

LIVING ON STREET: A STUDY ON THE STREET CHILDREN OF ARBA MINCH TOWN IN SOUTHERN ETHIOPIA

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ABSTRACT

As one of the developing countries, Ethiopia is being pestered by the issue of street children. The present study attempted to highlight the living conditions of the street children in Arba Minch town of southern Ethiopia. It focuses on the specific objectives including factors for children to choose the street life, the socio-economic and psychological problems that are encountered by the street children, their relations with the family members. To fulfill these objectives, the mixed research approach was adopted and data were collected from 50 selected street children. It was found that most of the street children are within the age group of 8-13 year. It was noticed that almost 70 percent of the street children were not interested to rejoin with their family, even though they were assured of economic support. This illustrates that the issue of street children cannot be viewed as economic phenomena alone but social and psychological as well. Further, they face multiple challenges on streets and many of them are subjected to negative activities like addiction to intoxication, etc. It is recommended that the issue of street children should be considered as socio-economic and psychological phenomena and the intervening agencies must provide support by taking family as unit.

Key words : *Street children, shelter, food insecurity, physical and verbal abuse.*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

UNICEF (1985) correctly observes that yesterday, street children were no more than a footnote. Today, street children are a major issue. Tomorrow, if present trends continue, they could be blight on urban civilization. For Africa, tomorrow is already here. Street children are not only blight on urban civilization; they pose a serious obstacle to overall socio-economic development in Africa (cited in Kopoka, 2000). UNICEF (2012) defined a street child as any boy or girl who has not reached adulthood, for whom the street has become her or his habitual abode and/ or sources of livelihood, one who is inadequately protected, supervised or directed by responsible adults.

The issue of street children is one of the poignant problems faced by almost all countries in the world. However, it is highly evident in developing nations. According to UNICEF (as cited in De Brito, 2014) there are tens of millions of street children all around the world. A report issued by the Royal Tropical Institute (RTI, 2002) - a research organization in the Netherlands- states that out of the estimated 100 million street children, the majority are in developing countries: 40 million in Latin America, 25-30 million in Asia, and 10 million in Africa (as cited in Shimelis, 2015: 46).

Studies made in Ethiopia show that there is a growing intensity of street children. Though there is no comprehensive statistical information on street children in Ethiopia, some estimate the number of street children to be between 100,000 and 150,000 and about 60,000 of them living in the capital city (FSCE, Pact-Ethiopia and USAID, 2003; MoLSA, 2005). Concerning the magnitude of the problem, for instance MoLSA estimated 5% annual growth in street children (MoLSA, 2005).

The literature shows that previously, poverty was assumed as the sole factor pushing children to be on the streets. But some studies suggest that poverty alone does not cause children to break their links with their family and live on streets. Veale, Taylor and Abbas, (1991) conducted a study in Sudan and found that poverty as such is neutral and does not break relationship among members. But it may weaken family bonds if it produces a home environment where parents are physically or emotionally abusive towards their children or towards each other. Many studies have pointed out domestic violence, broken family structure and different family centered factors (Ali et al., 2004), acute poverty (Richter, 2010), rapid urbanization and modernization (White, 1996) as the major factors for the children to come on to the streets.

Studies conducted on the issue (Pratiba, Mathur and Ansu, 2016; Shimelis, 2015; Wells, 2009; Sukla, 2005) revealed that the street children face severe problems including lack of adequate nutrition, homelessness, safety and security, clothing, health care, education, and face serious physical, emotional, sexual and social abuses. In addition, they are involved in actions that play negative role in their life long development as humans such as begging and delinquency (Shimelis, 2015). They encounter frequent exploitation, intimidation, and harassment (Human Rights Watch, 1999) on the streets due to lack of adult protection and guidance (Mander, 2001; Desai, 2010) and therefore they will turn up as anti-social elements (Onyekakeyah, 2013). Street children are often subject to discrimination, beating / torture and sexual harassment (Gupta, 2000). Taiabur (2009) observed street children are vulnerable to violence, abuse, public humiliation, and harassment and often find themselves incarcerated with adult criminals.

Based on the above literature it is understood that the concept of street children is complex one with multiple factors, multiple situations, and multiple challenges. The mechanisms to deal with street children require area specific and problem specific approach. With this background, the present study has been taken up to examine the living conditions of street children in Arba Minch town.

