are children that have been forced to leave home. Thrown away children are more likely to come from single-parent homes. Street children are often subject to abuse, neglect, exploitation, or, in extreme cases, murder by "clean-up squads" that have been hired by local businesses or police. In Western societies, such children are treated as homeless children rather than criminals or beggars [2]. 'Street children' is a catch-all term but covers children in wide variety of circumstances and with a wide variety of characteristics. Policymakers and service providers struggle to describe and assist such a sub-population. Individual girls and boys of all ages are found living and working in public spaces and are visible in the great majority of the world's urban centers [2].

UNICEF in the year 2013, analyzed 364 studies and 6,000 articles and reported the child maltreatment in

Author Affiliation

¹M.Sc Nursing Student ²Assistant Professor, ³Associate Professor, Vijaymarie College of Nursing, Hyderabad, Telangana 500016, India.

Corresponding Author

Anumol Joseph, Assistant Professor, Vijaymarie College of Nursing, Hyderabad, Telangana 500016, India.

E-mail: anujoseph14@hotmail.com

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the region of East Asia and Pacific region [3]. World Health Organization in the year 2013, identified violence against children as a growing public health issue with a global magnitude. Findings suggest that the confluence of risk factors such as poverty, poor legal protections, illiteracy, large family size, unemployment create an enabling environment for violence against children [4].

Kiellgren, Svedin & Nilsson in 2013 conducted a study on child physical abuse among the parents and the children in 16 sessions of programme and revealed that 76% of the children are abused at the age of 12-13 years [5]. Mathur in 2009 carried out a study on street children with aim to map the socio-economic realities of street children in Jaipur in India. The field scenario indicated that majority of street children were boys (71%) and in 8-12 years age group. Smoking, Drug abuse, gambling, watching television, robbery were common modes of entertainment for these children [6].

Methodology

Quantitative research approach, with non-experimental descriptive research design was adopted. The study was conducted in selected shelter homes of Hyderabad. The sample was selected through purposive sampling technique. 60 street children under the age group of 06-14 years of age were selected. The data was collected through a structured interview method. The reliability obtained was 1 indicating that tool was statistically reliable. The structured tool for the present study consisted of two sections, i.e., Section-A and Section-B. Section-A consisted of sample characteristics which gave baseline data information of street children such as age, gender, religion, education and schooling, parents, siblings and type of shelter home. Section-B consisted of items to assess the aggression, exposure to violence and abuse. There were 21 questions to assess under four domains, namely verbal aggression, physical aggression, indirect aggression and direct aggression with five-point Likert scale. The scores were organized in three categories:

01-35: Mild Aggression

36-70: Moderate Aggression

70-105: Severe Aggression

The exposure to violence checklist consisted of 16 questions and the scoring was done as follows:

0-4: No Exposure to Violence

5-8: Mild Exposure to Violence

9-12: Moderate Exposure to Violence

11-16: Severe Exposure to Violence

The abuse checklist consisted of 22 questions under four domains namely sexual abuse, physical abuse, verbal abuse and emotional abuse and the scores are organized in three categories namely:

0-7: No Abuse

8-14: Exposed to Abuse Frequently

15-22: Severe victimization to Abuse

Ethical clearance and permission to conduct the study was obtained from the authorities of the shelter homes. The purpose and the other details of the study were explained to the subjects. Assurance was given to the subjects about the anonymity and confidentiality of the data collected from the subjects.

Results

Table 1: Frequency and percentage of subjects by sample characteristics (n = 60)

S.No.	Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age		
	a) 06 - 08 Years	12	20%
	b) 09 - 11 Years	30	50%
	c) 12 - 14 Years	18	30%
2	Gender		
	a) Boys	35	58.3%
	b) Girls	25	41.6%
3	Religion		
	a) Hindu	24	40%
	b) Muslim	08	13.3%
	c) Christian	26	43.3%
	d) Others	02	3.3%
4	Education		
	a) Primary (01-05th)	22	36.6%
	b) Secondary (06-10th)	38	63.3%
5	Type of shelter home		
	a) Day	11	18.3%
	b) Night	49	81.6%
6	Number of parents		
	a) Single parent	21	35%
	b) Divorced	14	23.3%
	c) Both parents alive	07	11.6%
	d) None alive	18	30%
7	Number of siblings		
	a) 1 Sibling	07	11.6%
	b) 2 Siblings	16	26.6%
	c) More Than 2	19	31.6%
	d) None	18	30%

Table 1 depicts that the 30 (50%) children were under the age group of 09-11 years and 18 (30%) were from the age group of 12-14 years. 35 (58.3%) were boys and 25 (41.6%) girls. 26 (43.3%) were Christians, 24 (40%) were Muslims. 38 (63.3%) children were pursuing Secondary Education (6th-10 thstandard) and 22 (36.6%) were pursuing Primary Education (1st-5th standard). 49 (81.6%) children were in night shelter homes and only 11 (18.3%) were in day shelter homes. 21 (35%) were having single parent (alive) and 18 (30%) were orphan. 19 (31.6%) were having more than 2 siblings followed by no siblings 18 (30%).

