

# Research in Pharmacy and Health Sciences

## Research Article

### A cross-sectional study of characteristics of street children in Jaipur city, Rajasthan

Sonal Yadav\*, Anuj Jhakar<sup>1</sup>, Priyanka Sharma<sup>2</sup>, Samar Hossain<sup>1</sup>, Vandna Sen<sup>1</sup>

Department of Pedodontistry & Preventive Dentistry, Rajasthan Dental College-Jaipur, India

<sup>1</sup>Department of Community Medicine, NIMS Medical College-Jaipur, India

<sup>2</sup>Department of Pathology, SMS Medical College-Jaipur, India

#### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To study the socio-demographic profile of street children in Jaipur city, Rajasthan. **Setting and Design:** Cross-sectional study. **Material and Method:** Children between 5-15 years residing on the streets of Jaipur city were the study population. **Result:** Majority of the street children (74.5%) were in 9 to 13 years of age group followed by 5-9 years (13.5%) and 13-15 years (12.0%). 91.0% of street children were males. 65.3% street children were from nuclear family. Out of 400 street children 45.8% had left home to earn money followed by 21.0% and 11.8% street children who left home due to domestic violence and to avoid parental restrictions respectively. Peer pressure was cited as reason by only 4.8% street children. **Conclusion:** During the study it was also observed that approximately half of the street children i.e. 45.8% had left home to earn money 21.0% had left home due to domestic violence and 11.8% street children had left, to avoid parental restrictions. Death of the father and mother were the reasons to leave their homes for 5.8% and 4.8% street children respectively.

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**\*Correspondence to:**  
**Dr. Sonal Yadav, MDS**

**Email:**  
[Sonal Yadav 05@gmail.com](mailto:Sonal Yadav 05@gmail.com)

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#### INTRODUCTION:

Street children are among the most physically visible of all children, living and working on the roads and public squares of cities all over the world. Yet paradoxically, they are also among the most “invisible” and therefore hardest children to reach with vital services such as education and health care, and the most difficult to protect. Many children living or working on the streets have embraced the term “street children” considering that it offers them a sense of identity and belonging. The umbrella description is convenient shorthand, but it should not obscure the fact that the many children who live and work on the street do so on multifarious ways and for a range of reasons.<sup>1</sup>

The exact number street children is impossible to quantify but it is likely to number in the tens of millions or higher, some estimates place the figures as high as 100 million. It is likely that the numbers are increasing as the global population grows and as urbanization continues apace. Out of 10 dwellers were expected to be under 18 years of age by

2005.<sup>1</sup> There are at least 18 million street children in India. Many studies have determined that street children are most often boys aged between 10-14 years, with increasingly younger children being affected.<sup>2</sup>

UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund) <sup>1</sup> defines children living and working on the street in three categories; 1) A child of the street having no home but streets 2) A child on the street, visiting his/her family regularly 3) A part of street family, living on the sidewalks or squares with rest of their family. Families displaced due to poverty, natural disasters, or wars may be forced to live on the streets. They move their possessions from place to place when necessary. Often the children in these street families work on the streets with other members of their families. In institutionalized care, having come from a situation of homelessness and at risk of returning to a homeless existence.

It is important that the special problems of this group are recognized so that the Rajasthan state can target

its resources on areas most critical for preventing delinquency there by helping these youth in making a successful transition in to adulthood and molding them in to productive adults of the society. As few field studies had been carried out on street children in Rajasthan, hence this study had been undertaken in Jaipur city with the objective of studying the socio-demographic profile of street children.

### Material and Methods:

**Study Design:** Cross-sectional study. **Sample size:** As per the seed article the prevalence of substance use was 57.4% in street children<sup>3</sup> accepting this with 5% allowable error and 95% confidence interval, the sample size was calculated to be 375.4 which was rounded off to 400. **Study Area:** Jaipur City, India. **Study population:** Street children between 5-15 years of age of Jaipur city. **Inclusion Criteria:** All those street children who were between 5-15 years & agreed to participate in the study. **Exclusion criteria:** Non-cooperative and more than 15 years of age. **Study period:** From June 2013 to June 2014. **Methodology:** A cross-sectional study was carried out in Jaipur city. The sample size of 400 was calculated by using respondent driven sampling (RDS) technique.<sup>4</sup> **Analysis:** The generated data was entered onto a computerized Excel (Microsoft Excel 2007) spread sheet and was analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 20.0. The study protocol was approved by Department of Community Medicine, NIMS Medical College, NIMS University, Jaipur, India.