1.2. Objectives and Scope

The general aim of the present research is to examine the living conditions of the street children emphasizing on the specific issues such as demographic features of street children, factors for children to choose street life, socio-economic conditions of street children, and the support they require to come out of the street life. This study was conducted in Arba Minch town of Gamo zone of Southern Nations and Nationalities Peoples' Region of Ethiopia.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

The study employed descriptive approach by following combination of both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The qualitative techniques were used to understand the problems faced by the street children, their feelings about their families, interest to settle in life, etc. Quantitative techniques were employed to get the demographic information, educational status, causes for being on streets, income and expenditure pattern, etc. Both methods were used as complementary to each other.

2.1. Sources of Data

The data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary source of data consists of street children. The secondary information was collected from the records of department of women and child welfare of Arba Minch town, Non-governmental organisations, which worked on street children, and some published and unpublished documents.

2.2. Selection of Study Site and Informants

Non-probability sampling procedure was followed in selecting the study site. Sikella sub-city of Arba Minch was purposively selected, because the researchers in their preliminary observations and discussions with government and non-government officials found that street children were highly concentrated in Sikella sub-city.

Accidental sampling was used to select the respondent street children, since there was no any sample frame about the street children. Totally 50 Street children were picked up based on their willingness to give the information.

2.3. Tools and Techniques of Data Collection

To collect information from the respondents survey and interview techniques were employed. Survey technique was used to collect data from 50 selected street children by employing the questionnaire consisting of both close and open-ended questions. Interview technique was used to collect qualitative information from the limited number of informants about their feelings and experience on various issues pertaining to them. By following non-participant observation, the living conditions of the street children were assessed.

2.4. Data Analysis and Presentation

The data were analyzed by using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. First the data were

edited and categorized thematically. The patterns were identified from the qualitative data and presented in descriptive account. The quantitative data were analyzed by descriptive statistical analysis methods by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The quantitative data are presented in tabular and graphical forms.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1. Demographic Features of Respondents

3.1.1. Age and sex of the respondents

The population of street children generally consists of age groups up to 18 years and includes both boys and girls. But the composition of the boys and girls will be different. The data of the current study show that the majority of the street children are between the age of 10- 15 years. There are few adolescents who are on the street for their livelihood. The following table show the age and sex of the sample street children.

Table – 1: Frequency of the street children based on age and sex

Age (years)	Sex		Total	Per cent
	Male	Female		
7 – 9	5	0	5	10
10 - 12	8	4	12	24
13 - 15	12	6	18	36
16 - 18	12	3	15	30
Total	37	13	50	100

Source: Present study, 2019.

The data show that majority (66 per cent) of the street children of this study fall in the age of group of 13-18 years. 10 per cent of the street children are very young below 10 years old. Many children chose to live on the street after crossing the age of 10 years. This gives an idea that once children start working on their own, and able to get their food out of home, they opt to be out of home and live on street.

The sex composition of the street children demonstrates that boys are outnumbering the girls. Male children are almost three folds of their counter parts. Socio-cultural factors of the society may have implication of this scenario. Literature on the street children shows that boys generally outnumber the girls for various reasons like cultural norm, apprehension of the family members, etc. Veale and Doná (2003) write that girls are not abandoned when families disintegrate; the relatives and neighbours are more willing to take care of girls who are able to assist with household duties than boys who do not.

As indicated in the above cited works, during the adolescent stage females may be more vulnerable to sexual abuse, therefore the female children are subjected to more social restriction, and they are discouraged to leave the family and live independently. But the males at this age are not subjected to social restrictions on their movement and majority of male children are landed on streets.

3.1.2. Age at which became as street child

The data gained from the street children reveals that the children started their street life from the age of 5 to 16 years. The data show that 16 years is the maximum age at which some children chose street life. Once, they reach 16 years, they prefer to lead an independent life rather than opting for street life.

It can be understood from the data that more than 63 per cent of the street children chose to live on the street when they were between the age of 8 – 13 years. Further, it can be understood that the number of street children who start street life decreases after age of 13 years. It can be interpreted that when the age increase, children get maturity and developing coping strategies to face problems in life and they do not choose the option of deserting family life in favour of street life.

The analysis, based on sex of the informants illustrates that, the higher percentage of females than the males come to street between the age of 8 – 13 years. The female children reported that once they reach the age of around 10 years, they were able to do some household works like babysitting, cleaning vessels, cooking, washing clothes, etc. they desert their own family and settle as housemaids in urban areas, where they can get food and accommodation.

