

The Way Street Children of Dhaka City Live: A Survey

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Abstract:

Every citizen including children is protected from all sorts of discrimination by the constitution of Bangladesh. Children of today will become the leaders of tomorrow and are in essence, the most valuable human capital of a country. But it is a matter of sorrows that millions of deprived boys and girls have turned to the street as their residence and are referred to as street children. The problem of children's rights has recently received a lot of attention from around the world, with international conventions, summits, and worldwide action for children. Unfortunately, even in today's civilized world, a large number of children still live on the streets around the world. Street children lead really miserable lives with serious physical and psycho-social problems. This paper attempts to find out the way of living of street children in Dhaka city, the capital of Bangladesh. For this purpose, this study was conducted using survey method in different areas especially Railway stations, Bus stations, Launch terminals, etc. of Dhaka City where the street children usually live. Data was collected from face to face interview of 100 street children (Respondents) aged between 5 to 18 years. This paper reveals the socio-demographic profile of the respondents, parental and family profile of the respondents, economic profile of the respondents, socio-economic and psychological problems of respondents, health issues of the respondents and the reasons of being street children. This paper has also some recommendations on how to decrease the number of street children in Dhaka city and ensure better lives as all citizens are equal before the law and have the right to equal protection, and they must be treated equally under the law.

Key Words: Children, Street children, Socio-demographic profile, Health issues.

1. INTRODUCTION

Children are a nation's greatest asset because a nation's afterlife is primarily dependent on its children. As a result, they are referred to as the fathers of any nation (Hossain et al., 2016). Children can ensure that any nation's hopes and aspirations are reflected. They have the potential to spread happiness and tranquility throughout the country. Whether or not the children will fulfill the nation's

hope is dependent on the state's or country's provision of competent nursing and other facilities. From the start of civilization, they have been prioritized (Hurlock, 1972).

Children are a country's most valuable human capital (Nabi, 1973). These children, who are now under the age of eighteen, will surely be future leaders. Children should have opportunities for full development and growth toward maturity through physical,

emotional, mental, and spiritual wellbeing (Chowdhury, 1980).

The term street children refer to millions of destitute boys and girls who have adopted the streets as their abode or source of livelihood, or both (UNICEF).

Also the term "street children" refers to homeless children who live on the streets in various cities and metropolitan regions around the world, and homeless teenagers are commonly referred to as "street kids" or "street youths." There is no universal definition of street children, and there are differences in how they are defined in different countries. As a result, many policymakers adopt the UNICEF definition of street children as homeless, careless, and risky boys and girls aged less than 18 years who live on the streets for a living (Hakim & Rahman, 2016).

There are two groups of street children. The first group is "Children of the street", which refers to children who are homeless, and their source of livelihood is in the streets of urban areas, where they sleep and live. The second group is "Children on the street", who work and live on the streets in the day time but return back home at night (UNCHS, 2000). Children who live on the streets are particularly exposed to exploitation and abuse. These children also face increased threats to their safety and well-being. (Chowdhury et al., 2017)

Around 120 million children are believed to be living on the streets worldwide (approximately 30 million in Africa, 30 million in Asia, and 60 million in South America) (Humanium, 2011). An estimated 1.2 million children live or work on the streets of major cities and urban centers around the world; this includes "runaway" children who live or work on the streets as well as youngsters who return to their families (Pagare et al, 2014). Recently, most of Bangladesh's cities have

experienced rapid but well-planned urbanization, which has resulted in increased work opportunities in urban regions. As a result, urban migration is on the rise, causing urban population growth to outpace Bangladesh's national population growth (Nasrin, 2014). Every year, a big number of people come to Dhaka in pursuit of better opportunities. People move to escape poverty since there are no viable opportunities locally, and they must relocate in order to survive (Skeldon, 2003).

There is a widespread belief that people may improve their lives by working in metropolitan regions, but in reality, they face numerous obstacles. Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh and seen as a land of opportunities, must accommodate a large influx of migrants. According to one estimate, roughly 0.32 million migrants enter Dhaka city each year (Islam, 1997). According to estimates from the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), the number of street children in Bangladesh was 1.5 million in 2001 and will rise to 1.56 million by 2024. Internal migration and people looking for work have primarily caused this problem in Dhaka (Wares, 2019).

The number of street children in Bangladesh's major cities has increased dramatically. The increase is linked to recent official estimates showing that Bangladesh's urban population continues to grow at a rate of roughly 9% per year (Khan, 1999). Regrettably, a huge proportion of the world's children continue to live on the streets deprived of their basic rights. An estimated 1.2 million children live or work on the streets of major cities and urban centers around the world; this includes "runaway" children who live or work on the streets as well as youngsters who return to their families (Pagare et al, 2004).

