Research on the Education of Children Working in the Streets

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at resolving working conditions of children working in the streets and the relationship between the deprivations of education based on the educational situation. In this context, the demographic characteristics of children working in the streets, educational experiences, future perceptions, life expectations and how to include social mobility provided from education was the main focus. This study group consists of seventy-eight (78) children working in the streets in Istanbul in the years 2013 to 2014. The research is a qualitative study in the scan type. Children interviewed were determined using appropriate purposeful sampling techniques. For data analysis, content analysis method was used. According to the findings, a significant proportion of children working in the streets are between the ages of 11 to 15 and males who come from families in lower socio-economic levels, are leaving schools due to financial difficulties, failures, war, not enjoying school, having to work and the fact that their family does not want them to work etc. A large number of children attending school (46 people) stated that they had failed the school. Children who do not carry on their education in order to contribute to their family income often remain outside the educational system. According to the statements of the children, it is figured out that the desire to support their families is not restricted. It is seen that some of these children have plans to support their families for the future. However, having income-generating jobs require certain level of education. Yet, as it is known in this case, the majority of children cannot fulfill their dreams and they will be disappointed in the future.

Key words: Children working in the street, right to education, educational expectations.

INTRODUCTION

In the words, especially from the 1980s, both child labor and street children phenomenon has greatly become area of interest (Droz, 2006: 349-363). Street children working or to be worked in the streets in under-developed and developing countries accelerate social and economic problems, such as unemployment and poverty (Peralta, 1992; Aptekar, 1998; Swart, 1990). Children living in poverty and their families have to work in the streets under difficult circumstances to survive. The fact that children are used as a means of commercial sexual exploitation, slave labor, organ mafia of various segments revealed the most severe consequences of child poverty.

Here, it can be stated that children growing up deprived of social security face crime and violence with ease while they are having difficulties in accessing basic social resources such as health care and education (Içli and Arıkan, 2007: 37).

According to International contracts, The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child (Item 9) contains children protection against all kinds of oppression and exploitation. Children cannot be the subject of any trade. Before a minimum age, children cannot be worked for any job. However, according to (IPEC) 2010 datas of International Programme of the Elimination of Child
Labour, the number of working children in the age group 5 to 17 years was estimated to be approximately 215 million worldwide (Diallo et al., 2010; ILO, 2006). More than 90% of them are in underdeveloped countries, particularly in Africa and South Asia (crutches and Baydar, 1991: 125).

In researches done in developing countries where child labor is widespread, the vast majority of children working is approximately 70% in agriculture, fisheries and forestry jobs and the rest work in hazardous and dangerous jobs such as mining and quarrying and manual labor, selling, tourism labor, home services, transportation, storage and manufacturing (Ilo, 2010). According to the datas of TSI-2012, 893.000 children between the ages of 6 to 17 are working in Turkey (SIS, 2013). It has been identified that 44.7% of children working are in agriculture, 24.3% in industry and 31% of them are involved in the service sector and 50.2% of children who are working do not go to school (Gold, 2000: 296).

Unequal distribution of income, economic growth, imbalances in employment conditions, failure, migration, population growth, not benefiting from educational facilities have led to children participating in the labor market created in the street (Açıklakın, 2008; Alpen, 2011; Women's, 2006; Axeman, 2011; Koksal, 1992; Atauz, 1997).

In Turkey, along with poverty which emerged as a result of unfair distribution of income, a significant amount of society finds its way together with children participating in working life (Stick, 1994: 25; Hard: 1997: 12; Küçükkalay et al., 2000: 108 -109). These children work in the streets with long-term jobs, such as selling of chewing gum, water, bubble, selling pretzels, shoe shiners, porterage, picking up trash, selling flowers, inadequate feeding, carrying heavy loads and exposure to a variety of accidents. Children are working in environments and conditions that are open to physical and sexual abuse. Children working in the street often come face to face with the police and the city police; they are treated badly by different individuals, join street gangs and can be used as objects of destruction that is, as thugs. Children working in hazardous environments of the street often are forced to leave school, run away from home where their family’s problems are increased and spend quality time on the streets. It is known that working children generally comprise of those who have been pushed beyond compulsory educational system for different reasons.