Further, those who chose street life at the age of 14 – 16 years, the males outweighed the females. The percentage of females is less than that of the males. This is interpreted that, when the females reach the age of 14 years, they prefer not to live on the street because of social problems like sexual harassment.

However, there are some children who became as street children below the age of 8 not based on their volition but by default, since their mother /families lived on the street as vagabonds.

3.1.3. Educational status

The educational status of the informants was categorized such as non literates, and literates. The literates were further sub categorized based on their grades like 1-3, 4-6 and 7-9. The maximum qualification of the participant street children was class 9. Out of the total 50 respondent street children, 10 percent were found as non-literates and ninety per cent are literates. Among the literate group, 30, 40 and 20 percent of the street children completed grade 1-3, 4-6 and 7-9 respectively.

The data show that 70 per cent of respondents completed less than 7th grade. This phenomena can be viewed that, when they reach class 7, they attain the age of 12 years and at this age they want more freedom. Further, they will be able to do some physical work, and they drop their education, and come out of home, to lead a life independent of family by involving themselves in one or the other types of avocations.

3.2. Factors for Street Life

The factors for streetism are multiple but more often they are interlinked. Kopoka (2000) viewed that there is no single cause for street children; it consists of even natural or man-made disasters. Most of the common causes found for this phenomena are often related to domestic, economic, or

social disruption including, but not limited to, poverty; breakdown of homes and/or families, etc. The study conducted by Pratibha, Mathur and Ansu (2016) in India, illustrates that most children leave their families to live on the street because of family problems such things as death of a parent, alcoholism of father, strained relationships with stepparents, parent separation, abuse, and family violence. Veale, Adefrisew, and Lalor (1993) stated that in Ethiopia, neglect or tensions between children and their stepparent along with economic factors were responsible for the decision of the children to go to the street.

The present study reveals that there are multiple pushing and pulling, factors that cause the children to desert their families and to land on the streets. Factors like poverty, disagreement in family, death of parents, peer pressure, etc., are found to be the predominant push forces and attraction to the urban life, job opportunities, etc, are pull factors for the children to come on to street. The researchers asked the study participants to prioritize these factors, which affected them the most. Some identified more than one factor based on their experience.

It is learnt from the data that the majority (84 per cent) of the informants divulged that poor economic conditions of their family propelled them towards street life. They mentioned that their family was unable to provide them good and sufficient food, clothes, even the stationary items like pen, books, etc. In order to earn on their own and get relieved from the poor conditions, they said that, they chose street life in Arba Minch town with an expectation that they would get work and money. The troubled relationship among family members also played a major role in developing the phenomena of street life. 50 percent of informants are on the street due to their disagreement with other members the family. Disagreement of the child with other members of family manifests as a clash and broken relationships. The major source of disagreement in family are said to be excessive discipline and physical punishment, quarrelling with drunkard father or and drunkard mother, divorce and remarriage of his/her care taking parent, quarrelling with the step father, violence unleashed by the drunkard father against mother and children, etc. Death of the care taking relative and divorce of the parents were also reported from 26 percent of the informants as the major cause for them to come to the streets. Peer pressure ignited some (24 per cent) of the respondents to become as street children. A minuscule (10 percent) of the sampled street children reported that attraction to street life is their major driving force to come to street, since they had thought that street life would give freedom from school and family restrictions.

A considerable chunk of the sampled street children (34 per cent) is found to have immigrated to Arba Minch from the neighbouring areas. Some of the street children came to Arba Minch, since they had their friends in Arba Minch and expected helping hand from their friends. Others came, in order to get employment, to find better facilities and attracted by the urban life.

All the immigrant street children had some expectations about urban life before they arrived into Arba Minch. The informants reported that their friends who had been in Arba Minch had told them about the availability of work, better working conditions, considerable amount of income, good

entertainment facilities, and better life styles by getting good food, clothes, friends, etc., in the town.

Other reasons for street life are found that some of the street children do not have family and some were born on street. Two of our respondents revealed that their families are on the street. Since, their mothers were street women, they were born and living on the street.

3.3. Socio- Economic Conditions of the Street Children

This section explains about the living conditions of the street children, consisting of relationship with the family, the support they received from the family, the intention for reunification with the family, and economic aspects like their income and expenditure pattern, etc..

