



## A STUDY ON THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF STREET CHILDREN IN CLUNY PADMINI SNEHA ILLAM, PONDICHERRY

Delphina Mary S.<sup>1</sup> and D. Victoriya Amalorpava Mary<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>PhD Scholar, Department of Social Work, Bon Secours College for Women, Thanjavur.

<sup>2</sup>Principal, Bon Secours College for Women, Thanjavur.

### ABSTRACT :

The main aim of the study was to examine the quality of life of the street children. There are 115 male children registered in Padmini Sneha Illam. Due to the language problem, the researcher could not collect data from 9 children. Thus, the sample size constitutes 106. The study is descriptive in nature. To measure the level of quality of life the researcher adopted WHOQOLBREF instrument (2004). The results of the study revealed that most of the children were 13 years and above. About 76% of the children reported that they have parents and that their level of education was up to high school. Majority of the respondents' family monthly income was in the range between Rs.6001-12000/-. There were significant difference between the age group, monthly family income, parenting style of the respondents and their quality of life.

**KEYWORDS :** Childhood, Street Children, Quality of life, Parenting style.

### INTRODUCTION

Childhood is a precious phase of life in which the budding child needs to cherish the love and concern of the family member in its growing process. The tender loving care a child would receive from the parents and the family paves for a solid basis for its affective growth. In contrast to this, if a child finds itself on streets, it already predicts the bleak future that the child is destined to face. The children on the street often have lost the precious childhood filled with laughter, happiness, playfulness and so on for no fault of their own. The high security risk they face poses the dangerous risk of losing their future as well. In addition to these, the potential possibility of getting involved in criminal activities and getting trapped into it for the rest of their lives is not worth. In case of the child being a female, the additional risk of human trafficking for flesh trade is an inhuman cruelty that could be forced upon it for the no fault of its own. The mass media that often bring to light the human trafficking for human organ trade is inevitable, as the child has no protection and security. Education is one of the basic human needs, which is denied to these children, which will render them almost non-human. These kids need to be loved, protected and cared for with utmost attention. This would protect them from harm as well as brighten up their future. Social concern needs to be



widespread among the public and volunteers in order to ensure that these children get what they deserve. Their human dignity must be upheld so as to live a dignified life, which the other children in the families get from their parents. It is also the responsibility of the government to provide the needed support to the voluntary organizations in evolving plans, strategies and implementation of the same in view of creating necessary platforms in taking care of the needy

children. Creating a social consciousness among the wider public with regard to these children in need would pave way for better future for the children. In the long run less and less children may find themselves on the street and eventually eradicating this problem totally.

### REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDY

Mathiti (2006) in his article noted that the quality of life of the participants in this study was depressed due to lack of access or substandard educational and medical facilities, or depressed material condition at the shelters. In a study by Gupta (2012) recommended that the quality of life of the street children was depressed due to a lack of access or substandard educational and medical facilities, or absence of emotional support from their poverty-stricken families. A study by Sharmila and Kour (2013) highlights that the street children are deprived of their basic minimal facilities in life, which result in them a negative attitude towards existing social system and structure. A study by Mannert et al. (2014) aimed at assessing the level of quality of life among 84 street youth in Ethiopian. The study results found that 83% of the respondents experienced traumatic events, 24% of them met criteria for PTSD and also, they reported that there are no difference between the respondents who have and who do not have PTSD symptoms and their quality of life. A study by Sharmila & Kour (2014) revealed that that majority of the street children work for 1-6 hours a day in street and usually boys work for longer duration when compared to girls. In order to find out the nature, magnitude and practices of abuse among street children by their parents, Sharmila & Kour (2014a) carried out a study among 160 street children, which indicated that majority of the street children experienced abuses by their parents. They also reported that fathers were stricter and showed more negative attitude towards children when compared to mothers. Myburgh et al. (2015) carried out a study with the aim to investigate and portray their lived experience, signifies that children living on streets are threatened, exploited and exposed to physical, sexual and emotional abuse on a daily basis by the community, the authorities and other street children. Many such studies have been conducted on the quality of life of the street children but they are all smaller in sample size and thus the researcher intended to assess the quality of life of street children in Pondicherry.

### METHODOLOGY

The researcher conducted the study in Clung Padmini Sneha Illam of Pondicherry. There are 115 male children between the age group of 8-16 years registered in Padmini Sneha Illam. Of which, 9 of them are from other states, and for the purpose of the study, the researcher decided to leave out those 9 children. Thus, the sample size constitutes 106. The study is descriptive in nature. To measure the level of quality of life the researcher used the WHOQOLBREF (2004) developed by World Health Organization.