However, the only reason for this isolation is not poverty. In addition, it is also observed that the society is becoming insecure and reluctant against educational institutions with a variety of reasons (Baştay, 1990). It is seen that sometimes parents approach their children from a pessimistic point of view because they are worried about their future. Problems, such as poor households for education to devote resources are limited, the training of accessibility problems in the education system to expectations does not respond, school related issues (training future returns non-educational content, motivating non-educational content, discrimination, labeling, school failure, school liking, school dropouts and not split) make children alienate from school thereby leading to the problem of working children. These children from school remaining at times and sometimes during school hours in the streets doing various jobs while earning money working and in doing so, the age required by training is not enough (Dessy and Knowless, 2008; Tezcan, 1997: 159).

These children working in the streets try to earn money by doing various jobs in the rest of time from school and sometimes during school hours and while doing so, they cannot benefit enough from the education, which has to be taken in their age (Dessy and Knowless, 2008; Tezcan, 1997: 159). Due to poverty, family’s not meeting the child’s educational expenses prevents children from attending school; not receiving adequate training makes children to be unequipped and future low-income adults and unskilled labor in the future like their family members (Caesar-Leo, 1999; Goulart and Bedi, 2007). The environments which children grow in at an early age and the quality of education provided to the child indicates future success and therefore, determines significantly the quality of life (Setter, 1994; Senemoğlu, 2001; Hero, 2009).

Children benefiting from at least primary education known as the basic is the most important period in which basic knowledge, skills and habits are gained as well as, being a stage where both individual educational experiences and general life are initiated. According to the 1739 National Education Basic Law, one of the the overall objective of Turkish National Education is to prepare individuals for life by developing their knowledge, skills and behaviors in order to acquire the habit of doing business and to provide them a profession that will make them happy and contribute to the happiness of society.

However, despite these laws, working children who spend most of their time working in the streets are unable to study as they return home tired and likely to be excluded from friends, thus having the disadvantage of not achieving these aims. Therefore, inequality and other problems that comes together within children's general school life goes on.

In Article 42 of the Constitution, "no one shall be deprived of education and training. Primary education is compulsory for all male and female citizens, and state schools are free of charge "(Eyes, 2008: 34). Education, at least at the stage of primary education should be free of charge. According to the conditions of equality, education should be provided to the child so as to increase the general culture, skills, and develop a sense of moral and social and become a useful member of society.

According to the datas of TUIK (2006), while 84.7% of working children "continue to have a school, 15.3% of them are not attending school. Number of working children in the 6-17 age group is 958 thousand people at the rate 5.9% of 16 million 264 thousand children in the 6-17 age group and is working at an economic job (958
thousand people). According to a study conducted by Goulart and Bedi (2007), an hour to work in any job for a child lowers his academic success with four percent (4%). Child every hour by working increases the probability of dropping out of school at the rate of 1.6%.

Children who attend school at least 6 hours per day will stay away from the negative effects of street in the course of keeping going to school in addition to receive education. It is necessary from the point of social, economic, human rights and equality of opportunity, to protect children working on the streets from neglect and abuse of all kinds, to ensure fully benefit from educational right. Abolishing poverty which is the the basic reason for children’s working, also ensuring children to use educational right and to remove the obstacles the use of this right are among the responsibilities of state.

In Turkey, even though the problems of children working on the streets is a social problem and occupy the country’s agenda for many years, this problem has not seen enough interest in the world of academia. When we look at the works done in this area, very few studies are found. In particular, although some research regarding the dimension of education of children working in the streets, there is no study to meet their educational expectations. In this study, the reason for the selection of Istanbul Province is that Istanbul is one of the major metropoles which have the most important industrial and commercial centers in the nation, intense migration and population density is high.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to analyze the relationship between severe working and living conditions and deprivation of education of the children living in the street and at compulsory education ages based on educational attainment. In this context, the following questions were sought; socio-demographic characteristics of children working in the streets, the reasons for working in the street, work experiences in the street and educational status are found out. The study concentrates on the criteria which are necessary for meeting children’s expectations from the education which is social mobility vehicle. Also it focuses on the factors which are essential for the inclusion of the social security system together with children’s families.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research sample

