

## Perception on Street Children: A Sample from Adana Province

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### Original Research Article

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#### Article History

Received: 15.12.2017

Accepted: 21.12.2017

Published: 30.12.2017

#### DOI:

10.21276/sjavs.2017.4.12.6



**Abstract:** This article was prepared to measure the people's thoughts living in the urban area of Adana province about the children who work on the streets. The aim is to provide these children with a more comfortable living environment by identifying their problems and providing some suggestions. The result of the surveys gathered from face-to-face interviews with 384 randomly selected individuals has simply tried to determine the people's thoughts about the issue. The major reasons of children who are worked in the streets are usually to contribute to family budget, to save money, to meet their own needs, to pay the family's debts, to learn business and professional skills, or just because they are pushed to work by their families. It's known that; street working children problem is closely related with internal migration and irregular urbanization. According to the data obtained; the interviewed individuals emphasized that the main reason for the increase on number of street working children is migration and migration related unemployment. The individuals also emphasized, they didn't contribute to these children in order not to encourage them to work in the streets; although knowing that the main reason is migration. Moreover, two of the aims of this study are to represent the thoughts of urban residents in Adana about street-working children; and to give advices to change the negative perceptions of individuals in the community about street children.

**Keywords:** Street Children, Society, Migration, Poverty.

## INTRODUCTION

The awareness proceeding in countrywide in the 1990s towards the street children and the problem of working children in the street has been inadequate despite efforts to take steps towards solving it. Over time, non-governmental organizations and the state have prepared programs and action plans have been drawn up, but the expected results have not been obtained.

The fact of children working on the streets is one of the problems brought into a certain state by a causative social problem: the immigration. The internal migration direction in Turkey is mainly from rural to urban. The main factors that cause people to move in that way are the agricultural lands that are destroyed by inheritance, the reduced need for agricultural labor along with increased mechanization, the people who want to provide better education opportunities for their children, the attraction of modern, vibrant and colorful life in cities and the terrorism.

Further to the migration from the rural to urban, the woman has started to take part in working life. As a result, the transition from crowded families to core families, the unfairness in income distribution, the

reluctance and the inability to compete with the big city's culture and the degeneration in culture have brought in scene the phenomenon of the street children and amplified it. In the provinces such as Istanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Bursa and Adana, the problem of increasing squatting due to the immigration has maximized the number of children moving away from the control of their families, which has caused the children to be pushed to the streets [1]. One of the prominent features of immigration to Adana is that the majority of the incoming population is far from professional skills. The concept of street children emerges from reasons such as financial impossibilities, poverty, unemployment, low standard of living, problems of adaptation to the culture of the city, confusion of identity, and dissolution of families [2].

Despite its development, Adana cannot respond adequately to the needs of the crowded population due to the internal migration movements and faces various problems in social and human fields. Nevertheless, it continues to be a center of attraction due to the fact that it is an organized industrial zone because of its agricultural and industrial development. The tendency to increase of the unemployment rate despite the high growth rate indicates the necessity of

an analysis of income distribution at the local level. At this point, the importance of how income distribution is made at the local level is itself defined. The main problem of the urban structure of Adana is that the current economic production is not distributed homogeneously to population groups. This situation is reflected negatively as the immigrants increase and accumulate. The children of predominantly immigrant families who live mainly in slums are working in the streets because of financial support and contributions to the family budget, for rescuing their lives, for paying the debts of the elders, for fulfilling their personal needs, and also they are forced to labor. Their education processes are so interrupted. Children working on the streets usually perform begging, paper-glass-plastic collecting, shoe dyeing, sales (paper handkerchief, gum, water, pretzels etc.), weighing, carriage in the market place and car window wiping. Approximately 32% of the street children working in the province of Adana consist of garbage collectors [4].

Although the number of street children in Turkey is not known precisely, some sources indicate that about 40 thousand children live on the street. It is believed that this number is actually much higher. In the "Living and/or Working Children on the Streets" report published by UNICEF in 2007, it is estimated that the number of children living or working on the streets in Turkey has reached to 80,000 [3].