Bangladesh is progressing toward becoming a developed country. Children, including

those living on the streets, have an important role in creating a developed nation. As a result, creating a plethora of possibilities for

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives of this study are:

- i. To determine the demographic characteristics of street children
- ii. To highlight their living habits and portray the current living situation
- iii. To learn about the issues that street children confront
- iv. To know about their goals for transforming their lives

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A survey was conducted among 100 street children at different transition points at Dhaka city likes Bimanbandar Railway Station, Komlapur Railway Station, Sadargat Launch Terminal, and Gabtali Bus Terminal. The research population included all street children aged 5 to 18. The data from the research areas was then examined and presented using tables, charts, and diagrams, among other methods. The information was gathered through face-to-face interviews with the respondents. The collected data set termed as primary data set whereas the data gathered from published and unpublished research reports, journals, books, and records and documents of

them to demonstrate their abilities will be a wise decision (Wares, 2019).

relevant agencies are termed as secondary data set.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table-4.1 presents the socio-demographic profile of the respondents. **Figure-4.1** shows that the age distribution of street children is contributing 12% within 5-8 years, 38% within 9-12 years, 40% within 13-16 years and 10% within 17-18 years. **Figure-4.2** shows that most of the street children are male (86%). **Figure-4.3** shows that 58% of the respondents are illiterate, 30% have completed primary school, 7 % have completed secondary school, 5% have completed higher secondary school and no one has completed above higher secondary level. It has been shown in **Figure-4.4** that the sleeping place of 40% street children is the Railway stations. The other major sleeping places are Bus stations, Launch terminals, footpath, parks and others which account for 15%, 18%, 10%, 9% and 8% consecutively. **Figure- 4.5** shows that 8% respondents stay alone, 35% respondents stay with parents, 10% respondents stay with father, 27% respondents stay with mother and 20% respondents stay with co-workers.

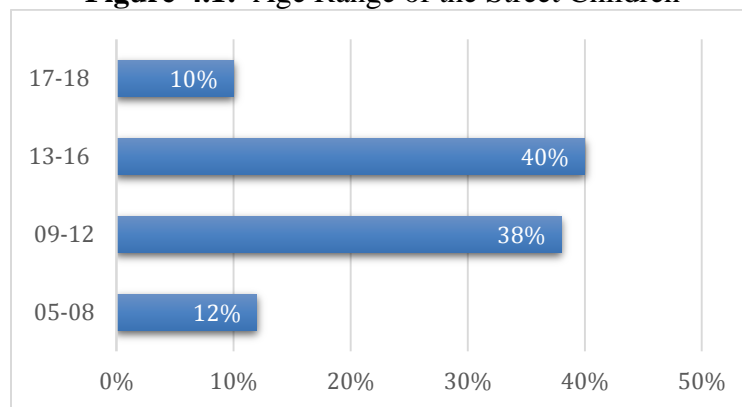
Table-4.1: Socio-demographic Profile of the Respondents

Parameters	N=100	
	Frequency	Percentage
Age of the Respondents (Years)		
5-8	12	12
9-12	38	38
13-16	40	40
17-18	10	10
Gender of the Respondents		
Male	86	86
Female	14	14
Education of the Respondents		

Illiterate	58	58
Primary	30	30
Secondary	7	7
Higher Secondary	5	5
Above Higher Secondary	0	0
Sleeping Palace of the Respondents		
Rail station	40	40
Bus station	15	15
Launch station	18	18
Footpath	10	10
Park	9	9
Other	8	8
With whom the Respondents Stay		
Alone	8	8
Parents	35	35
Father only	10	10
Mother only	27	27
Co-workers	20	20