The research is a descriptive study. Descriptive survey model is a study model to determine the specific characteristics of a group aimed at collecting data (Büyüköztürk et al., 2009: 16) An analysis of the educational status of children by the researcher prepared a questionnaire, was administered to children working on the streets. Children interviewed appropriate purposive sample (Kümbetoğlu, 2005: 98) was determined using the technique. An questionnaire form, prepared by the researcher, was carried out children working in the streets to analyze children’s educational status. Children interviewed were determined by using the technique of appropriate purposeful sampling. (Kümbetoğlu, 2005: 98).

Participants

In this research, the participants consist of 78 children working in the streets of Istanbul Province in 2013 to 2014 academic year. When creating participants, purposeful sampling was followed as it represents all research universe and determined criteria that are considered important for the selection (Bonell’s Eagle and the Lion, 2001). In qualitative research, sample group is small in order to study sampling in depth. Therefore, instead of selecting a random sample, purposive sampling is preferred (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Data collection tool

Detailed literature survey is conducted by the researcher to obtain in-depth knowledge about the subject of study and the instruments were obtained through open-ended, semi-structured questionnaire formed as a result of survey. Regarding comprehensibility of open-ended questions prepared in compliance with research purposes, the questions are examined by a testing and evaluation specialist and a pedagog in Faculty of Education at Ankara University and the necessary arrangements have been made in accordance with recommendations. By means of prepared interview form, thoroughly face to face interviews were carried out.

The validity and reliability

Validity and reliability are the most commonly used measure in terms of scientific researches’ credibility of the results. Reports of collected datas in detail and researcher’s explanation on how to reach the conclusions are among the most important criteria on the validity of a qualitative research (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006: 255-257). The data in the survey, are encoded to ensure the validity of this study and along with generating themes, all of the data obtained from participants are included in the findings section. Apart from the researcher, the research data were examined by an expert in the fields of educational sciences and qualitative research to ensure the reliability of research. Inter-coder reliability analysis was implemented on the obtained themes. Codes and themes
determined accordingly, this comparison results were found to be similar in the ratio of 95%. For reliability, the formula which is Reliability = Consensus / Consensus + Dissidence X 100 is applied on the coding made by the researcher and readers (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Data collection and analysis

Content analysis technique was used in the analysis of the research data. Content analysis is interpreting of similar data around specific concepts and themes brought together, in an understandable way by organizing data (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). Concepts that are relevant for each question were identified by examining the data relating children’s educational status. These concepts were encoded and tested by two investigators. Common themes are presented as research findings on the basis of reviving codes. The contents as a result of the content analysis of data obtained are as follows: age, gender and family related characteristics of children working in the street, the children of war and migration, the children of unemployed and poor families, child labour and exploitation, labour and poverty, “to become rich”, "to work and to get rid of", "study and not living childhood", poverty and lack of education, reasons for dropout.

Age, gender and family related characteristics of children working in the street

According to findings of the study, it is seen that more than four-fifths of the group (81%) are male and approximately one fifth of the group (9%) are female. It is obviously seen that a significant part of the children is male. It stems from the reason that street work has distinctive qualities and working is generally accepted as a characteristic of men. When distribution related to the age of the participants is examined, it is seen that more than half of the group is in 11 to 15 (64%) age range, group, one in four is in 7 to 10 (25%) age range. Taken the total of children who are in 7 to 10 and 11 to 15 in age range into consideration, the majority of the children consist of primary and secondary school students. The overall number of these children in their families ranges from four to seven (4 to 7). Having more children, and the responsibility for meeting the basic needs such as their care, feeding, dressing and inability to meet their demands make children drag into the labor market at a young age. In particular, a significant proportion of children (48.7%) of them have more than 4 siblings (48.7%) and a significant portion has 7 or more siblings (31.6%).