Throughout the world, the countries where street children expose a large-scale problem are generally the ones with low economic development. The concept of street children is not a concept that the world has just met. Especially in the 1980s, the appearance of street children has increased in the public opinion agenda. However, the continuity of the problem is caused by the inability of preventing the poverty and the income unjustified distribution. The government agencies and non-governmental organizations that try to produce solutions to the ever-growing street child problem are inadequate in studies made or to be made for the benefit of street children, because of the insufficient number of these organizations and a lack of human and financial resources. Therefore, the society needs contribution and participation of the institutions or the people personally.

The aim of this study is to identify the problems of children working in the urban area in the city of Adana and to provide some suggestions eliminate these problems. It is also to make suggestions for the individuals living in the urban area in Adana province to reveal to express their thoughts about children working in the streets and to change the negative perception of street children in the society.

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

The main material of the study is the data obtained from the questionnaires applied to the people

living in the urban area of Adana province. Despite the fact that Adana is being selected as a place of work and its population is getting crowded due to internal migration movements, Adana is not responding adequately and faces various social and human problems. It continues to be the center of attraction due to its being an industrial zone and agricultural and industrial development. The main problem of the urban structure of Adana is that the current economic production is not distributed homogeneously to the population groups. This is reflected to the immigrants in a negatively increasing and accumulating manner. As already mentioned, Adana is getting the unqualified labor force while emigrating the qualified workforce. In the light of this numerical data, Adana is also a favorite among street children because of its especially mild climate.

Before putting the questionnaire into practice, the children and the individuals working on the streets were observed. A conversation with some children and individuals were done and the previously applied were examined. It was also determined at the same time and before the necessary permissions were applied that a survey should be planned with the street children to check if they have an intention or not for participating in the informal conversations with the sellers who came near the researchers in the social environment. Previous work has not been included in this scope of the study because they stated that they had friends who joined this study before but they were not approved by their parents. For this reason they mentioned that they do not want to participate in this research. However, continuous observations were made and noted by the researchers throughout the study period. Findings from observations made are also included.

One of the significant characteristic of the immigration to Adana is the fact that the proportion of the people remains far from vocational skills. In having qualified immigration and giving unqualified immigration, Adana is among the top 10 cities within the scope of Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies "Immigration in Turkey and 14 Provinces (Provinces that allowed the migration) in the Population Survey that has been moved" [5]. Address-Based Population Registration System data between 2014-2015 indicates 52,647 migrants to Adana with a net migration rate of -5,3.

The individuals who participated in the study were identified by simple random sampling, because the chances of working with the whole population were low. The questionnaire forms have been applied in the neighborhoods where the presence of the street children was intense. The following formula has been used to calculate the sample size to represent all individuals living in urban areas in Adana:

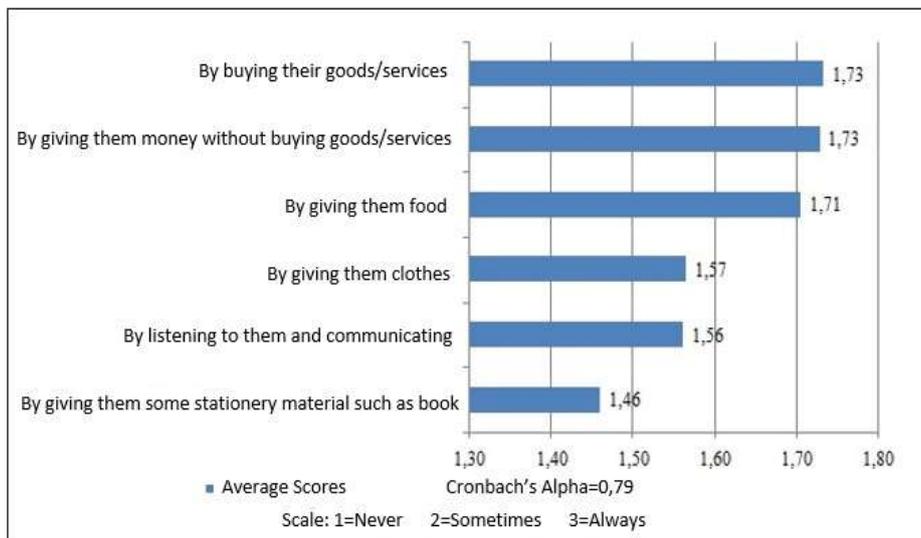
$$n = \frac{p \cdot (1 - p)}{(e/Z)^2}$$

n = Sample volume  
 p = the frequency of the observed event  
 e = rate of error  
 z = the confidence interval.