Table 2: Level of aggression. (n=60)

S.No.	Aggression	Frequency	Percentage
1	Mild Aggression (01-35)	01	2%
2	Moderate Aggression (36-70)	07	11.66%
3	Severe Aggression (71-105)	52	87%

The table 2 shows that a larger proportion of street children reportedly had severe aggression, 87%, followed by 07 (11.66%) with moderate aggression, and only 1 (2%) child had mild aggression.

Table 3: Domain wise aggression mean scores and rank order of street children (n=60)

S. No.	Domains	Mean	Modified Mean	Rank Order
1	Verbal Aggression	21.2	4.2	2
2	Physical Aggression	23.75	3.39	4
3	Direct Aggression	17.05	3.41	3
4	Indirect Aggression	19.66	4.91	1

Table 3 shows the mean scores of aggression in each domain and further rank order of aggression levels. The highest reported aggression was indirect aggression with modified mean of 4.91, followed by verbal aggression with modified mean of 4.2, direct aggression with modified mean 3.41, and physical aggression with modified mean of 3.39 was the least reported aggression.

Table 7: Vulnerability of Aggression, Exposure to Violence and Abuse among Street Children. n = 60

S. No.	Categories	Possible Range of Score	Range of Obtained Score	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Deviation
1	Vulnerability to Aggression	01-105	34-105	81.67	83	3	13.10
2	Exposure to Violence	01-16	08-16	11.95	12	12	1.97
3	Vulnerability to Abuse	01-22	05-22	17.64	18	18	2.92

Table 4: Levels of exposure to violence (n=60)

S. No.	Exposure To Violence	Frequency	Percentage
1	No Exposure to Violence (0-04)	0	0%
2	Mild Exposure to Violence (05-08)	02	3.3%
3	Moderate Exposure to Violence (09-12)	36	60%
4	Severe Exposure to Violence (13-16)	22	36.6%

Table 4 shows that 36 (60%) children were exposed to moderate violence, 22 (36.6%) street children were exposed to severe violent behavior. Only a small proportion of subjects, that is 2 (3.3%) were exposed to mild violence and surprisingly no street children reported no exposure to violent behavior. From the above findings, it can be inferred that street children were vulnerable to violence.

Table 5: Levels of Abuse. (n=60)

S. No.	Abuse	Frequency	Percentage
1	No Abuse (0-07)	01	1.67%
2	Exposed to Abuse Frequently (08-14)	07	11.66%
3	Severe Victimization to Abuse (15-22)	52	86.66%

Table 5 shows that more than half children, that is 52 (86.66%) had been victims of severe abuse, followed by 07 (11.66%) street children who were exposed to abuse frequently and only one child reported of being not abused. The above findings highlighted that children vulnerable to be exploited by others posing a threat to their psychological health and all round development.

Table 6: Domain wise abuse scores rank order of street children (n=60)

S.No.	Domains	Mean	Modified Mean	Rank Order
1	Sexual abuse	3.01	0.75	3
2	Physical abuse	2.91	0.72	4
3	Verbal abuse	4.61	0.92	1
4	Emotional abuse	7.1	0.78	2

Table 6 shows the mean scores of various types of abuse in each domains and further rank order of abuse levels. Children reported to be more verbally abused with modified mean of 0.92, followed by emotional abuse with modified mean of 0.78, sexual abuse with modified mean of 0.75 and physical Abuse with modified mean 0.72 being the least reported abuse.

Table 7 shows, no significant association was found of aggression, exposure to violence and abuse with the selected demographic variables like age, gender and number of parents as all the calculated Chi-square values were less than the table value.

Discussion

The present study is congruent with a study done by Kaur on anger, aggression and violence among adolescents in a selected school of Delhi [7]. The study revealed that majority of the male samples that is 58.33% belonged to age group of 14-18 years. In the present study both the genders participated 58.3% males and 41.6% females respectively. In the former study the findings revealed that majority of the children, that is, 75% reported mild vulnerability to aggression and violence [16]. The present study highlighted that 87% of street children had severe aggression, followed by 07 (11.66%) who had moderate aggression, and one 01 (2%) reported mild aggression. Another study conducted in Norway [8] on 'Suspected Child Sexual Abuse as Context for Parenting' by Softestad and Toverud showed that sometimes it is the parent who is abusing the child and hence precautions are to be taken by providing interventions to the child on the basis of schooling, recovery and behavioral building pattern with changes in parent-child relationship. However, the present study has not used any preventive and parenting strategies. The street children reported to be abused verbally more than any other type of abuse, such as emotional, sexual and physical.

Conclusion

The children who are ill-treated and neglected are the ones who turn out to be juvenile delinquents and criminals. Street children, orphans are most vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and violence. Hence, these children need counselling for their emotional and psychological health. The children

who are aggressive, exposed to violence and abused are violent and angry towards the society. Hence, they should be reformed in children homes and rehabilitated in society.

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