Children of unemployed and poor families

Parents are very poor because they could not find work in urban environment or earnings is less if they can find temporary work, without social security, as a result, their children undertake significant responsibility for the livelihood of their family. The mother of more than half of the children who participate in the conversation are unemployed (68.4%); the mother of six children work a cleaning work (7.9%); the mother of two children work a seasonal work. As for the father of street children, they generally have temporary work with less money. The father of sixteen children are seasonal workers (21.1%); the father of fifteen children work continuous jobs (19.7); the father of nine are self-employed (18.4%); the father of seven children work as peddler; four are unemployed (5.3%). As to income distribution, thirty-two of them (42.1%) did not mention their income. The monthly income of seventeen children's family is below minimum wage (22.4%); nine of them is between 700 to 1000 lira (11.8%); two of them is between 1000 to 2000 (2.6%). Both the father and the mother of street children work in jobs with lower incomes. Therefore, this fact seems to be livelihood strategy of the child’s labour. Due to the fact that good jobs and high income requires high education, it was found out that the father of nine children (11.8%) is a primary school graduate. The father of fourteen children is a literate (18.4%); the father of forty-eight children is an illiterate (63.2%). Furthermore, as the mother of eight children is a literate (10.5%); the mother of fifty-nine children are not literate (77.6%), the mother of six children is a primary school graduate (7.6%), while the mother of one child is middle school graduate (1.3%).

Child labour and exploitation

When examined the daily gain of the children who participated in this study, twenty children (26.3%) earn ten or twenty lira a day; thirteen children (17.1%) earn money below ten liras; ten earn between 20 to 30 (13.2%); one child earns 30 lira (1.3%).They can survive based on diet. Thirty-eight of these children (42.9%) say that they
work every day. Ten children (12.2%) work 4 to 5 days a week; eleven children (12.1%) work at the weekends. These children are generally vulnerable; in other words, they are deprived of the protection of their family or the environment. In terms of the amount of working hours of the children who participated in the study, it was found out that thirty-six of them (40.9%) work more than eight hours; thirteen children (14.8%) between 6 to 8 hours and nine children (10.2%) 3 to 5 hours every day. Working hours of the children range from 3 to 8 hours. Sometimes this becomes double. They generally do physical work and as such they frequently get injured. Most children work in crowded places in very bad conditions for whole day. The amount of work they have to do is determined by their families since they have to earn money to support their families. As a result, they have to sell their goods insistently to the customers. When we look at the children's profile, they sell water, begels, band-aid, flowers, they make shoe shining, clean car windshield, play the flute and collect garbage etc. These jobs do not require physical power.

**Work and poverty**

All family members who are capable work in all kinds of jobs; they can find jobs in the labor market, and they usually work in temporary and low-paid jobs to fight poverty. Children see this situation as "to contribute to the family". Participants who have been interviewed recounted in this subject as follows;

A large number of children (37) working in the streets expressed that "to contribute to my family", 7 children stated "because my parents forced", nine kids expressed that to meet school and my own expenses", three children stated "I'm working because of poverty", two children stated "desire to earn money" and one child stated "to gain profession and life experience". Children stated why they work in the street with these phrases.

In the aforementioned expression, the child undertakes the role of an adult who providing income to his family. It is understood from the other children's expressions that the desire to help their families seems not to be limited to just now. Some of the children seem to have also future plans to help their families. The following example is a striking one revealing the extent of the responsibility children felt for their families. I would like to be a Prime Minister to represent the country, that is good to have a right to speak about everything (Dogan, 16): I'd like to be a cop and I would not interfere with the children like us, I would ignore them (Haider, 10): We have Tayfur brother in the neighborhood, I would like to be like him. The man has money, he has everybody around him and all the young people are in his service. (Sadik, 11): I would like to be a lawyer, there are too many guiltilies and I want to be a lawyer to get them punished. (Kamil, 15): I wanted to be a good teacher like my teacher. I really love her as she behaved very well to me; she always took my pen and book; thanks to her. (Moonlight, 12): I do any work except for working in the streets, if I read in fact; I will become a very successful man. (Erhan, 12): I wanted to be a businessman. I want to be like those rich ones (Peters, 11).