Based on the highest value of p (1-p), the error rate is assumed to be 5% and the confidence interval is 95%, finally reaching 384 in the formula.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The average age of the participating individuals is 35, and 49.2% of them are women. 33% of the participants had a university degree and 48.7% are married. 30,5% of the individuals have 3 or more children. Individuals have different ways of supporting street children. As it can seen in Figure 1, most important ones are; by buying children’s goods/services, by giving them money without any purchase, and giving them some food. Some of them prefer to give clothes and stationery materials such as book.



**Fig-1: Ways of supporting children who work on the street**

The very main reason for purchasing of goods/services from street children is the thought that they are in need of help. Although the reasons for buying children's products vary for individuals, the main ones are; to give children some financial support, sensation of pity for children, and to contribute their

education. Among the causes of purchasing goods/services from street children, fear is influential at low levels. The goods purchased usually do not contain the reason for the need. Furthermore, it is not observed an aim of getting rid of seller children by buying their goods/services, in society at large (Fig-2).



**Fig-2: Reasons for receiving goods and services from street children**

Some of main the reasons of individuals for not getting anything from the street children are that; not to approve of and encourage children to work on streets, and not to support migration, rural to urban. On

the other hand, it is observed that the percentage of those who do not shop from street children is very low because most of the individuals do not care about street children (Fig-3).

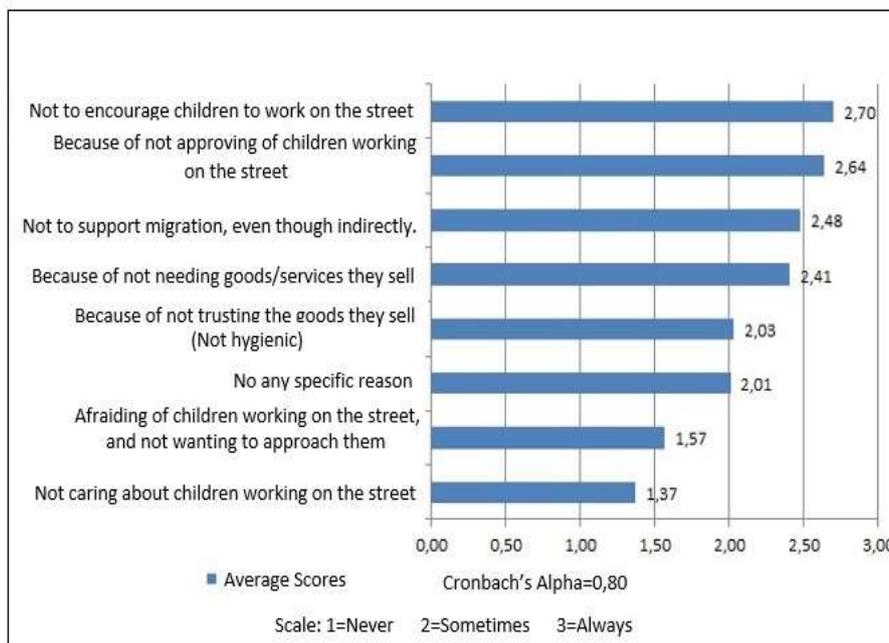


Fig-3: Reasons for not receiving goods and services from street children

Street children can be seen everywhere. Places where street children are seen most commonly are, traffic lights, parks and in front of mosques. Moreover;

market places, minibus stops, cafeterias and restaurants are among the places where they are sometimes encountered (Fig-4).