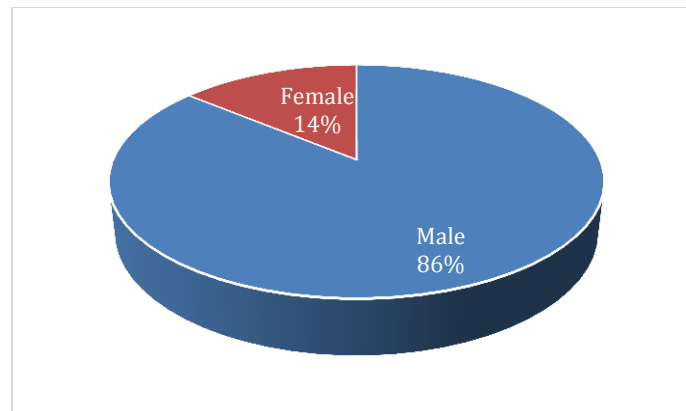
Source: Field Survey, 2022

Figure-4.1: Age Range of the Street Children



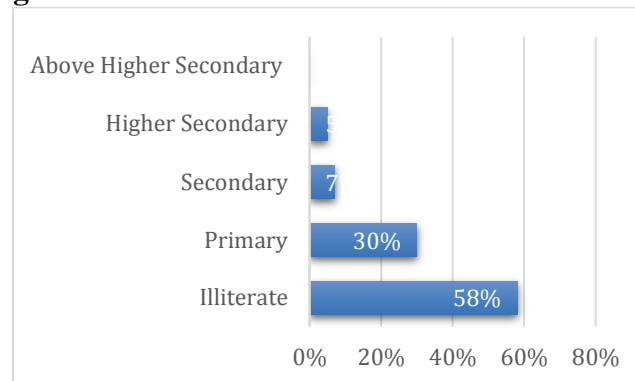
Source: Field Survey, 2022

Figure-4.2: Gender Distribution among the Street Children



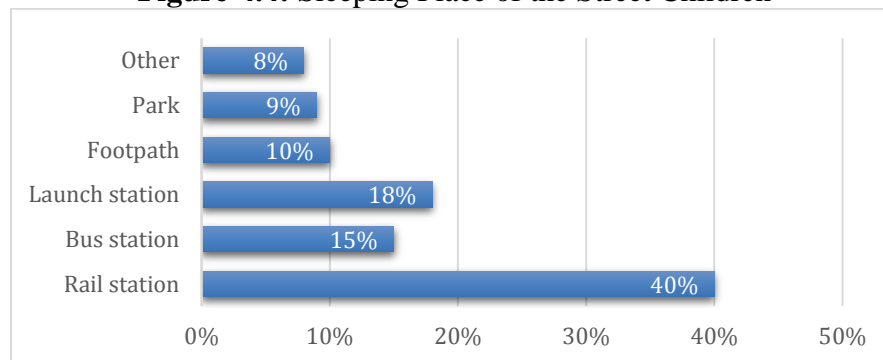
Source: Field Survey, 2022

Figure-4.3: Educational Profile of the Street Children



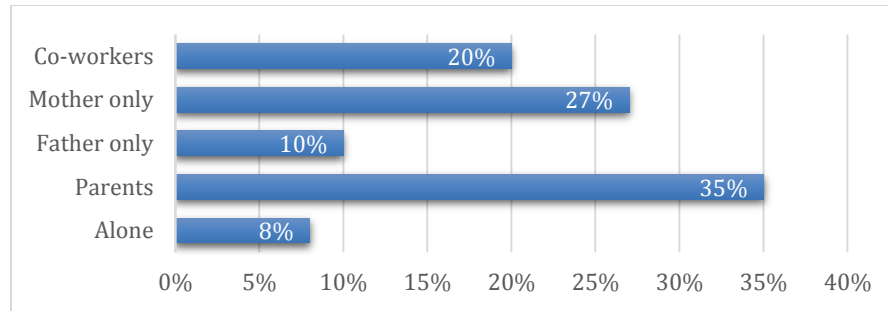
Source: Field Survey, 2022

Figure-4.4: Sleeping Place of the Street Children



Source: Field Survey, 2022

Figure -4.5: With Whom the Street Children Stay



Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table- 4.2 shows the parental and family profile of the respondents. **Figure -4.6** shows that 13% have 1-2 members, 44% have 3-4 members, 35% have 5-6 members and 08% have 7 or more than 7 members in their families. **Figure-4.7** shows that 43% of respondents' parents living palace is urban, 37% of respondents' parents living palace is

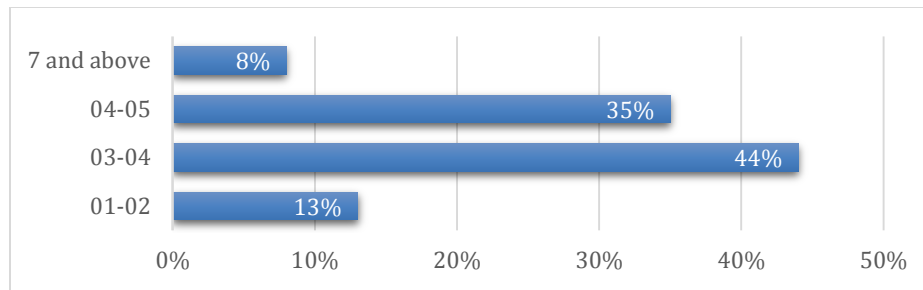
rural. 18% of respondents' parents have passed away. **Figure -4.8** shows that no educational status of 7% respondents' parents. Respondents' parents with Primary, secondary, higher secondary and above higher secondary education amount to 55%, 25%, 8% and 5% consecutively

Table- 4.2: Parental and Family Profile of the Respondents

Parameters	N=100	
	Frequency	Percentage
Family Size of the Respondents (Person)		
1-2	13	13
3-4	44	44
5-6	35	35
7 and above	08	08
Parents of Respondents Living palace		
Urban	43	43
Rural	37	37
Dead	18	18
Others	02	02
Educational Status of the Parents of Respondents		
No	7	7
Primary	55	55
Secondary	25	25
Higher Secondary	8	8
Above higher secondary	5	5