To hold these professions requires a certain level of education. However, as it is well known, these children do not continue their education as they work in difficult conditions and they often remain outside of the education system. In this case, the vast majority of children can not realize their dreams and they will be disappointed in the future.

**Being rich**

Children living in severe living conditions which stem from poverty answered the question of "What do you want to do at most?" as "Being Rich". Considering their "suffering" from the poverty, this demand arises in a natural way as the antidote of poverty, unfortunately.

They expressed wealth and it results by phrases, such as "We get a nice home. I would like my father to behave a little bit better. (Sümayra, 14): I would like to earn a lot of money. Thus, my mom does not yell at me. (Torun-15): I would like to have a lot of cars and travel countries alone. (Yetkin, 14): I would like to have a beautiful life with my family. (Nowruz-13): I’d like to have money. I want to be like my friends at school (Nida, 15). Some of the replies for what they say about how to become rich is actually disturbing.

Some children answered like these; I want to be a footballer (Efraim, 11). I want to be the boss at a place to earn a lot of money (Peace-14) and then, one child says "I would like to gamble (Ilhan, 12). These children who are exposed to struggle belong to rich life.

**"Not to work and live childhood"**

Children living in poverty lack living in necessary financial resources in terms of growth and development; therefore, they cannot benefit from the most basic human rights. In children's narrative, Celal expressed "Having enough money not to work; I do not want to work after school." These stands out exhaustion and weariness stem from working. The request for living childhood is quite evident in the expressions of some children: I want to go on vacation during semester and summer holidays (Ömer, 15). I want to go to stadium for Galatasaray match, lying down, sleeping for days or going to match (Yusuf, 12). I want to be with with my parents, going to amusement park with my parents and my brothers (Mert, 15). I want to ride bumper car and I want to buy new clothes (Mustafa, 14). I want to play at a café in a street where I aspire (Khalil, 12). I want to hurt those who mistreat me (Irfan, 13). I want to have my own computer and after doing my homework
would play games (Hifzi, 12). The burdens of living conditions have led children to different pursuits. Changing the location stands out in this quest. These children's "escape" is seen as liberation: I want to return to Syria (Asif, 14). I want to go to Paris. Everyone laughs at me when I stated this, still I want to go because it looks very nice from the television (Right, 12).

Poverty and education/lack of education

The children of poor families were forced to leave school after primary school depending on the severe poverty rate. Considering the level of education regarding the distribution, the rate of those who do not attend school (Primary School Dropout, Primary School Graduate, Secondary School Dropout, Secondary School Graduate and High School Dropout) consists of more than half of the group (52%). The proportion of those who are still attending school (primary and secondary) is nearly half of the group (45%). This shows that more than the half of the children living in the street cannot continue with their education. This leads to the withdrawal of children from the employment area which is rapidly changing and needing more training in the developing world.

Dropout reasons

A significant number of children working in the streets have left school due to several reasons. These reasons are listed as follows: Financial difficulties, failure, dislike of school, reluctance of families, being obliged to work and war. Although the children living in the street said that they had left school due to failure and dislike of school and the education system demands a certain amount of money from them. Earning this money leads to the children living in the street to work in difficult conditions. Children are unable to continue their classes because of untimely and heavy work in streets. Therefore, they fail and prefer to work completely in the streets, while majority of the children attending school (46 people) stated that they had failed in school, 17 children stated that they had succeeded. Successful children expressed themselves as follows. I am successful in my classes because the teacher gives me chocolate all the time (Recep, 11). My school report is good and I got five eight times and succeeded when I studied (Ibrahim, 10). As to the children who identifies themselves unsuccessful; I am feeling unsuccessful, hopeless and feeling depressed (Maher, 11). I was going to school in very difficult circumstances, even if the food was not enough, the home was crowded, I did not have time for my lessons (Hussein, 14). I failed because I could not study (Mahmud, 13).

