

STREETISM IS THE GLOBAL TREND OR THE FLIPSIDE OF THE DEVELOPING WORLD

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The understanding of streetism is presented in this article by providing definitions of both; scholarly and policy sources. Explanations to the growing trend of streetism is described, it consists of introduction, literature review and conclusion. Definitions will lead to understanding of the reasons and causes of this phenomenon worldwide. Streetism is not exclusive to the third world countries but developed countries also experience it. The limited education opportunities, poor or no income will make young adults in developed countries want to attain their goal through illegal means. Then the review will focus on the causes leading to streetism among children. Special attention is paid to case studies conducted worldwide.

Keywords: streetism, domestic violence, family, parental divorce, infectious diseases, emotional impact, street children, sexually transmitted diseases (STD), behavior

It is estimated that about 100 million children between the ages of 5 and 18 live on the streets in less developed world countries [5]. There are many reasons why children go to the streets of the cities, towns, and villages. All children who found in the streets can be allocated into one of the two major types of street youth depending on how much time they spend on the streets.

The first category of children lives at home and they are on the streets to earn for their livings and support their families. They are often forced by their parents to do everything they can to earn money and such children do any possible job requiring minimum skills or knowledge. They are engaged in shoe polishing, newspaper selling, begging, sometimes in prostitution or into other illegal activities connected with menial income.

Children in the second category accept street as their homes and the only place for living, because they sleep and live on the streets. These children usually do not have any ties with their families and siblings. They run away from their homes for various reasons. Mostly conflicts with parents or family members force them to go to the streets.

This article aims to provide explanations to the growing trend of streetism, it consists of introduction, literature review and conclusion. The literature review will present the understanding of streetism by providing definitions of both; scholarly and policy sources. Definitions will lead to understanding of the reasons and causes of this phenomenon worldwide. Then the literature review will focus on the causes leading to streetism among children. Special attention is paid to case studies conducted worldwide.

The definition of streetism is often contested and argued by scientists, practitioners and policy makers. And for this reason, the following definition by UNICEF (1995) is used in defining the target group as of children who are under eighteen years old. According to this concept, there are two categories involving children. On the one hand there are vagrant children for whom the street is the source of income. On the other hand there are children for whom the street is the constant place for living. In "Working with street children", these children are not adequately protected by adults and they do not have permanent home. They have to survive day and night on the streets and such style of life is the only open option for them. Street children live on the streets spending all their time or they spend some of their time just to earn money to support their families. However street is the only source of income or even shelter for both types of street children. Street plays an important role to the target group children, as it is the only environment for those children, the word *street* is reflected in the term streetism [6].

According to Encyclopedia Britannica, "*Streetism*" is the term that refers to the life situations of street children who usually live in the streets and engage in menial income. These children experience homelessness and they live on the streets of towns, cities, villages. There are children who work on the street and the other group who is called children of the street. They are called so because they not only work on the street but live, sleep, have food on it.

Why do children go to the streets? Streetism is a social and an individual problem; it is very common in developing countries. Various issues influence the growth of streetism, the most prevalent causes of streetism are: domestic violence, low income of families, family

related problems, physical and sexual abuse, and various sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS, (United Nations, 1990). Above mentioned factors place children in difficult situations where they cannot enjoy the life as majority of children in normal families do. The other complication is that such children are responsible for their lives, they are often without any support and they are often ignored by the society. Children are vulnerable because they do not have steadfast support system, and they have to deal with their problems on their own. The absence of support and secure conditions contradict to the Convention on the Rights of the Child [7]. Children in developing countries face difficulties on the streets due to the absence of children supporting programs. Researchers, policy makers must apply their efforts to develop effective measures to support them. Until the society accepts the existence of the problem and it introduces measures to prevent it, the streetism will escort the developing countries.

The changes in the family dynamics might be one of the most significant factors in the growth of streetism. It can occur due to domestic violence, death in the family, parental divorce or remarriage among many others. Such drastic changes in the family structure can have significant and emotional impact on a child. Children may feel unhappy or neglected in such family structures. According to UNICEF (2001), such neglected children prefer to move into the street rather than staying within stepparent settings (stepmother or stepfather) or in extended family settings. The UNICEF (2001) suggests that family members, stepparents physically and sexually abused such children. Such attitude to vulnerable children suffering from the loss of biological parent(s) made children to go to the streets.

