

ÜNİVERSİTE ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN SOKAKTA ÇALIŞAN ÇOCUKLARA YÖNELİK YAKLAŞIMLARININ İNCELENMESİ

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ÖZ

Gençler sokakta çalışan çocuklarla günlük hayatta sıklıkla etkileşim ve iletişim halindedir. Bu noktada bu çalışmanın amacı Türkiye’de ve dünyada sokakta çalışan çocukların içinde buldukları şartların ağır, tehlikeli ve istismara açık olmasına dikkatleri çekmek ve bütün bunlara rağmen bu çocuklara karşı gençlerimizin bakışı ve duyarlılığını tespit etmektir. Ayrıca, üniversite öğrencilerinden sokakta çalışan çocukların çalışma nedenleri, mevcut durumları, beklentileri ve çözümlerinin öğrenilmesi amaçlanmaktadır. Aynı zamanda sokakta çalışan çocukların sosyal ve ekonomik koşullarını iyileştirmek bakımından politika önerileri geliştirilmiştir. Çalışma nicel nitelikte olup anket tekniğinden yararlanılmıştır. İstatistiksel değerlendirmede cinsiyet açıklayıcı değişken olarak kullanılmıştır. Çalışmanın örnekleme İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Sosyoloji Bölümü’nde okuyan ve basit rastgele örnekleme yöntemi ile seçilen 64’ü kadın ve 67’si erkek toplam 131 katılımcıdan oluşmaktadır. Katılımcıların sokakta çalışan çocuklara yönelik düşüncelerini ve önerilerini sınırlandırmamak için anket soruları içerisinde açık uçlu sorular ile kontrol sorularına yer verilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sokakta çalışan çocuklar, sosyal hizmet, çalışan çocuklar, üniversite öğrencileri

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE APPROACHES OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TOWARDS CHILDREN WORKING IN THE STREETS

ABSTRACT

Young people often interact and communicate with children working in the street in daily life. At this point, the purpose of this study is to reveal the desperate and dangerous conditions of the children working in the streets and determine young people’s attitudes towards these children, who are susceptible to exploitation in Turkey and in the world. It also aims to obtain information about university students’ views concerning these children’s reasons for working, their current conditions, their expectations from life, and university students’ suggestions for solution in this regard. At the same time, policy recommendations have been made to improve the social and economic conditions of children working in the streets. The sample of the study, which is a quantitative one, consists of 131 participants. 64 of whom are female and 67 of whom are male, and study at Istanbul University Faculty of Letters, Department of Sociology. The sample was selected by using the simple random sampling method. Open-ended questions and control questions were included in the survey questions in order not to limit the opinions and suggestions of the participants towards children working in the streets.

Keywords: Children working in the street, social work, working children, university students

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INTRODUCTION

The child, among all other living creatures, is the one who requires the longest duration of time for care, protection and love. A society's development and progression is possible only if children who are raised in this society are physically, spiritually and socially well-developed (Akçay; 2008).

The term "child" is a concept which changes according to a society's structure, culture, beliefs and its economic situation in history (1). According to Convention on The Rights of The Children, "every individual (or person) below the age of 18 is accepted as a child unless national laws set maturity at a younger age"(Akçay; 2008). According to the Child Protection Law no 5395, a person is considered a child even if he is younger than that who has not completed the age of 18 (Demir; 2012). Recently, due to an economic crisis and low level of welfare, many crises have occurred in society. One of the most important of these crises concerns children who are living under poor conditions. Those children are exposed to physical, emotional and sexual abuse. As a result, they start to use and become addicted to drugs (Topbaşı; 2004).

'Children in the street' is defined as children between the ages of 7-18 who are partially or completely deprived of their educational opportunities, working away from where they live at their own request or at the request of their parents without family support (SHÇEK, Çocuk ve Gençlik Merkezleri Yönetmeliği; 2001). Child abuse and neglect is the whole of actions or inaction done by an adult or relatives such as mother and father or caretaker, which blocks or restricts child's development and is depicted as unsuitable or detrimental by communal rules and professionals (Oral et al.; 2001, Bahar et al.; 2009). World Health Organization defines child maltreatment as "purposive or unwitting behaviors done by an adult who affects health, physical and psycho-social state of the child negatively". Abuse may occur in the form of physical, emotional, sexual and economic types of misuses (Turhan et al.; 2006, Bahar et al.; 2009).