It is seen that harsh living and working conditions of children causes to lose school motivation and disinclination for school. However, some students are seen to be successful with the interest and motivation of their teachers. These children are of the opinion they could make changes in their social position through education. In the expression of children; I would love to be a great guy by studying and I would like to have my own job (Aykut, 13), studying in order not to have these difficulties (Kadir, 11). I would like to go to school like normal children (Alp, 12). I want to be a teacher and moved away. I also want my sister to marry, then they can stay with her (Erman, 14). I would like finish school and have a profession I wanted (Ridvan, 11).

Today, having a better job and income is associated with higher levels of education. By having education, street children think that they can escape from misery environment. However, when the state of these children’ access to quality education is considered through a holistic perspective, qualified educational opportunities do not seem possible due to both the opportunities of children’s family and the problems in education system. All these negative conditions coming together cause children to fail.

Conclusion

Abusing child labour and employing the children in different ways are very sad ways of exploitation. Children working in the streets in very bad conditions stem from the fact that they are disregarded from law and are open to abuse. These children are unprotective; they have also been deprived of social and political rights, education and especially right to life. These children have been outcast from society, whereas they should benefit from educational rights and they should be sent to school and play games. The demographic structure of their families, low level of education, having many children do not make it possible to see the difficulties of working conditions and the dangers they meet and to take precautions accordingly. The basic assumptions of this research and our main assumption which makes the starting point of this research is that street children's being outcast from education and together with their families' economic problems are some of the reasons why they started to work on the streets.

This study showed why children work is that they want to make contribution to their families and meet their school expenses. This makes a high proportion of why they work. The number of uneducated families who are supposed to prevent their children from working on the streets is a lot greater than educated families.

The parents job do not require qualifications, these are just daily work. The child working in the streets usually contribute to the family budget and therefore this behavior is encouraged by the family and other people. However, the number of those who did not attend school cannot be underestimated. The reason why they left the school is that they cannot afford to go to school. This is one of the
reasons why children have low expectation from education. Low expectation for education affects them negatively. The research results in other studies related to children working in the streets support the findings in this research. Kağıtçbaşi (1981) found out that when family’s income is low, more financial help is needed. According to the findings of this study the majority of the children attend their school. Working in the streets do not prevent them from attending the school, however, it generally prevents their success in the school.

Çırak and Çivitci (2004), did a study in Malatya on children working in the streets and examined their demographic and psycho-social characteristics and found out that the majority of children working on the streets came from families with many children. The reason why children work in the streets is to make economic contribution to their families whose economic conditions are bad and these families also have low education level. They also found out that working in the streets affected their success in the school in a negatively. In order to integrate these children into the society as individuals, the state and related organizations should provide financial support to the poor families and extend help to complete their basic education.

However, the number of families below poverty level is very high and they need the state’s protection. However, the state’s policy is wrong and the budget allocated for these children is limited. In this context, for the protection of all children adequate social consciousness should be developed in the society and necessary support should be provided.

As a result, under these circumstances it seems to be difficult to prevent this situation, however, by taking some precautions, the number of street children can be decreased. Uncontrolled migration to big cities can be prevented by increasing cultural and economic investments in small cities. A new protective and planned policy should be made to improve poor families’ welfare. Children working in the streets can be avoided by providing jobs for poor families. Furthermore, it can be suggested that teachers, social workers in the framework of Teacher-Parent Meetings can cooperate with families living in the slum areas. Teachers should carefully be selected for working especially in the slum areas. It is believed that qualified teachers can be effective to prevent children working in the streets by providing education.

In order to eliminate the negative viewpoint about the children who work in the streets, they must be integrated into the community. They must also be educated with other children in the same school. It is very important for the schools and the local administration to find out why children do not go to school and why they leave their school so that the necessary remedial precautions could be taken. Those children who work illegally should be integrated into the community. Rich and poor children should also be educated in the same classrooms. The school and local administration should determine the number of students who do not go to school or why they leave their school. Thus, it is important that they could take remedial measures. Instead of children’s doing illegal jobs, the financial support given to the families should be spent for these children’s education. The right of education and healthy life should be provided for these children and continual control mechanisms should also be applied.

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