3.3.1. Relationship with family

It is understood from the data that out of 50 informants only 42(84percent) street children have their families of orientation and the rest do not have any family. Out of those who have family, majority of the informants (32), have their families in Arba Minch town and only ten informants' families are located out of Arba Minch. Out of the 42 street children who have families, 80 per cent responded that their family members were aware of their street life. Only two male respondents reported that their family members did not know that they were on the street.

The response of the members of family about the street life of their child was reported to be mixed. On continuum of response, it ranged from disclaiming of the child on one extreme end to the demanding the child to come back to home on the other end.

It is understood from the data that, out of 42 street children who have families, majority of them (64 per cent) reported that their families do not want their children to be on the streets, and lead a harsh life. Those families demand their children to re-join the family and live with them. Ten children (24 percent) reported that they had not been in contact with their families and they did not have knowledge of the response of the members of their families. The rest (12 percent) of the informants said their families were not concerning about them.

An attempt was made to understand whether the street children had intention to reunite with their family. Interestingly, it was found that, out of the 42 children who had families only 13 (31 per cent), were interested to reunite with their families. However, the rest 29 (69 per cent) were not willing to rejoin their families, since, they did not like the behaviour of some of the members of their families particularly the behaviour of the drunkard father or the stepfather. This illustrates that, the rough relationships cause for schism among the members of the family up to the level of deserting the family. This trend of the street children demonstrates the degree of antagonism of children about their families. The reasons of the children for not rejoining their family members are given in the following table.

Table - 2: Reasons for not rejoining of the street children with their families

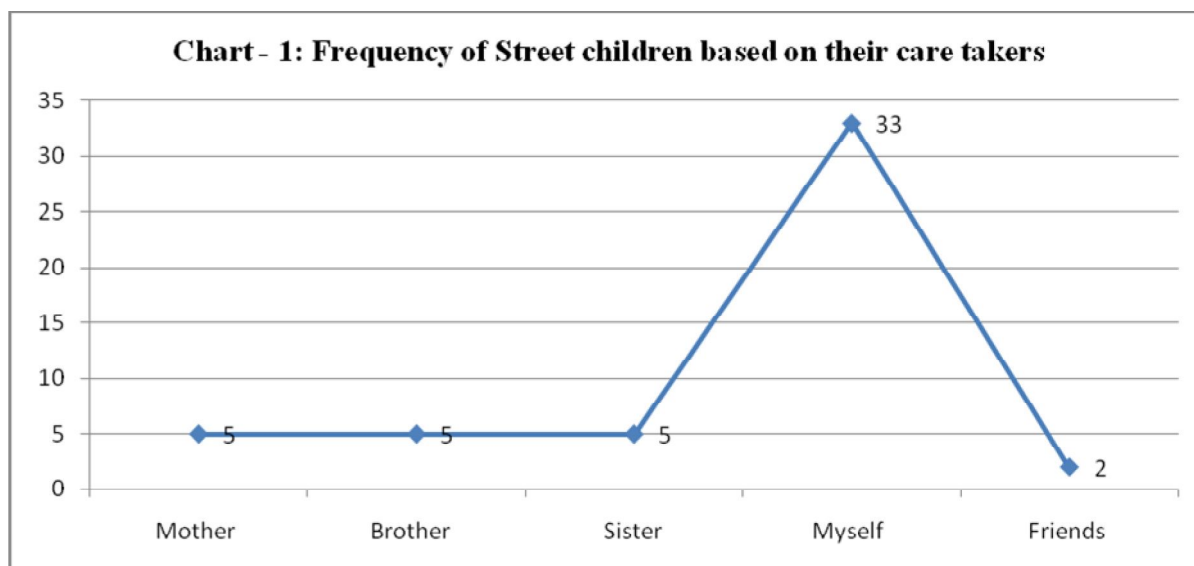
Reasons	Frequency
I do not like my father	3
I do not like my step father	5
I do not like to live with my family members	9
I feel freedom and comfortable here	5
I get income on my own	3
No sufficient food at home	2
My family could not fulfill my needs	2
Total	29

Source: Present study, 2019.

Generally, it is presumed that most of the street children desert their family to live on street, due to economic causes. The data from the table reveals that majority (22 out of 29) of the street children are not willing to reunite with their family, not due to economic reasons, but disagreement with family members. It highlights the importance of non- economic factors that deter them to reunite with their family.

Seven of the individuals cited that poverty of their family is the main factor for their disinterest to join with their family. They informed that their families could not provide the basic things for them like proper food, clothes, etc. Some others divulged that if they join with families, they would not get income at the residential area of their families.