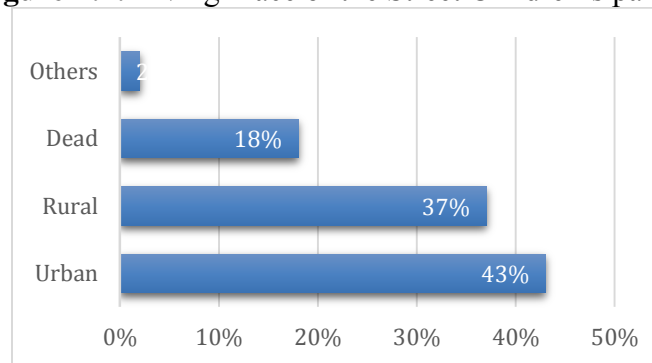
Source: Field Survey, 2022

Figure-4.6: Family Size of the Street Children



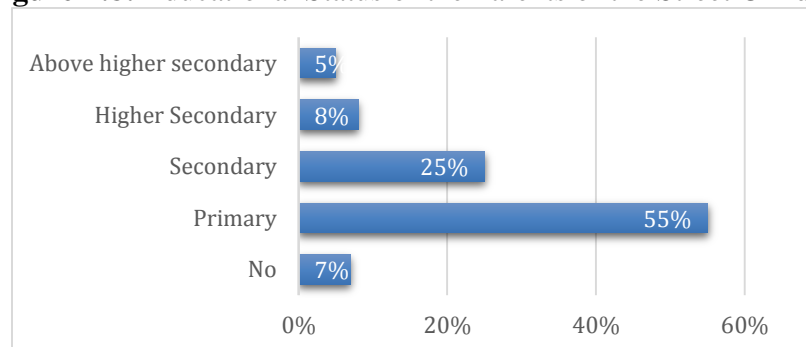
Source: Field Survey, 2022

Figure-4.7: Living Place of the Street Children's parents



Source: Field Survey, 2022

Figure-4.8: Educational Status of the Parents of the Street Children



Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table- 4.3 shows the economic profile of the respondents. **Figure-4.9** shows that 12% respondents are involved in begging, 22%

respondents are involved in day labor, 18% respondents are involved in selling flower or newspaper, 35% respondents are involved in

scavenging, 8% respondents are working in small shops and 5% are doing other jobs. **Figure-4.10** shows that the daily average income of 15% respondents is below Taka 50 per day, of 54% between Taka 50-100, of 20% between Taka 101-200 and of 11 %, more than Taka 200. **Figure-4.11** shows that their working hours are very high compared to their earnings. It shows that 6%

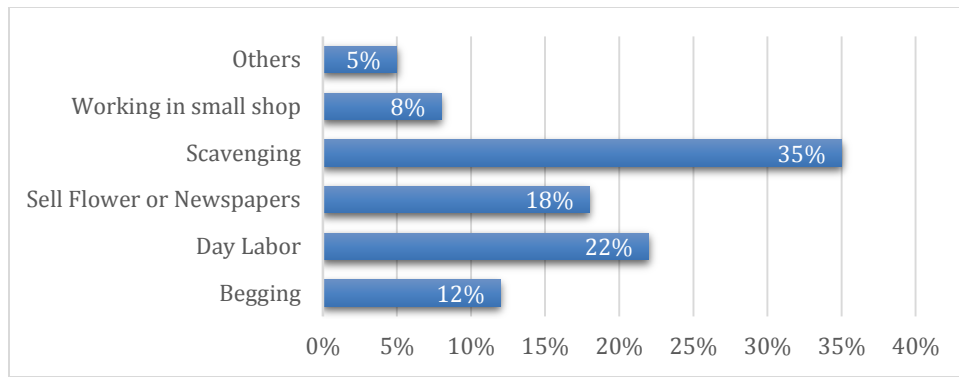
respondents are working 1-3 hours per day, 31%, 52% and 11% respondents are working consecutively 4-6 hours, 7-9 hours and 10-12 hours per day. **Figure- 4.12** shows that 53% respondents expenses their earnings for personal purposes, 22%, 17% & 8% respondents expenses their expenses for family purposes, unnecessary purposes and saving purposes

Table- 4.3: Economic Profile of the Respondents

Parameters	N=100	
	Frequency	Percentage
What Type of Work Respondents are Involved in?		
Begging	12	12
Day Labor	22	22
Sell Flower or Newspapers	18	18
Scavenging	35	35
Working in small shop	8	8
Others	5	5
Daily Average Income of the Respondents (Bangladeshi Taka)		
<50	15	15
50-100	54	54
101-200	20	20
200+	11	11
Daily Working Hours of the Respondents (Hours)		
1-3	6	6
4-6	31	31
7-9	52	52
10-12	11	11
Nature of Expenditure		
Personal expense	53	53
Family expense	22	22
Unnecessary expense	17	17
Saving	8	8