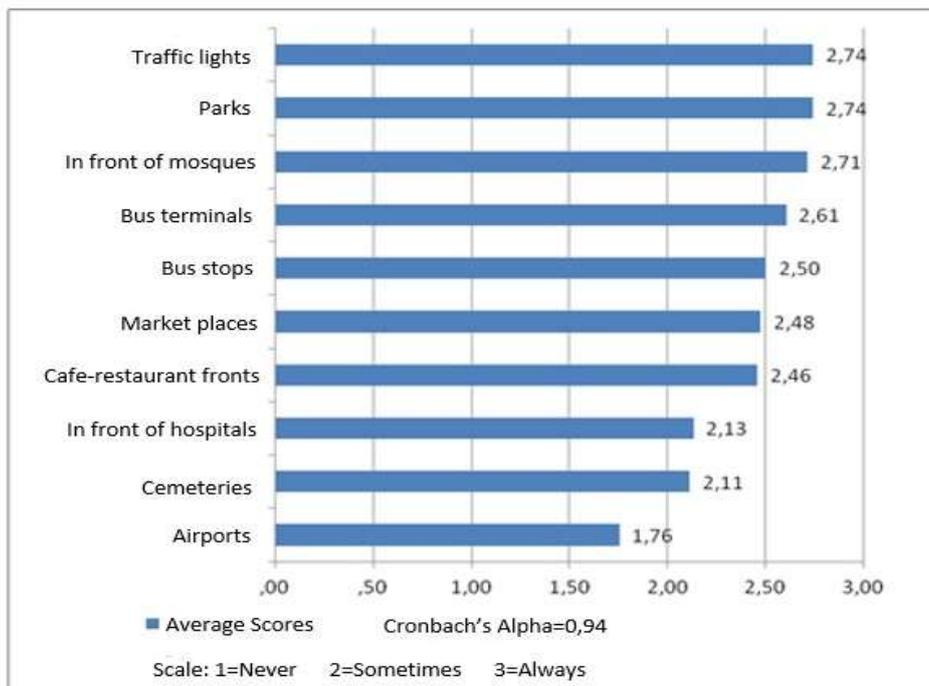


Fig-4: Places where street children are seen most commonly

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

For the children working on the street, there exists a worry throughout the society. The notion of reducing by law and legislation the number of children working on the street dominates the society in general. The notion that the number of children working on the streets is inversely proportional to the level of community development is evident. The main reason behind the problem of these children is poverty, and migration from rural to urban areas. The level of poverty across the country and the multiplicity of children working on the streets remain in parallel. Poverty is a general feature of the mentioned children and their families. The street children, who are members of poor families having many sons and daughters, are considered to contribute to family budgets when they earn money in the streets. The main causes of workout of the children on the street overtake supporting family income, saving money, being in need to work by the family pressure, supplying personal needs, supporting for family debt payments, job and vocational learning.

The idea of financial support of the children working on the streets to their families is widespread throughout society. The thought that children are forced to work on the streets is widely accepted. In public, the children working on the streets are perceived not as those who earn by working but as those who are begging and earning unrequited benefits. It is conceived that their families would not increase their income levels with the aid of the children earnings by working in the street.

As a result of the fieldwork, it has been determined that the families of children working on the streets are uneducated and they should be trained first. The lack of education is a common problem both for street children and their families. The idea of increasing the quantity of educational activities is widespread, considering the contribution of the education of children working in streets to a solution. The children working on the streets are a problem in their immediate surroundings and in society as well as in their own. In this context, they are considered as a social problem.

Despite the growing problem of street children, a lack of human and financial resources and a low level of awareness of social perception lie at the bottom of the basis of the inadequacy of the relevant governmental institutions and civil society organizations for the solutions.

The children working in streets are exposed to the danger of acquiring harmful habits as a result of the high-risk environments they are in. Working on the streets without any superiors; they are open to get into the bad habits such as smoking, alcohol, drugs (volatile) substances and they usually use them. The children working in streets in many difficult conditions are the

targets of the crime and terrorist organizations because of the weaknesses in their family ties and the difficulties in keeping their records.

The street children from patriarchal, crowded, fragmented and poor families in which domestic violence and abuse are widespread, can escape from their home after an intense pressure and decide to live on the streets. As a result of the observations, the street children generally have distressed psychology. It has been observed that the loved-ones with strong family ties are more psychologically resistant than others mentioned above.

The child working on the street and the child working with a master craftsman are not equated by the society. The child working in the field and the child working in the street are not the same either. For the society, the main risks that street children may face are nutritional deficiencies and illnesses. The threats of extortion and poisoning are in the last place.