Most of the sampled street children said that they were taking care of themselves. Only 15 street children are looked after by the members of their respective families. The following graph illustrates about the number of street children based on their respective caretakers.



Source: Present study, 2019.

The graph illustrates that only one third of the sampled street children are depending on the members of their family, and almost all of these children are found to be at lower age group less than 12 years. The data show that those who are above 13 years and able to manage themselves, develop a peer group and live together on street. They have abandoned their families and do not expect any help from members of their family.

3.3.2. Economic aspects of street children

3.3.2.1. Income and expenditure of street children

The street children are making their income by involving themselves in various subsistence avocations. They pursue these livelihood activities in combination. No street child was found involved exclusively in single occupation. But, to assess the sources of income of the street children, only the major source in which the particular individual engage him/herself most frequently and through which he/ she gets large part of income, is taken into account in the study. The major livelihood opportunities of the street children are said to be carrying luggage (40 percent), shoe polishing (34 percent), begging (14 percent), and other small activities (12 percent).

More than one third of the street children are making their livelihoods by carrying luggage in the market places, followed by the shoe polishing. Since carrying luggage does not require any investment or any items, and it can be performed spontaneously, it is taken up by the large number of street children. Relatively shoe polishing requires some investment on items like needle, thread, brush, etc. Most of the children came to street without any cash on hand. They prefer the job of carrying luggage to shoe polishing.

An attempt was made in this study to assess the average income and expenditure of the street children per day to see whether they gain sufficient income to fulfill their basic needs, and to examine how they spend their income meticulously for their survival or simply squandering on unnecessary items. In this regard, the researchers collected information about the average daily income and expenditure of the each sampled street child. The daily income of the street children ranges from ETB 30.00 to 100.00 with an average income of ETB 40.00. The following table gives the details of the frequency of street children and their average daily income.

Table - 3: Average income of the street children based on sex

Income (birr)	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
< 30	12	1	13	26
30 – 40	12	7	19	38
40 – 50	10	2	12	24
50 – 60	3	3	6	12
> 60		0	0	0
Total	37	13	50	100.0

Source: Present study, 2019.

The above table shows that the income of the majority of the street children (31 i.e. 62 per cent) is within in the range of ETB 30.00 to 50.00. Out of 13 whose income is less than ETB 30.00 per day 12 are males. The lower income of these male children can be interpreted that, more males are coming on to the streets at the lower age than the female children and the income of these children is less.

The data reveal that street children spend their income on items like food, smoking, *chat* (leaves of local herb), *araki* (local liquor), and entertainment like watching cinemas or football game on televisions in local T.V. houses. It is understood that different individuals are spending their income on varieties of items. Each child was asked to list out the items on which he or she spends, and to write the average amount how much he/she spends on each item per day. The minimum and maximum daily expenditure of the street children ranges from ETB 10 – 50 with an average expenditure of ETB 24.00. The following table gives particulars about daily expenditure patterns of the street children.

Table - 4: Expenditure pattern of the street children

Expenditure per day (birrs.)	Items & frequency of street children.				
	Food	Smoking	<i>Chat</i>	<i>Araki</i>	Entertainment
< 10	1(2)	12(67)	10 (45.5)	0	2(28.5)
10 - 14	18(36)	6(33)	8 (36)	11 (85)	5(71.5)
15 - 19	15 (30.0)	0	4(18)	2 (15)	0
20 - 24	10 (20.0)	0	0	0	0
25 - 29	2(4)	0	0	0	0
30 - 34	2(4)	0	0	0	0
35 - 39	2(4)	0	0	0	0
> 40	0	0	0	0	0
Total	50	18	22	13	7

Note: Percentages are calculated against the number of persons involved in particular expenditure and given in parenthesis.

Source: Present study, 2019.

The above table shows that food is the major item on which every sampled street child spends, followed by *chat*, (22), smoking (18) local liquor (13) entertainment (7). Further, it is witnessed that nearly 88 per cent of the street children spend less than 25 ETB per day, on food which clearly shows that they do not get sufficient food, in terms of quantity and quality per day. This indicates that they get low quality food. Apart from food, considerable amount of income is spent on *chat*. Nearly half of the sample respondents have the habit of chewing *chat* and almost 50 per cent of their income, is spent on *chat*.

