Chapter 13

Psychosocial Intervention Studies for Street Children with Substance Abuse

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ABSTRACT

The chapter made an attempt to review the literature and describes various interventions available for street children. The current chapter enlists all the intervention activities carried out for this group. Method of the study followed web based literature review (secondary data) using pubmed, Ebsco, Psyinfo, like on by using key words such as street children, substance abuse, motivation, intervention like on. Totally about 300 studies had been found out which discussed about street children. Among them the reviewers had chosen important studies for review purpose. Studies were discussed under the subthemes of concept of street children, prevalence of street children, reasons for on the street, street life and ways of coping with stress, substance abuse among street children, intervention carried out with street children and substance abuse, suggestions and conclusion. Conclusion: The discussed psychosocial intervention in the chapter are well proven in the general population and effectively tried with street children.

INTRODUCTION

The present society which is the transitory from rural to the urbanization is facing lot of new challenges like HIV/AIDS, sanitation problem, environmental pollution, infrastructure along with many new types of social problems such as detached families, single parent families, street children, elderly people dislocation from family are different from the traditional problems of racism, castism, gender discrimination, population escalation, poverty etc. Among all the present social problems providing various psychosocial interventions for single parents, detached families, street children, old age problems are the need of the hour and all the governments in the world are trying their level best to minimize these problems. Street children are more vulnerable and there is a huge need to address this issue. Children are the future
citizens of any country and if they are on the streets, they will not get the adequate love and affection, education, values etc which makes them to be the burden of the country. Hence, there is a great need to address the issues of street children.

The limited and insufficient studies done so far on street children show that, the problem is increasing at an alarming rate. It is worsened by some factors such as economic crisis, displacement caused by war and political instability, rapid and uncontrolled urbanization. Studies show that, there are a large number of children working in the cities and major towns. A number of factors push these children to work on the streets. In the developing countries like India, the problems are rural to urban migration, unemployment, broken families, parents scolding, beating, alcoholic parents, poverty, orphan, fought with parents, step mother problem, stolen money from home etc., whereas in the developed countries they are victims of alienation and systematic exclusion (BOSCO, 1998; World Health Organization [WHO], 1993; Agnelli, 1986).

Some children come to the streets seeking better lifestyle but the condition makes their life still shoddier. Studies show that, many of the children work on the streets in all the weather conditions without proper shelter and clothing. Many of them suffer from different illnesses, drop out of school or compromise their education itself. Furthermore, these children suffer from abuses by different people including employers and street gangs. Due to poverty, the children do not get proper food and their housing condition will be very poor. Due to various reasons, there is a high chance of these children vulnerable to all kind of exploitation. It may be physical, economical, emotional, psychological and sexual. Peer pressure and use of substances in streets among the street children is common and it is a part of the street life. In spite of living on the streets due to the nature of work they do and lack of protection, they are vulnerable to all kinds of high risk behaviours. Substance abuse is a major concern in these children and it is evident that, majority of the street children use some kind of psychoactive substance.

NEED AND SCOPE OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter made an attempt to review the literature and describes various interventions available for street children. The chapter enlists all the intervention activities carried out for this group. As treating this group is challenging, understanding this group and planning an intervention requires special knowledge. This chapter also bridges the gap and helps to the mental health professionals, activists, Non Govt. Organization [NGO] personnel to have comprehensive idea on available intervention activities for this group.

METHOD

The chapter followed web based literature review (secondary data) using pubmed, Ebsco, Psyinfo, and other search engines by using key words such as street children, substance abuse, motivation, intervention like on. Along with web based literature, other available secondary sources were also reviewed for the purpose. Totally about 300 studies had been found out which discussed about street children. Among them the reviewers had chosen important studies for review purpose. Studies were discussed under the subthemes of concept of street children, prevalence of street children, reasons for on the street, street life and ways of coping with stress, substance abuse among street children, intervention carried out with street children and substance abuse, suggestions and conclusion.