Instead of going down to the crux of the problem of these children's situation, it has been found that the people have approached superficially this problem by making money or buying the product/service they have sold. One of the main reasons of the people's support (purchasing what they sell) is their sense of pity. It is determined that the fear factor is in its lowest level for whom buying goods and service from street children while it remains in the highest level for those who do not get anything from them. It has been found that street children are mostly seen in traffic lights and parks, and rarely in more controlled and remote places such as airport / cemeteries.

The following suggestions were developed as a result of the findings obtained, the observations made on the streets and the time spent with the children working on the street.

It has been observed that the main reason of the workout of the street children are the economic stresses experienced by their families and it is considered that giving a job to one of the family members will contribute to solve the problem.

In order to prevent the increase of the number of the children working in streets, augmenting the penal sanctions imposed on their families is a must. Legal arrangements should be made to prevent violence and abuse against street children; punishments within the scope of deterrence should be increased.

The local authorities (the muhtars) must be assigned to listen to the problems of the street children. Therefore, the data flow to the related institutions by recording the problems provides for the availability to get clearer and more accurate informations. These further informations received lead to more actions and

solution proposals can be developed. The government granting privileges (tax exemption, improvement of credit facilities, debt restructuring etc.) to private and legal entities are necessary for the institutions and organizations contributing to the protection of street children.

The relation with their schools of these street children who are working in the streets and still continuing their education should be examined. Necessary precautions should be taken and enhancing attractiveness should be supplied to increase their adaptation to the school. Educational expenses for street children who have lost their school life due to economic difficulties should be catered and any scholarships should be provided. The effectiveness of educational activities for street children can be improved by the search, creation and implementation of alternative education methods.

Playgrounds for their mental and physical development can be increased by identifying neighborhoods where they live intensively. Vocational courses and employment opportunities should be enhanced for their families with no employment opportunities.

Cultural and artistic activities such as cinema, theater, exhibitions must be organised for free for children working on the street. Free training opportunities should be created in artistic areas such as theater, music and painting. On one hand, while rehabilitation services are being provided, on the other hand they must be presented with an environment in which they can express themselves. It may be more appropriate to give more practical training to these children who are not accustomed to discipline so that effective results can be obtained from those who are fulfilled with work training and vocational training courses. The families of the children working in the streets are usually those individuals who have migrated from the rural to the urban. In order to prevent irregular migration, the educational and dissemination activities for children and young people in the rural area should be increased and economic and social facilities should be augmented so that they can stay in their local areas. Inexpensive public housing taken as bumpers, being as immovable personal properties in Adana's districts that allow intense immigration and where inspections can be made to prevent sales and renting should be constructed. Also within the same regions, creating employment opportunities in state-subsidized factories and businesses, which are not profit-intensive, and if necessary which can operate at a loss can lead to a solution. It should be taken preventive measures with strict supervision and new legal regulations to the problem of informal employment and informal intermediate staff in the city, which makes immigration attractive. The street children living in disadvantaged environments with regards of the lack of sanitary

conditions are needed to make legal arrangements that will facilitate their access to health care. Also, street children who are more likely to be involved in crimes and are to have infectious diseases must be taken under control by the reason of community security. And for this reason, it is necessary to adopt bio-identity application because of the frequent occurrence of cases shows they do not carry an identity card.

Any media tools need to be used to raise public awareness and to support for resolution. Public spots can be broadcasted across the country and local media can be used for regional problems (billboards, brochures, posters, etc.). The number of the communication channels can be increased. Free call centers can be established, which are connected to local networks.

An effective registration system must be established in order to be sure that they meet the basic needs of security, nutrition and shelter. Many rehabilitation, meeting and gathering centers for street children should be opened and widespread under the control of the social workers. In order to meet the needs for accommodation and protection, shelters must be constructed where children working on the streets can spend the night.

Finally, bureaucratic and legal obstacles need to be softened in order to carry out more scientific researches on street children. The education and publication studies should be carried out to raise awareness of their families on the destructive effects of working on the street.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The current study was supported by the Scientific Research Projects Administration Unit of Cukurova University.

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