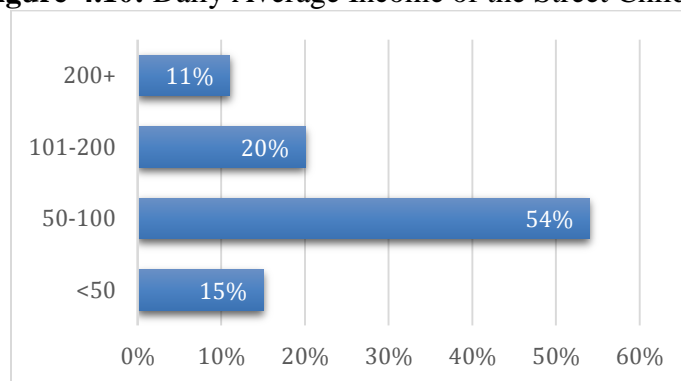
Source: Field Survey, 2022

Figure-4.9: Working Areas of the Street Children



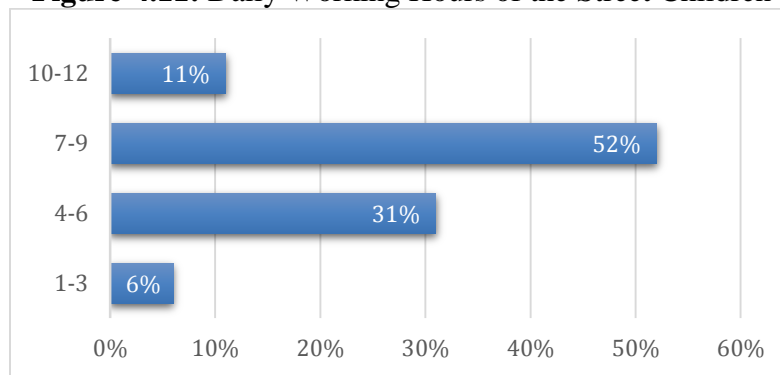
Source: Field Survey, 2022

Figure-4.10: Daily Average Income of the Street Children



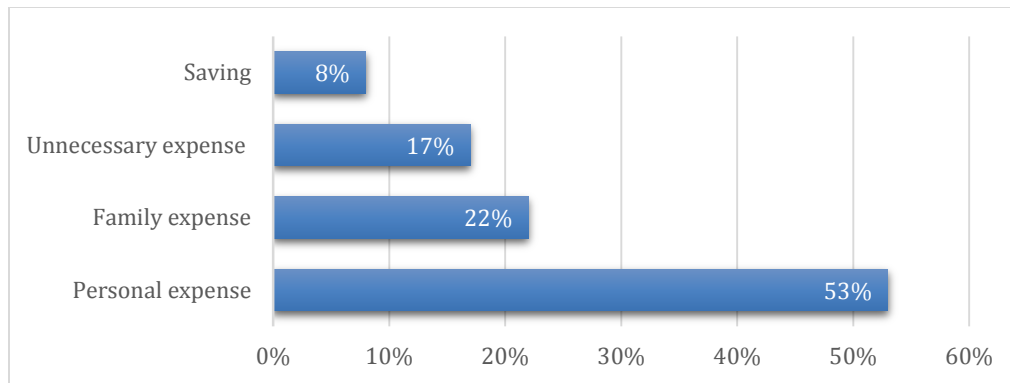
Source: Field Survey, 2022

Figure-4.11: Daily Working Hours of the Street Children



Source: Field Survey, 2022

Figure-4.12: Expenses Areas of the Street Children



Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table- 4.4 shows the socio-economic and psychological problems of street children. **Figure- 4.13** shows that 47%, 36%, and 17% respondents can usually eat once a day, twice a day, thrice a day consecutively. **Figure- 4.14** shows that 44% of the respondents usually eat from street shop, 29% at home, 11% collect food from

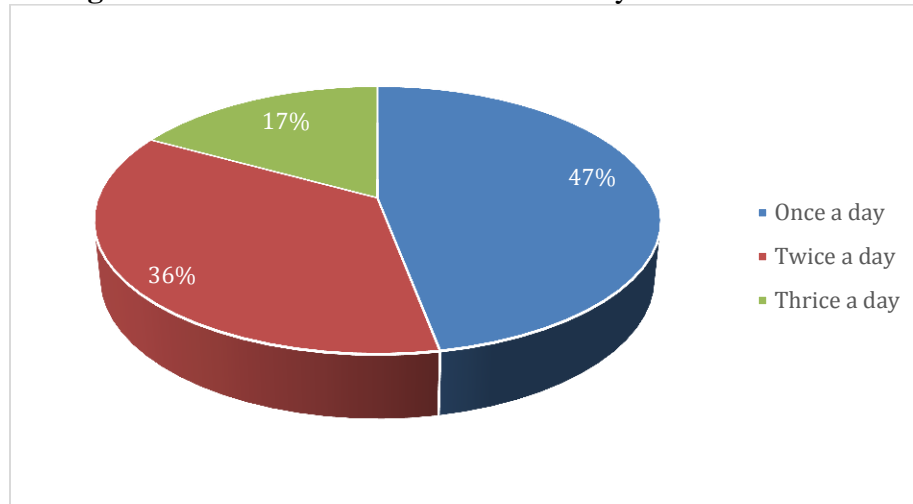
dustbins, 13% beg for food from restaurants and 3% others. **Figure-4.15** shows that 72% respondents face oral or verbal harassment. It is alarming that 48% respondents take drugs that has been showed in **Figure-4.16**. It has also been showed in **Figure- 4.17** that 17 % respondents shows well, 38 % fair and 45% poor behavior during data collection.