Physical abuse, in its widest sense, can be defined as "a child's suffering an injury caused by factors other than an accident". The most frequent way is beating the child; child's getting hurt for reasons other than accidents can be prevented. This is a diagnostic definition which ranges from strict rules applied on children to torment, which continues to be repeated. This is the most visible kind of abuse that is easier to notice and the most frequently notified one in developed countries (Karatay; 2000 Retold by. Akçay; 2008, Tufan et al., 2009). Symptoms and findings can be a slap in the face or punishment methods using various objects. The most frequently observed lesions are recorded on the head, eyes, ears, skin, soft tissues, bones and ligaments and visceral organs. These attacks may result in serious conditions such as the requirement of hospitalization of the child, and they may even result in deaths. It is stated that physical abuse, along with physical traumas, may end up in psychological and social traumas. Hence, it can cause personality disorders by blocking personality development of the child (Karatay; 2000, Akçay; 2008). "If contingency and relationship between the child and the adult is used for sexual stimulation of him/her or another person, this is accepted as sexual abuse of the child. Sexual abuse may have been performed by another child if that child has substantial power or control over the other" (Karabulut, 2000; Akçay, 2008).

There are several types of child maltreatment; these are talking with the child about sex, showing the child pornographic materials, taking sexual photographs of the child and child pornography, making mocking remarks about the child's sexual development, preferences and genitalia, verbal and emotional abuse of the child's sexual environment, showing genital organs to the child, masturbating in front of the child, watching the child as he / she is naked or in a condition which may give sexual pleasure to the abuser (peeping = voyeurism), making the child witness others' sexual abuse, touching the child with sexual intentions, forcing the child to touch the abuser in a sexual sense or urging the child to masturbate the abuser, forcing the child for oral sex, violating the child with the aim of sexual pleasure, vaginal or anal intercourse with the child, using

the child as a material for prostitution, and forcing the child to have intercourse with animals (Karabulut, 2000; Akçay, 2008). Similarly, they are manipulated into taking risks, doing hazardous work and participating in political activity for obtaining food. Basic amenities like education, clothing, shelter, and medicine are less or sometimes not available to them (Wells, 2009). These street children are engaged in different works of adult people i.e. rickshaw pulling, begging, prostitution, factory work, domestic work, etc (ICDDRB, 2004).

On the other hand, one of the most common types of abuse that is seen in daily life is emotional abuse, which is defined as mother's, father's or other adults' having wishes or expectations on / from the child's skills and behave badly towards the child. This involves shouting at the child, refusing, humiliating, cursing, leaving the child alone, intimidating, menacing, not satisfying the child's emotional needs, expecting skills which are not suitable for his /her age, discriminating between siblings, not valuing him/her adequately, not caring, abusing, mocking, giving nicknames, exerting excessive pressure and authority, teaching anti-social behaviors, encouraging the child for behaviors that are not acceptable by society (teaching aggressive and non-adaptive behaviors and encouraging and providing an environment of drugs or alcohol use, antisocial behaviors like prostitution and robbery) and exhibiting over-protective manners (Akçay; 2008).

Due to the numerous reasons arising from the social, economic and cultural structure of our country, many children work in the streets. The conditions of these children, who suffer all kinds of abuse, are detrimental to their physical and psychological health. Furthermore, the increasing number of street children gives rise to grave concerns for the future of our society (Erdoğan; 2003). Making the child work in positions that block the child's development or violate the child's rights for a little amount of money is defined as economic child abuse. One of the most important problems of our contemporary societies is the problem of working children (Bahar et al.; 2009). Recently, as economic crises have deepened and the level of welfare has decreased, many problems have occurred. The most important of them involves children who are under dire conditions. Those children are exposed to physical, emotional and sexual abuse and they start using drugs (Topbaş, 2004).