3.4. Challenges Faced by the Street Children

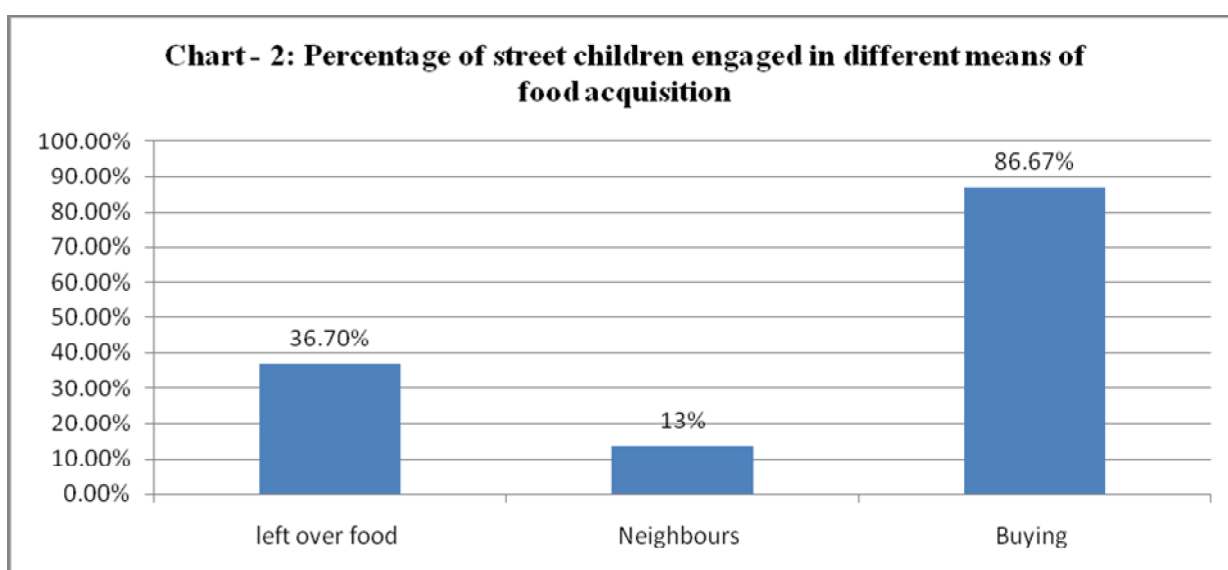
Giddens (2014) writes that the life of a street child is a life of constantly trying to survive on the street. Street children's living situation is filled with difficulties, and often related with drug abuse, violence, crime, family disruption, abandonment, disease, prostitution, and so forth (De Brito, 2014).

The current study made an attempt to understand the challenges faced by the street children in social, economic and psychological aspects. The data reveal that the street children in Arba Minch are facing the problems pertaining to the basic necessities like food, shelter, protection, etc. The following sections will expound the challenges of the street children of Arba Minch.

3.4.1. The problem of food security

Street children can usually get some amount of food to eat, but they do not have nutritious or balanced diet, which manifests itself in the form of anemia, malnutrition, and vitamin deficiencies (Pratibha, Mathur and Ansu, 2016).

The data gathered from the sample street children by employing survey technique in the current study, reveal that, generally in Arba Minch, the street children get food by three means, i.e. collection of leftover food from restaurants, getting from the nearby households, and buying the less expensive food. These means are not entirely exclusive. Most of individuals employ combination of all these means, depending on the need and context. But, they choose one of the means as the major source of food, along with other subsidiary sources. The following chart indicates the frequency of street children and their major means of food acquisition.



Source: Present study, 2019.

It is shown in the chart that majority of the sample street children get their food by purchasing it. But, when they do not have money to buy sufficient food they resort to the other mechanisms like taking leftover food from restaurants, and begging from nearby houses, etc.

The times of food intake also varies across the street children. Only 17 (34%) of the sampled street children reported that they take food three times per day, whereas 33 (66%) are taking only two time in a day. Few informants reported that sometimes they did not get food. This shows that the street children are facing the malady of food insecurity.

3.4.2. Resting place

The street children face the most acute problems related to shelter. They lack shelter and exposed to all ranges of weather conditions such as summer, rain, chilly weather, etc. These children suffer not only from physical homelessness, but also from a psychological homelessness since they have “nowhere to belong” (Pratibha, Mathur and Ansu , 2016).

The data of present study show that the street children do not have any house to rest during night times. Most of them (60 per cent) spend their nights on street and 40 per cent of them resort their friends' places. The following table illustrates the status of the street children's resting place at

night.