Table-4: Socio-economic and Psychological Problem of Street Children

Parameters	N=100	
	Frequency	Percentage
Respondents can Usually Eat in a Day		
Once a day	47	47
Twice a day	36	36
Thrice a day	17	17
The Place where the Respondents Usually Eat		
Street shop	44	44
Home	29	29
Collect food from dustbin	11	11
Beg for food from restaurant	13	13
Others	3	3
Respondents Face Any Oral or Verbal Harassment		
Yes	72	72
No	28	28
Respondents Take Any kind of Drug		
Yes	48	48
No	52	52
Behavioral Information of Respondents During Interview		
Well	17	17
Fairly	38	38
Poorly	45	45

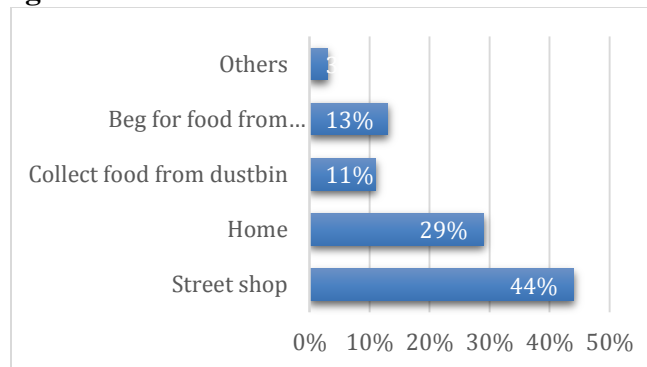
Source: Field Survey, 2022

Figure 4.13: Number of Meal Consumed by the Street Children



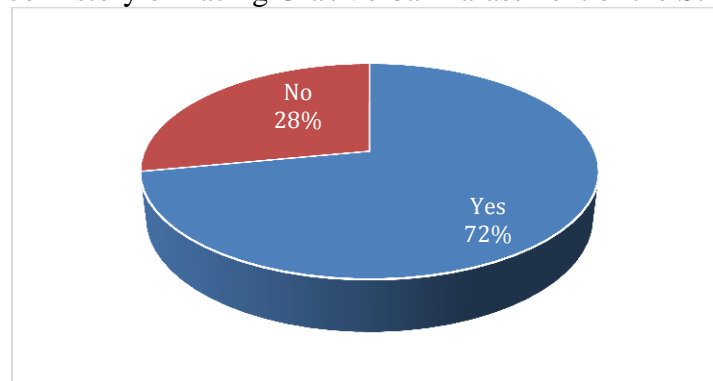
Source: Field Survey, 2022

Figure-4.14: Sources of Meal for the Street Children

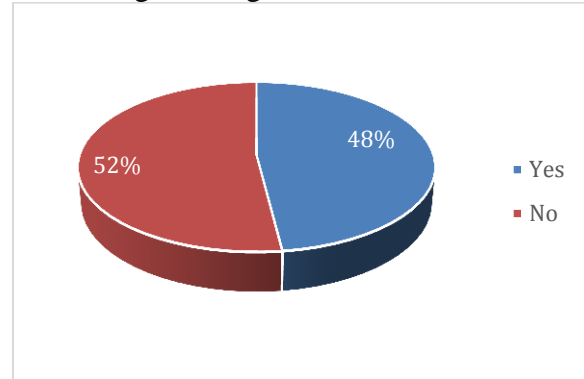


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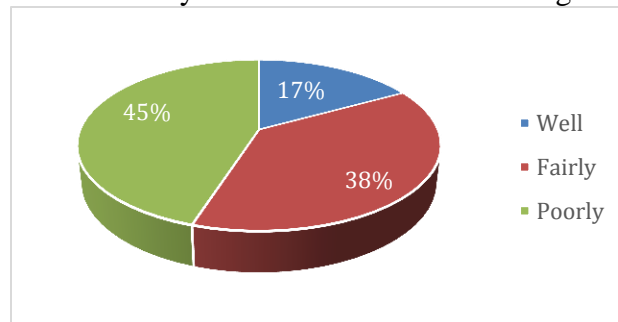
Figure-4.15: History of Facing Oral/Verbal Harassment of the Street Children