There are currently more than 100 million "children working on the street" across the world (Hinton, 2006: 73-74). According to the data of World Health Organization, 40 millions of children from all over the world whose age ranges from 1 to 14 experience child abuse or neglect and are in need of support (Şimşek et al., 2004; Bahar et al., 2009). This is a great risk for children working on the streets.

According to Bronfenbrenner's approach to ecological theory, the vast majority of human developments come from the environments which they live in. Therefore, in addition to the parents, major institutions (school, house, street, playground etc.), which are the living spaces of the child and which include upper and lower layers, can help maintain a healthy ecology for the child. This also affects the physical and spiritual development of the child (Vélez-Agosto et al., 2017:901). As a global phenomenon, "street children" is one of the biggest problems that we face in big cities and even in majority of towns all around the world. These "street children" may end up with problems such as violence, kidnapping, abuse, injury, death, prostitution, instigation, drug addiction, and contagious and malignant diseases. These are caused by many factors such as poverty, abuse, media, rapid social changes, immigration, modernization, etc. (Okumuş; 2007). Today, the "working child" phenomenon is regarded as one of the most important social issues observed in transition from developing societies to developed societies, and the basis of this phenomenon is dealt with in relation to economic, social, political and other problems in the field. The meaning of child labor in urban life may vary depending on whether "working in a specific workplace" or "working in the street" (Çağlayandereli and Yetim; 2007).

In accordance with the obligations arising from being a part of international agreements and in the light of the rules and principles of our national laws, it is necessary to help these children to become a functional part of the society by supporting them in terms of their physical and psychological health and their moral development. A study conducted by Erdogan focuses on children who live and work on the streets and as a result suffer all kinds of abuses. With the concept of social state in mind, we should also discuss the type of work needed to find a solution to this problem of major social importance (Erdoğan; 2016).

Children who work on the streets differ from their peers in terms of some characteristics they exhibit. First of all, they are at risk in terms of physical, emotional, social and cognitive development due to their being on the street (Alptekin; 2011:27) . The most important factors that push children to crime are media, economic factors, and drug addiction (Tekgöz Obuz, 2019) Hence, children who work on the streets are those who have lost the protection and guidance of an adult and have made the street a home for themselves. Children on the streets are less supported by their families and have to share the family's livelihood responsibility by working in the streets and markets (Ennew, 1998: 15; Kombarakaran, 2004: 855; Akyüz, 2010: 333 -334). The crime rate among children working in streets is quite high for a considerable majority of them and their future is also at stake (Atauz; 1998:79). Even if they spend their time and days working on the streets, they are controlled by their families. Nevertheless, there is no guarantee of safety and protective measures for children working on the streets. (Güneş and Kalaycı; 2004:6).

THE METHOD OF STUDY

The main purpose of this research is to learn and examine the feelings, thoughts and approaches of university students towards street working kids.

This study was conducted through interview / interview method from qualitative data collection tools. Participants in the most commonly used interview method in qualitative research are those that convey their own perspective, feelings and perceptions to interview forms (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013).

Our study is procured with a questionnaire application and its basic segregation is grounded over gender. Attendants of the questionnaire are chosen randomly from among our sample Istanbul University Literature Faculty students, 64 of which are female and 67 of which are male. In total 131 people are reached. The main purpose of the sample group is the fact that the researcher is a student at Istanbul University Department of Sociology, and at the same time the research is very beneficial in terms of time and cost. Questions of the survey include open-ended questions in order not to limit students' ideas and suggestions about street children. Moreover, in order to provide trustworthiness, check questions are also included. The collected data were transferred to SPSS 20.0 program, frequency values and tables were created and statistical analysis was performed and interpreted.

FINDINGS

Considering the evaluation of expressions towards street children by giving priority according to their importance; first, female and male students' first three grades and orders look similar to each other when they are wanted to give priority to the issues towards street children. Statements such as "children who are forced to work because of their parents' bad habits", "Children whose parents are divorced or dead" and "children who have financial problems" are most common answers given by the attendants.

- When the evaluation of answers that are given by attendants is made by means of their priority on the issue of street children;
Females choose;
 - These are children who are forced to work due to their parents' bad habits.