Table - 5: Resting place of the sampled street children

Resting place	No. of street children		
	Males	Females	Total
On street	25	5	30
Relatives' house	2	0	2
Friend's place	10	8	18
Total	37	13	50

Source: Present study, 2019.

It is observed from the above table that there is a big gap between male and female street children regarding the resting place. Out of total thirteen female street children 8 (61.5 per cent) and 5 (38.5 per cent) are resting during nights in their friends' houses and on street respectively. Out of the total 37 male children, 25 (68 per cent) are resting on the street, and in terms of percentage, it is nearly two folds of that of the girls (38.5 per cent). The informants reported that, most of the girls particularly the adolescents do not stay on street during nights because of the fear of sexual harassment. The small girls who do not have relative in the town, form friends group and stay together during nights. This is reported by the female children as the coping mechanism adopted by them.

Those who spend their nights on street, select one centre as a semi-permanent area, keep their paraphernalia, and take rest during nights. They will have radiating mobility from there. They roam at different places in search of work and food during daytime and withdraw to their place in the night for resting. However, the selected centres are not constant for street children. They keep on changing resting place due to internal clashes among street children resting at one place. Further, the police chase them from the selected place if any disturbance takes place around the area.

3.4.3. Abuse

The street children face risks like both physical and verbal abuse by the general public in public places. Some of the street children reported that they had experienced physical abuse like beating, and sexual abuse.

The data show that 25 (16 males and 9 females) and 20 (13 males and 7 females) respondents faced physically and verbally abuse respectively. It shows that one out of every two faced some physical abuse like beating, pushing, etc. Further, out of the 9 females who were physically abused, 6 were sexually harassed. Out of these six females, five were attempted to be raped but they managed to escape and one girl was beaten by man when she demanded money for sexual work.

Verbal abuse encompasses usage of filthy terms to insult the street children. Some of the street children informed that they were compared with stray dogs, and some were referred to as robbers,

ignoble, lazy, and irresponsible, etc. Besides, they were branded as thieves and beaten up by the people.

3.4.4. Conflicts

The street children reported that they had involved in conflict for various reasons at many times. Out of the total 50 informants 23 (46 per cent) of them got clashes with their co-street children. Some of them involved many times (up to 5 times) in the conflicts. The predominant factors for clashes are said to be sharing food and money (20 per cent), followed by stealing of the personal things like dress, bags, money, etc., (7 per cent) and insulting during chatting, (7 per cent).

3.4.5. Addiction to the bad habits

Pratibha, Mathur and Ansu (2016) observed that many street children resort to using psychoactive substances (such as alcohol and drugs) in an attempt to escape from the overwhelming pressure of their traumatic past and their daily problems.

In the current study, an attempt was made by the researchers to assess the status of the street children about the addiction to the bad habits such as smoking, alcohol consumption, chewing *chat*, etc. The data show that some of the street children had the habit of smoking, *chat* chewing, etc., before they became as street children. The following table shows the details of frequency of street children addicted to the drug abuse.

Table – 6: The frequency of street children addicted to bad habits

Habits	Frequency of street children							
	Before		Total	%	After		Total	%
	Male	Female			Male	Female		
<i>Chat</i>	7	1	8	16	17	5	22	44
Smoking	6	0	6	12	15	3	18	36
Beer/ <i>Araki</i>	2	0	2	4	10	3	13	26

Source: Present study, 2019.

Note: 1. Percentages are calculated against the total number of sample population (50)