Source: Field Survey, 2022

Figure-4.16: Drug Seeking Tendencies of the Street Children

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Figure-4.17: Amenability of the Street Children during Data Collection

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table-4.5 shows the health issue of the respondents. **Figure-4.18** shows that 60% respondents wash hand before eating and rest 40% are not washing hand before eating. **Figure-4.19** shows that 54% respondents daily take bath and rest 46% do not take bath daily. **Figure-4.20** shows that 80% respondents had been sick during last month. **Figure-4.21** shows that most of

them are suffering from Fever/Cold/Headache (75%), skin diseases (31%), Diarrhea (11%), stomach pain 14%. **Figure-4.22** shows that 32% respondents are getting treatment from government hospital, 43% from Pharmacy, 0% from private doctors, 17% from kabiraji, and 8% take homeopathy medicine

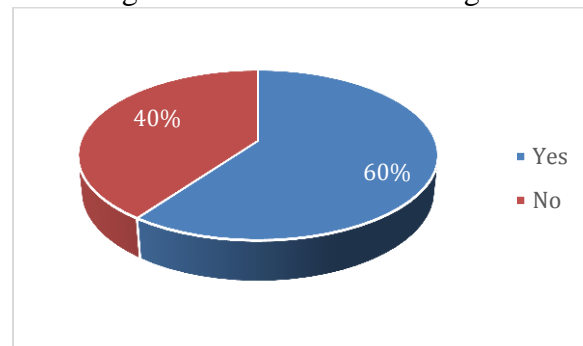
Table-4.5: Health Issue of the Respondents

Parameters	N=100	
	Frequency	Percentage
Respondents Wash Hand or Not before Eating		
Yes	60	60
No	40	40
Respondents Daily Taken Bath or Not		
Yes	54	54
No	46	46

Respondents had been Sick During the Last Month or Not		
Yes	80	80
No	20	20
What Type of Disease?		
Fever/Cold/Headache	75	75
Skin Diseases	31	31
Diarrhea	11	11
Stomach Pain	14	14
Other	12	12
Nature of Getting Treatment		
Government Hospital	32	32
Pharmacy	43	43
Private Doctors	0	0
Kabiraji	17	17
Homeopathy	8	8

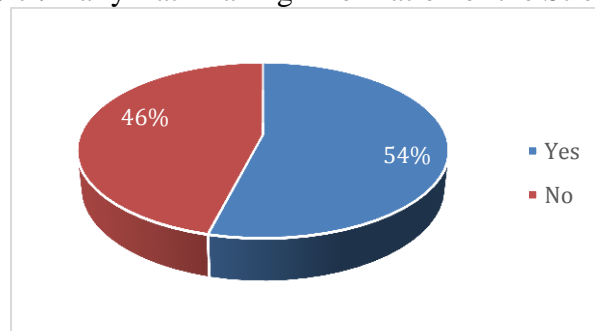
Source: Field Survey, 2022

Figure-4.18: Hand Washing Tendencies before Taking Meal of the Street Children

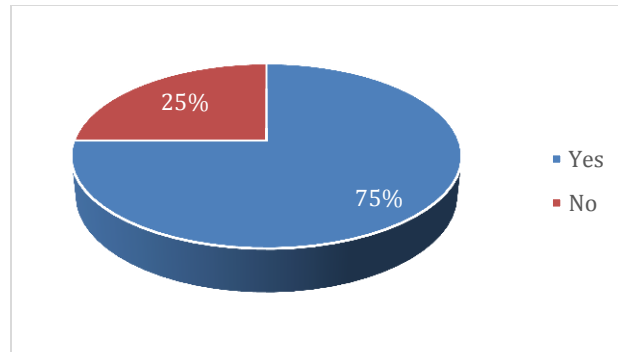


Source: Field Survey, 2022

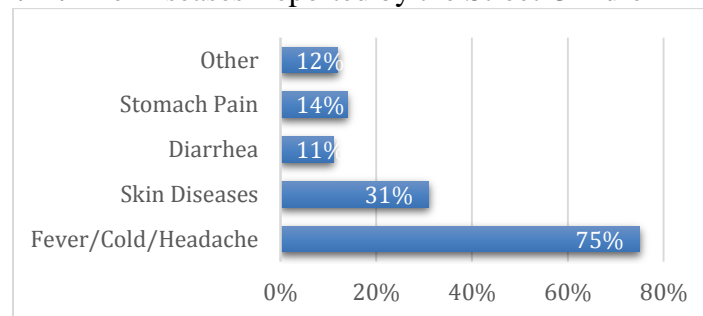
Figure-4.19: Daily Bath Taking Information of the Street Children