### Results and discussion:

Majority of the street children (74.5%) were in 9 to 13 years of age group followed by 5-9 years (13.5%) and 13-15 years (12.0%) (Table 1 and Figure 1). This is consistent with the findings of Pagare D., et al. (2004)<sup>3</sup> who found that average of leaving home was 9.1 years.<sup>5</sup> in his review article on the street children in developing world said that, children rarely begin street life before they are 5 years of age. Scanlon T., et.al. (1998)<sup>6</sup> in their study of street children in Latin America also observed that their ages ranged from 8 to 17 years, with average age on entering the street being 9 years.

In the study population it was observed that majority of street children 84.0 were Hindu, followed by followed by Muslim 11.0% and Christian 4.5% (table 2). Nearly 60% of the street children 65.3% were from nuclear families while 17.5% and 17.2% were from broken families and three generation/joint

families respectively (table 3). Wainaina J. (1981)<sup>7</sup> in his study of parking boys of Nairobi said that 85% of the "Parking Boys" of Nairobi were brought up by a single parent in a female – headed family. Subrahmanyam Y., et. al. (1990)<sup>8</sup> in their study also observed that family discard was a major problem. Benegal V., et. al. (1998)<sup>9</sup> in their study of drug abuse among street children in Bangalore found that, a smaller but significant number had been rendered homeless because of breakdown of their families due to death or desertion of parents.

During the study it was also observed that approximately half of the street children i.e 45.8% had left home to earn money 21.0% had left home due to domestic violence and 11.8% street children had left, to avoid parental restrictions (figure 2). Death of the father and mother were the reasons to leave their homes for 5.8% and 4.8% street children respectively. Peer pressure was cited as reason by 4.8% street children to leave their homes whereas 2.8% children left home due to presence of the step parents. These findings were consistent with the findings of Ojanuga (1990)<sup>10</sup> who had conducted his study on 55 Nigerian Street Children under age 15, who were begging for a living found that the children were on the streets because their families were poor and needed the money they earned. Subrahmanyam Y, et. al. (1990)<sup>8</sup> in their study also observed that poverty was a significant aspect of the children being on the streets. Benegal V, et. al. (1998)<sup>9</sup> in their study of drug abuse among street children in Bangalore found that most of the children surveyed i.e. 65 (24.4%) had left their homes because of economic hardship and had migrated to the city in search of jobs. Lusk M., et. al. (1989)<sup>10</sup> and Lusk M. (1992)<sup>11</sup> in their study of street children of Juarez: and street children of Rio de Janeiro had observed that majority of the street children are on streets to earn the money as there is not enough at home.