4. Total number does not match with table since a single informant may be counted for more than one habit.

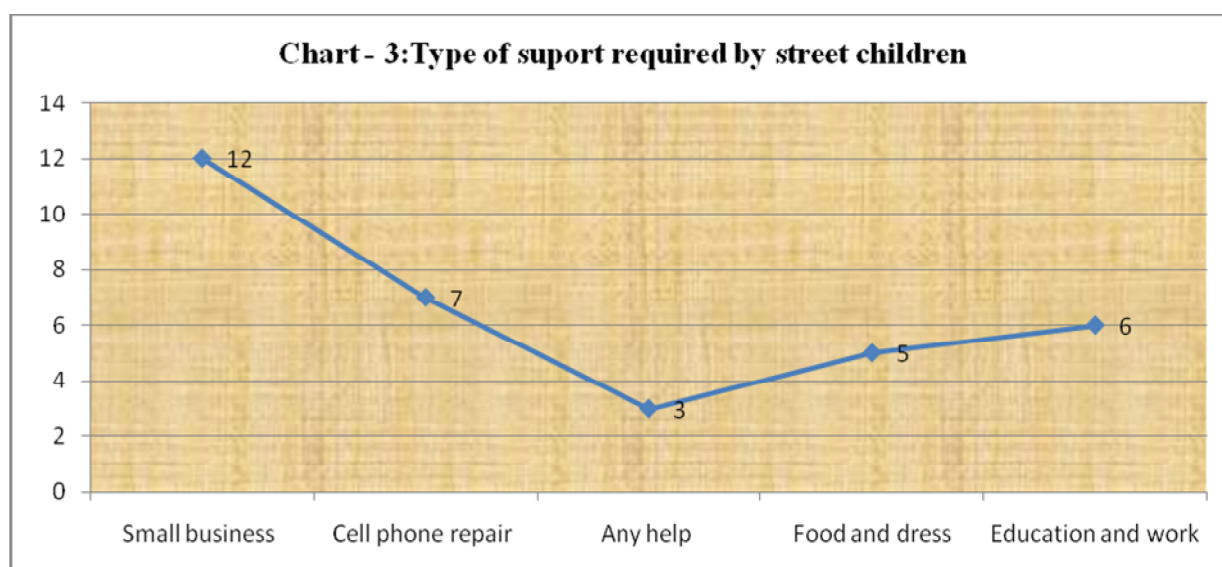
It is reported that, there is an increase in usage of *chat*, smoking, consumption of *araki* (local alcohol) at alarming rate from pre-street children stage to the street children stage. The above table discloses that there is three folds increase in the number street children from pre state of street children to the current state of the street children. Around 44, 36 and 26 per cent of the street children are highly addicted to *chat* chewing, smoking and consumption of *araki* respectively. This information vindicates the hazardous saturation of the street children. It will cause socio- economic and health predicaments of the street children.

3.5. Starting New life

It is learnt from the data that, many of the street children chose street life with expectation that they would get better life by gaining “sufficient” income on the street and can have free and comfortable life without many restrictions. However, the data demonstrates that, there is a large gap between expectations and the reality on the ground. Many of the street children are highly disgusted with the street life, because they did not get their dreams materialised on the street. Out of the total 17 immigrants, hardly any one was satisfied with their current reality. No immigrant child reported that he/she had fulfilled at least more than half of their expectations. Seven (41per cent) reported that very small portion of their expectations was met. The rest 3 (18 per cent) are desperate and their expectations were not fulfilled at all. Based on the data it could be deduced that no immigrant child had fulfilled dreams about urban life style.

An exercise was made in the study to elicit the view of the street children about their willingness to quit the street life and start the new life. Majority of them (66 per cent) expressed their willingness to quit street life, if any assistance is provided to them to make their livelihood. This trend shows hard conditions they face in street life. But, some individuals (34 percent) do not find any discomfort in current life style and they are unwilling to quit the street life based on the ground that they had freedom without any compulsion.

Those who are willing to cease their street life reported that they need some assistance to have alternative livelihood sources such as opening of, or working in small shops, getting skill training in electrical or electronics, etc. Some of the street children do not have any idea about what support they require beyond their immediate needs like food and cloths. The following graph illustrates the number of street children and their respective desire of livelihood opportunities.



Source: Present study, 2019.

The above graph shows that majority of the street children are interested to have small business of their own, such as selling consumer goods like shoes, sock, clothes, food items, etc., followed by electronic works as repairing mobile phones, etc. Eight (24 percent) of them do not have any idea about the field they want to choose. They just need help to fulfill their immediate needs.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Ethiopia is facing the pressing predicament of the issue of street children. Most of the street children are within the age group of 10- 15 years of old, and at this age they are supposed to be in the school and learn the life skills, but they lose this opportunity and undergoing all hardships on the streets without physical and emotional attachment with members of their family. Though the economic aspect is the significant factor for starting the street life, the other socio-psychological factors are crucial to propel the children to choose the street life. The living conditions of the street children are intolerable as they face social, economic, and psychological hardships such as lack of shelter, food, clothes, love and affection. Further, they are subjected to physical and verbal abuse. Since, the childhood experiences are base for the personality development of individuals, the street children may turn into anti social elements in their future due to their harsh and negative experiences at present. Hence, it is recommended that the government and the nongovernmental developmental organizations, should concentrate on providing socio economic support at the family level to mitigate the influx of the children to the street.

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