- These are children whose parents are divorced or dead.
- These are children whose financial condition is bad.
- These are children who emigrated from Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia region.
- These are children who use alcohol and drugs.
- These are children who work consciously and in an organized way.

And males choose;

- These are children whose financial condition is bad.
- These are children whose parents are divorced or dead, and who have financial problems.
- These are children who are forced to work due to their parents' bad habits.
- These are children who emigrated from Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia region.
- These are children who work consciously and in an organized way
- These are children who use alcohol and drugs.

Findings table

Table 1. Evaluation of the answers given by male and female students, in relation to the question “Did you buy something from street children until now?”

Gender	Expressions (%)		
	YES	NO	I Don't Remember
Male	74%	19%	7%
Female	72%	22%	6%

As it is shown in table 1, we see that 74% of male attendants state that they have bought something from children who work on streets. 19% of male students state that they never did and 7% of them says that they do not remember. And likewise, 72% of female participants' state that they have bought from street children. 22% of female students' state that they did not buy anything from street children and 6% of them say that they do not remember.

Table 2. Evaluation of question “What is your reason for buying something from street children?” by means of male and female participants.

Gender	Expressions (%)				
	For Help	For Pity	Urgent Needs	Other	I Didin't Buy Anything
Male	51%	15%	6%	11%	17%
Female	65%	10%	6%	7%	12%

As it is shown in table 2, we observe that when men are asked about the reason that makes them buy something from street children, 51% of their answers state that they do it in order to help them, 15% of them feel pity. Moreover, 11% of the attendants states that they did not buy anything from them. Similarly, we observe that when women are asked about the reason that makes them buy something from street children, 65% of their answers state that they do it in order to help them, 12% of them feel pity and 6% of them say that they needed to fulfill their urgent requirements. Moreover, 12% of the attendants states that they did not buy anything from them.

Table 3. Evaluation of the answers for the question “Is there a familiar child who works in streets?” by female and male attendants.

Gender	Expressions (%)	
	YES	NO
Male	90%	10%
Female	96%	4%

As it is shown in table 3, 10% of male participants state that there are such children among their friend and neighbor environments, and 90% of them says that there is not such a child around them. Similarly, in accordance with the question that we asked in the direction of whether there is a child who works on streets or not; 4% of female participants state that there are familiar children who work in their neighborhood and %96 of them says that there is not such a child.

Table 4. Evaluation of the answers of “What do you feel when you see a street child in terms of male and female attendants.

Gender	Expressions (%)			
	Anger Towards Parents	Pity For The Child	Help	Other
Male	39%	27%	20%	14%
Female	55%	24%	17%	4%

As it is shown in table 4, 39% of men state that they feel anger towards those children’s parents, 27% of them say they feel pity, 20% of them prefer to help and 14% of them give the answer of “other”. And likewise, that when participants are asked about their feelings when they see a street child who works, we see that 55% of women feel an anger towards his / her parents, 24% of them feel pity for the child, 17% of them say that they help the child and 4% of them give the answer of “other”.

Table 5. Evaluation of the question: “What does a street child mean to you?”

Gender	Expressions (%)			
	A Child Who Earns His/Her Own Life	Emotional Abuser	A Child Who Helps His/Her Family	Other
Male	40%	19%	21%	20%
Female	17%	40%	17%	26%

As it is shown in table 5, 40% of men think of them as “a child who earns his / her own life”, 19% of them say “emotional abusers”, while 21% of men think that he / she is “a child who helps his / her family” and 20% of them give the answer “other”. Similarly, 17% of female attendants gave the answer “a child who earns his / her own life”, 40% of them think that they are “emotional abusers”, while 17% of them gave the answer “a child who helps his / her family” and 26% of them choose “other” as an answer.

Table 6. Which statement completely explains the fact that street children are seen as social problems?