The children's choice to go to the streets sometimes lead them to other problems connected with streetism such as bad influence of peers. In such, young people are exposed to harmful behaviors of peers, such as use of violence to dominate their peers and alcohol and drug abuse. This influence may bring vulnerable children to premature sex; because youth being affected by the usage of drugs or alcohol and being unconscious of their implications often become the victims of various consequences of such behavior. Particularly children in Zimbabwe are at high risk of infectious diseases such as HIV or other severe sexually transmitted diseases (STD) [8]. Other research conducted in Zimbabwe shows that street children are at high risk of having such danger-

ous (STD) such as HIV. This study also indicates that street children; girls and boys have intercourses which can lead to being infected by HIV disease. The study describes types of sexual activity where the children are engaged, they are boys engagement into sex with males, sex with prostitutes, or even more sophisticated forms. Boys and girls use their bodies as forms of payment for services through providing sex or girls become sex workers to support their new families. Child marriage / underage girls are in a relationship with men who groom and further force them to prostitution. In most cases they live as a husband and a wife, such husbands usually send their young wives to earn money for the "couple". Engagement into criminal activities is not only offensive but dangerous because vulnerable children can become victims of various gangs.

Streetism is not exclusive to the third world countries but developed countries also experience it. Unlike children from poor families or rural areas, children from developed countries also go to the streets. Where they like peers from developing countries, often make crimes or they are involved in various street gangs. A comparative study conducted by Guide, et al., shows that the essential raise of youth violence took place not only in developing countries but in many countries in Western Europe in the early 1990s [2]. According to England and Wales statistics of 580 in 100,000 aged 14–16 were convicted by the police in 1994. The statistics for western Germany revealed that young people aged 14 to 18 years were suspected for violent crimes almost six times higher about 3000 per 100,000. Such high crime rate among children put the target group to high risk to become a victim. For instance, the 1995 records of Netherlands indicate that young people at the age of 15 to 17 years are four times at a higher risk than adults to be assault victims. At the same time the criminal rate among young offenders grows up every year.

Many street youth live harsh and violent lives; such lifestyle has risks of violent trauma, accidents or even of death [3]. Many vagrants finish their lives as a result of social marginalization and street dangers. Day to day struggle for survival push them to anti social behavior such as street conflicts. These conflicts in turn often end with fatal cases because harsh lifestyle makes such children cruel even to each other. They get traumas and die on the streets, in prisons or they just disappear after being wounded. A vast number of street children go missing. The problem is that youth do not have social guarantees and are not provided medical

treatment in a timely manner. Vulnerable youth do not have access to medical care and services as a result this leads to complex health problems and even to death.

Another reason why children go to the streets and join gangs is the will to possess the stuff and seduces of luxury life and the promises of lucrative or luxurious lifestyle. Young children want to consume and the amount of such demands is often beyond the capacity of normal family. The TV shows, films and various programs advertise high style of life; youth driving luxurious cars, wearing expensive clothes, attending top class clubs and restaurants attract youth to the streets. They covet what is not affordable to their parents. The youth's understanding of good living is based on this type of consumer standards and will go to a large extent to meet up with the lifestyle that is not affordable to their parents. The limited education opportunities, poor or no income will make young adults in developed countries want to attain their goal through illegal means. Therefore, the unavailability of legal means of attaining their high or even unfeasible goal at the instant moment make them unhappy with their families and as a result go to the streets.

Streetism in Kazakhstan. The situation with streetism of Kazakhstan needs to be researched since there is a gap in the literature and empirical researches. The confusion is that according to official information there are no street children in Kazakhstan. Official papers narrate about what is being done to orphanage children and they do not mention that there are street children. The other problem is that there is no clear or even definition to streetism in Kazakhstan. For this reason, there are only children in families no matter whether children live there or not and children in orphanage institutions isolated from the society. On the other hand, unofficial sources report that, there are hundreds of thousands of street children [4]. We tried to find the reasons of streetism in other sources and found out that they are the same like mentioned in this paper. They are: low income of families, addiction to alcohol, family problems, and lack of parental guidance [1]. The science of Kazakhstan has to apply efforts to the issue of streetism, which in turn may bring policy makers to accept the phenomenon of streetism. The acceptance of streetism definition will produce positive effect on the society in general and to the development of inclusive education of Kazakhstan.

In conclusion of this article the children of all social statuses, nations, race and financial

backgrounds face the same risk to be a street child. As studies show, financial background of the family is only one aspect of being vulnerable to streetism. The issue is that some children financially is in more beneficial position than others but there are many other reasons to be a victim of streetism. The examples in this article assert that children as adults can think critically and take extraordinary decisions such as: leave their warm houses and go to the streets where nobody is going to take care of them.

It was very sensitive for us to write this article because of our background of working as teachers and a group masters at the college and university. During our work experience we met many children who were the subject of streetism. When we read sources explaining the reasons for streetism, we kept remembering those children. They struggled against harshness of life and often they were not understood by the society. Although some of them worked as waiters/waitresses or other low skilled works and paid for their education, most of them did not get proper support. Stakeholders, practitioners, teachers often did not interfere to their families since they did not have legal right to do so. All that they could do is just wait until they brake the laws or successfully finish their education and move forward.

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