### RESULTS

**Socio Demographic Variable:** The findings of the study indicated that majority of the respondents were in the age group of 13 and above years, 36 per cent of the respondents were in the age group of 9-12 years and the remaining 18 per cent of the respondents were 8 years. Nearly one-third (72%) of them belonged to Hinduism, most of the respondents were from semi urban area and they belong to most backward community. With regard to their parental status, 76% of the respondents have parents, 6% of them were semi orphans and 18% of the respondents were orphans. Majority (58%) of the respondents' level of education was up to high school. Majority of the respondents belonged to joint family with 2-3 siblings. More than two fifth (42%) of the respondents' families had the income in the range between Rs. 6001-12000/- as monthly income and most (42%) of the respondents reported that poverty made them become street children. With regard to their health condition most of the children suffered from some kind of illness like stomach pain, fever and cough, and 40% of the respondents reported that during night they stayed in the street. Most (46%) of the respondents reported that they were in Sneha illam for the past 4-5 years and 72% of the respondents had the habit of telling lies.

**Table – 1: Mean scores of quality of life across the background characteristics of the street children**

S.N	Variable	N	Mean	S. D	Value
1	<b>Age Group</b>				F - 4.643
	8 years	19	74.64	9.489	df – 2,103
	9-12 years	38	72.68	7.264	Sig. - 0.012
	13 years and above	49	68.54	8.757	<b>P&lt;0.05</b>
	Total	106	71.12	8.678	
2	<b>Educational Qualification</b>	44	71.10	10.364	t - -0.021
	Primary Level	62	71.13	7.343	df - 104
	High School				Sig. - 0.983
					P>0.05
3	<b>Monthly Family Income</b>	17	65.25	7.014	F - 7.350
	Rs.6000 or less	66	71.18	7.511	df – 2, 103
	Rs.6001-12000	23	75.30	10.588	Sig. - 0.001
	Rs12001 & above	106	71.12	8.678	<b>P&lt;0.001</b>
	Total				
4	<b>Type of Family</b>				t - -0.985
	Nuclear Family	39	70.03	8.624	df - 104
	Joint Family	67	71.75	8.711	Sig. - 0.327
					P>0.05
5	<b>Parenting Style</b>				F - 4.616
	Single	7	62.61	7.342	df – 2,103
	Double	80	72.23	8.204	Sig. - 0.012
	Orphan	19	69.57	9.476	<b>P&lt;0.05</b>
	Total	106	71.12	8.678	
6	<b>Factors accounting for Street Children</b>				F - 1.380
	Poverty	49	72.52	8.014	df – 2,103
	Parent Sickness	35	69.37	7.648	Sig. - 0.256
	Parents Compulsion	22	70.78	11.190	P>0.05
	Total	106	71.12	8.678	
7	<b>Stay During Night</b>				F - 1.524
	Shelter Home	26	73.95	10.974	df - 3.102
	Slums	14	69.15	6.855	Sig. - 0.213
	Street	42	71.05	7.536	P>0.05
	Friends	24	69.33	8.387	
	Total	106	71.12	8.678	

**Socio Demographic profile and Quality of life of Street Children:** From the table – 1, it highlights that the respondents in the age of 8 years have better quality of life than the other age categories of the respondents. The results of the ANVOA (F-4.643, p<0.05) test have stated these findings as turning out to be statistically significant at moderate level. It is clear from the above table 1.2 that the mean score of quality of life is higher among the respondents who have studied up to high school than the other respondents but with regards to the independent sample t test (t-0.021, p>0.05) there is no statistically significant difference between the educational qualification of the respondents.

The results in table 1 shows that the respondents in the income bracket of Rs.12001 and above have better quality of life than the other income categories of the respondents. The results of the ANVOA (F-7.350, p<0.001) test have stated these findings as turning out to be statistically significant at high level. In

the above table, 1.4 it is inferred that the respondent belonging to a nuclear family has better quality of life than the respondents who live in joint families. However, the independent sample t test ( $t = 0.985$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) results show that there is no significant difference between family type of the respondents. It can be said that the respondents who are living with both father and mother have higher quality of life than the other category. The ANOVA ( $F = 4.616$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) results are statistically significant at moderate level. It is also indicated that the mean score of quality of life among the factors accounting for street children because of poverty is higher than the other categories that account for street children. However, the ANOVA results highlights that there is no significant difference between factors accounting for street children and quality of life of the respondents. Results of the study also reveal that the respondents who stayed in shelter home have got higher mean score than the other respondents. However, the ANOVA ( $F = 1.524$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) test has stated that these findings have not turned out to be statistically significant.

## CONCLUSION

Street children are young people below the age of 15, whose family relationship are broken and deserted either by father or mother. These children don't have monitoring either from their parents or from social sectors. These children are exposed to the vulgarity of social evils. Their parents are usually unemployed and illiterate; therefore children are indulging in stealing, sniffing and lying. Children who are living with their parents have better quality of life than the respondents living alone or in homes. The children's characters have been moulded in their prime age. However, character building can also be done proactively through planned action and activities within the classroom and society.

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