Gender	Expressions (%)			
	Government's Responsibility	Lack of Social Solidarity	Social Poverty	Deterioration and corruption within the society
Male	28%	24%	25%	23%
Female	29%	23%	22%	26%

As it is shown in table 6, when we ask the question of “which statement explains the fact that street children are seen as social problems?” we see that 28% of men think it is due to government’s insolubility, 24% of them say “lack of social solidarity”, 25% of them think it is due to poverty and finally 23% of them say “deterioration and corruption within the society. Similarly, when we ask the question of “which statement explains the fact that street children are seen as social problems?” we see that 29% of women think it is due to government’s insensibility, 23% of them say “insufficient social solidarity”, 23% of them think it is due to poverty and finally 26% of them say “deterioration and corruption within the society.

CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION

As a result of this study; firstly, women and men give the same answer in the first three rankings when they are asked to evaluate the statements given about children working on the streets in order of importance. According to the participants, the main reasons for children working in the streets are the social structure of the family and economic difficulties. As a matter of fact, the same results are obtained as shown in the researches (Aptekin, 2011, Friberg and Martinsson, 2017).

According to this research, 73.5% of the participants have been shopping from children working on the streets so far. The main reason for this was that most of the participants (83%) stated that they did it for charity purposes. Depending on the results of this research, although the child's work is not legal and contrary to the rights of the child, it is thought that the feeling of pity comes to the fore even though it is considered as emotional or belief abuse in terms of cultural and social values of the society. Although the community is against children working on the street, they cannot give up buying products from children working in the streets because of conscience that is regarded highly in society (Erdoğan, 2003; ICDDR, 2004; Karataş ve Mavili, 2019).

As a result of this scientific study, when the participants' perspective on children working in the streets were evaluated, it was found that women were more emotional and men were more realistic. It is stated that these children are supposed to be provided with all the requirements of education, health as well as economic, social, cultural, sporting and artistic needs with the participation of all relevant institutions and organizations of the state as well as NGOs.

Within the framework of the social work discipline, maximizing the best interests of the child and minimizing all the negativities about the child, social workers always take care of child welfare, child rights and law (Berker, 2003). They are supposed to objectively fulfil their duties by writing reports and providing psychosocial support for the children. A social worker must act with the “empowerment approach” within the framework of “system theory” while they work with street children.

In this context; social work is practiced by educated social workers with the aim of improving conditions for people suffering from social deprivation. To apply theories regarding social systems and human behavior, social work engages in the interaction between people and their environments. The principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental in order to perform social work (Hare, 2000). As the social work profession needs to provide psycho-social support to disadvantaged groups, it should provide support to these groups and their families. The social work profession promotes problem-solving concerning human relationships, social change and provide liberation and empowerment to people to enhance wellbeing (Friberg and Martinson, 2017:6-7).

According to the rights-based approach of social work, it is inevitable that children working on the streets experience many problems and that their rights must be protected and enhanced (Mavili ve Daşbaşı 2016:256). This study may provide a small picture of the situation to pave the way for future studies. It is recommended to identify all the factors that push children into the streets by observing the families and their environment or working with them one by one and to carry out more concrete, solution-generating studies.

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UZUN ÖZ

Bu çalışmanın amacı, sokakta çalışan çocuklarının koşullarının ağır, tehlikeli ve istismara açık olduğunu belirtmek ve tüm bu koşullara rağmen üniversite öğrencilerinin bu çocuklara yönelik yaklaşımlarını ve duyarlılıklarını öğrenmeye çalışılmaktadır. Günlük yaşamlarında sıklıkla sokakta çalışan çocuklarla temas halinde olan ve onlarla iletişim kuran, karşılaşmakta olan üniversite öğrencilerinin bu çocuklara yönelik bakış açılarıyla birlikte duyarlılık düzeylerini öğrenebilmek amaçlanmıştır. Bu çalışma aynı zamanda, sokakta çalışan çocuklarının sosyal ve ekonomik koşullarının iyileştirilmesi, ailelerinin iş ve maddi durumlarına bakılarak çözüm önerileri üzerinde yoğunlaşılmasının gerekliliği üzerinde durulmuştur. Çocukların mevcut durumlarını ve beklentilerini belirleyebilmek aynı zamanda onları sokakta çalışmaya iten nedenlerin öğrenilmesi oldukça önem arz etmektedir. Bu çalışma araştırmacı tarafından önceden hazırlanmış yarı yapılandırılmış anket formu ile veriler katılımcılarla birebir görüşülerek toplanmıştır. Çalışmanın örnekleme İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Sosyoloji Bölümü öğrencileri arasından rastgele olarak 150 kişi seçilmiştir. Ancak anketleri eksiksiz ve tam olarak dolduran 131 kişi değerlendirmeye alınmıştır. Araştırma kapsamındaki katılımcıların demografik değişken olarak sadece cinsiyet değişkeni üzerinde durulmuştur. Bu bağlamda katılımcılardan 64'ü kadın, 67'si erkek olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Anketin soruları, üniversite öğrencilerinin sokakta çalışan çocuklar hakkındaki fikirlerini ve