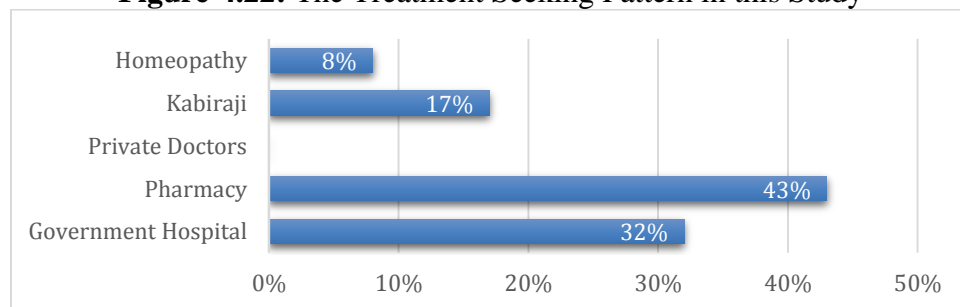
Source: Field Survey, 2022

Figure-4.20: Information about the Street Children Sickness during Last Month

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Figure-4.21: The Diseases Reported by the Street Children in this Study

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Figure-4.22: The Treatment Seeking Pattern in this Study

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table- 4.6 shows that the respondents reason of being street children. The reasons for 28% is parents separation, 32% is for

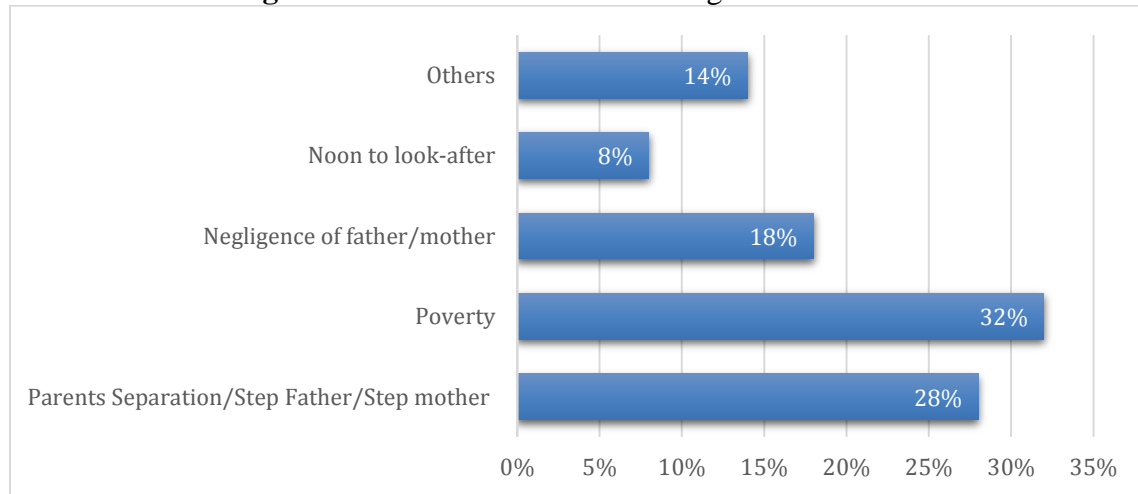
poverty, 18% is for the negligence of father or mother and 8% due to none to look after that has also been showed in **Figure-4.2**

Table-4.6: Reasons of being Street Children

Parameters	N=100	
	Frequency	Percentage
Parents Separation/Step Father/Step mother	28	28
Poverty	32	32
Negligence of father/mother	18	18
Noon to look-after	8	8
Others	14	14

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Figure-23: The Factors for Becoming Street Children



Source: Field Survey, 2022

5. CONCLUSION

It is already mentioned that the survey was directly made among 100 street children at different transition points at Dhaka city like Bimanbondor Railway Station, Komlapur Railway Station, Sadargat Launch Terminal, and Gabtali Bus Terminal. The research population included all street children aged 5 to 18. It was observed that they have extreme lacking in fundamental needs. Children from many parts of the country travel to Dhaka for survival due to family dysfunction, extreme poverty, river erosion, torture by step-parent or being duped by someone (Kabir, 1999). They are unable to meet their basic needs in this manner, and exploited economically, socially, and politically by one class of individuals. People torture them physically or sexually, and isolate them psychologically (Bequele & Myers, 1995). People who are involved

in child rights violations, torture, or harassment should be severely punished. Laws relating to this should be enforced. The passers-by, hijackers, and others may torture and mistreat street girl children. Aside from

that, they treat them badly and encourage them to engage in illicit activities. These individuals should be held accountable (Freeman, 1983). Because they are the most vulnerable category, street children should be given precedence in any form of program for children. It is necessary to take appropriate and effective efforts to protect children from all forms of abuse, to provide for their basic needs, and to ensure the well-being and development of street children. Some NGOs have implemented various initiatives to provide basic necessities to street children in order to achieve this goal,

however it has been noted that the overall status of the street children is not improving (Mia, 1995). Children are at the center of social progress because they construct the world of future, so all of us, including the government, should take the necessary

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