### Conclusion:

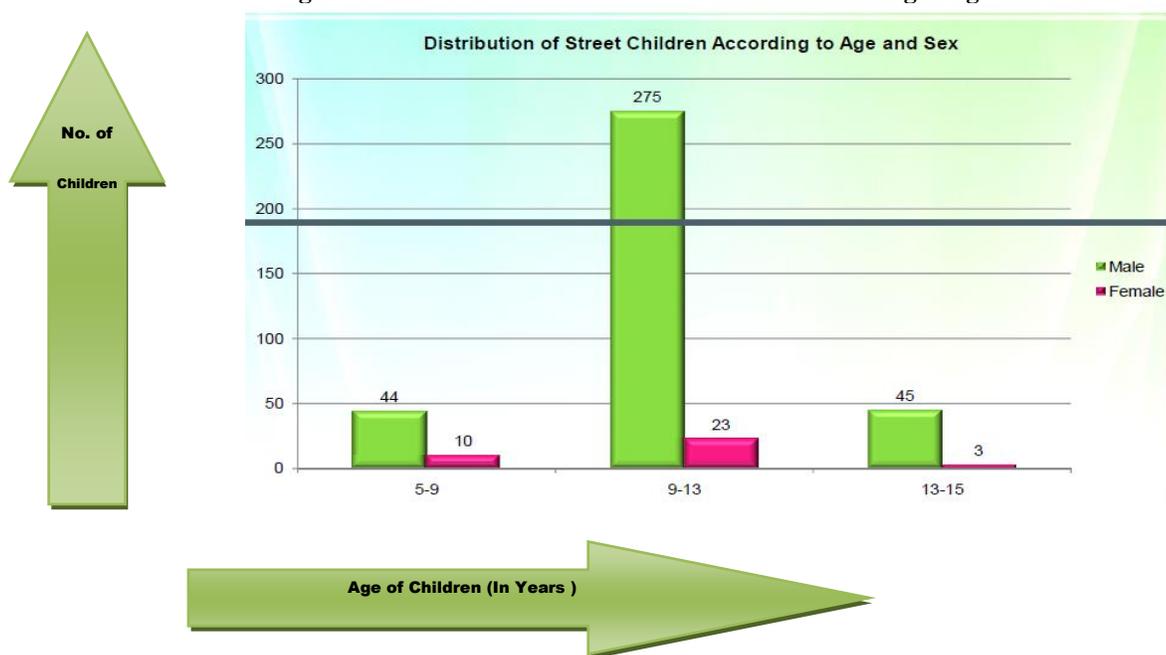
In this study 74.5% street children were in 9-13 years of age. Majority of street children i.e. 65.3% were from nuclear family followed by 17.5% and 17.2% children who were from broken families and three generation /joint families respectively. The main reason for leaving home by nearly half of the street children i.e.45.8% was to earn money.

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**Table 1: Distribution of Street Children According to Age and Sex**

Age (In Years)	Sex				Total	
	Male		Female			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
5 -9	44	11.0	10	2.5	54	13.5
9-13	275	68.8	23	5.7	298	74.5
13-15	45	11.2	03	0.8	48	12.0
Total	364	91.0	36	9.0	400	100.0

**Figure 1: Shows distribution of street children according to age and sex**



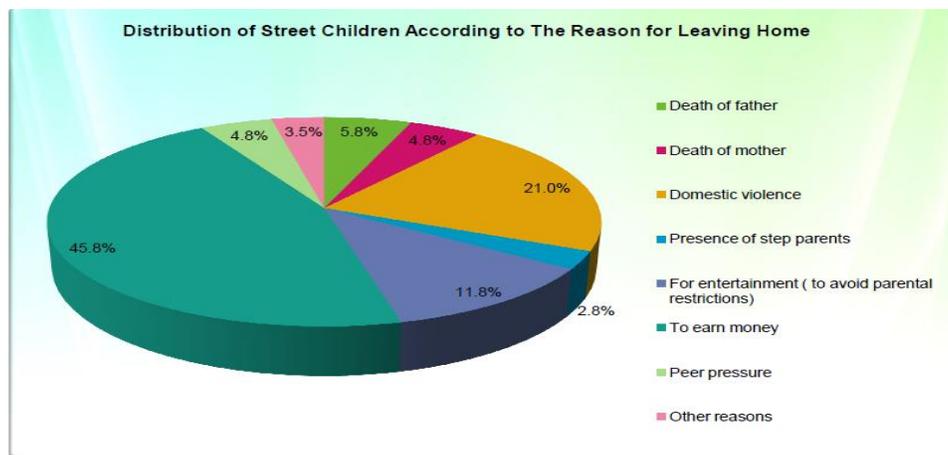
**Table 2: Distribution of street children according to religion**

Religion	Number	Percentage
Hindu	336	84.0
Muslim	44	11.0
Christian	18	4.5
Others	02	0.5
Total	400	100.0

**Table 3: Distribution of Street Children According to Type of Family**

Type of Family	Number	Percentage
Nuclear Family	261	65.3
Three Generation/ Joint Family	69	17.2
Broken Family	70	17.5
Total	400	100.0

**Figure 2: Shows distribution of street children according to the reasons for leaving home**



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