önerilerini sınırlamamak için açık uçlu sorular içermektedir. Ayrıca, güvenilirlik sağlamak için kontrol soruları da yer almaktadır. Bu çalışmada, sokaklarda çalışan çocukların sayısını azaltmak veya tamamen bitirebilmek için kamu kurumları ve sivil toplum örgütleri arasındaki işbirliği sağlanmaması ön planına çıkmaktadır. Gerek kamu gerekse özel sektörlerinin sokakta çalışan çocuklarının ailelerine gerekli istihdamı sağlayabilmeleri ve makro düzeyde sosyal politikaların etkin ve sosyal adaletin sağlanması bakımınıda oluşturmaları önem arz etmektedir. Bu politikaların sağlıklı ve üretken olması için verimli ve daimi bir işbirliğinin elzem olduğu düşünülmektedir. Aynı şekilde sosyo-ekonomik yönden dezavantajlı ailelerin çocuklarına eğitim, sağlık sosyal ve finansal fayda sağlaması için olumlu yönde hak temelli yaklaşımla desteklenmeleri bakımından oldukça değerli olduğunu düşünülmektedir. Sokakata çalışan çocuklara ve/veya çalışan çocuklara üzülmeye alışverişin yapılması ya da duygu sömürsünün yapılması gibi yaklaşımlar ve ikilemler oldukça zorlayıcı olduğu kanaati baskın olabilmektedir. Oysa sokakta çalışan çocukların bulunması gereken yerleri aileleri ile eğitim ortamları olduğu unutulmamalıdır. Ekonomik zorlukların sosyal ve istihdam politikaları ile kamu ve STK'ların sorumluluk çerçevesinde gidermeleri gerektiği konusunda düşünceler ağır basmaktadır. Sokakta çalışan çocuklar tehlikenin farkında olamyabilirler fakat sokakların suç işleme potansiyelinin en çok olduğu bir ortam olduğu ve zararlı maddelere ulaşabilirliğin kolay olduğu unutulmamalıdır. Bu nedenle gerek ailelerin gerekse güvenlik görevlileri ve sosyal hizmet uzmanları ile diğer profesyonel meslek çalışanlarının yakın işbirliği içinde olmaları ve profesyonel mesleki disiplinlerinin etik yaklaşımı ile müdahale etmeleri oldukça önem arz etmektedir. Bu bağlamda Aile, Çalışma ve Sosyal Hizmetler Bakanlığı başta olmak üzere diğer bakanlıkların da sağlıklı ve koordineli bir şekilde çalışmalıdırlar. Aynı zamanda sokaklarda çalışan çocuklar için güvenlik kuruluşlarının daha etkili, caydırıcı ve dinamik çalışmalar yürütmeleri önemli görülmektedir. Dolayısıyla sokaklarda çalışan çocukların sorunlarını mobil sosyal hizmet uygulamaları ile giderilmeye çalışılması yerine, bu sorunu daha çok profesyonel meslek çalışanları ile sosyal sorun odaklı, aile, çevre ve çocuk merkezli çalışmalar yapılmalıdır. Bu da işlevsel, sosyal ve sorunları toplumsal ve insan hakları temelli olarak beirlenmesi ve ona göre çözüm önerilerinin geliştirilmesi oldukça etkili olabileceği düşünülmektedir.