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***The collective and Relative Contribution of Socio-economic Background parents  
Among Urban Street Children: A Case Study of Ambo City, Western Oromia,  
Ethiopia***

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**Abstract**

*It is common global experiences that to observe greatly increasing children living, working, and experiencing acute socio-economic problems. However there is variation in the magnitude of the problem, with less developed countries facing more acute problem than developed one. Similarly, it is generally acknowledged that such children represent some of the most vulnerable social groups in the world today. Street children are disadvantaged group who suffer a double jeopardy, first as children and secondly as street children. There are immense socio-economic factors that are responsible for child streetism that such type of study is needed to unveil the reality. This study therefore, examined the contribution of socio-economic background of parents to child streetism. In this study cross-sectional survey study design was used. 526 street children in Ambo town were selected using availability sampling technique and filled the five Likert scale questionnaire. Three research questions were answered in the study. The collected data was analyzed using multiple regression analysis with the help of SPSS version 16. According the finding of the study 67.4% of the total variance in streetism among urban children is due the seven variables of socio-economic background of parents. Except the extent of substance use by parents, streetism is predicted by all the six variables of socio-economic backgrounds of parents and child personal expectation of improved life along street, at  $P < 0.05$  level. Therefore, appropriate measures should be taken by the concerned bodies to ensure that the variables are adequately and appropriately managed so that their contribution to streetism will be play down or totally eliminated.*

**Key words:** *Child streetism, Socio-economic background of parents, personal factor and contributing factors.*

## **Introduction**

Defining the term 'street children' precedes any explanations surrounding the concept. Kobayash (2004) defined street children as "boys and girls under age 18 for whom 'the street' (including unoccupied dwelling, wasteland, etc.) has become their home and/or source of livelihood, and who are inadequately protected or supervised by responsible adults," ( p.5). This definition includes children those use streets as both place of work and residence. Similarly, Consortium for Street Children (2009) noted that the term 'street children' is usually applied to children under the age of 18, who either live or make a living on the street. Hong & Ohno (2005) identified three categories of street children. These include: street living children (those who have lost ties with their families and live alone on the street), street working children (those spend all or most of their time working on the street to earn income for their families or for themselves and have a home to return to and do not usually sleep on the street) and the children of street living families (those who live with their families on the street). Therefore for Hong & Ohno (2005) "street children" is used to refer to children who work and/or sleep on the streets.

For UNICEF street children refers to: Children who reside in the street (who have run away from their families and live alone in the street); Children who work in the street (Children who spend most of their time in the street, but who regularly go back to their homes); Children of the street families (Children who live with their families in the street); and abandoned children (UNICEF, 2005: 15). Therefore these four categories of street children were included in this study.

Even though accurate data on the size of street children is difficult to obtain, literatures indicate that significant number of children are forced to work or/ and reside on streets. It is also stated that the size of children living and working along the street has also been increasing from time to time. As indicated by Kibrom (2008), the global street child population ranges between 100 – 150 million.

Though, Ethiopia is the poorest country in the world with a per capita income of about 120 US Dollar (ESPR, 2008:200), the problem of street children is one of those currently emerging social issues. This is not because of the absence of contributing factors for child problem in the country, but due to the long standing cultural child welfare institutions such as *Guddiifachaa* that were providing care and support for needy children. Therefore, the declining of traditional child welfare institutions in Ethiopia now a day's is another responsible factor for the currently emerging child problem in general and street children in particular. Tadasse (2006) indicated that due to the extended family role and cultural child adoption practices that consider child as social asset and were offering care and support for children, a number of street children in the country was insignificant until the recent past of the decline of extended family role and cultural child adoption practices (Tilahun.H, in ESPR, 2008:195). Therefore, now a day the problem of children in general and the issue of street children in particular are severe social problem in Ethiopia.

On the other hand, until recently there is no accurate statistical data that put the exact number of street children in Ethiopia. As indicated by Tilahun (2008), in Ethiopian social Policy Reader (ESPR, 2008), the number of street children in Ethiopia in 1986 was estimated to 100,000. MOLSA further indicated as this number is increasing in 5% annual rate, while UNICEF (2000)

estimated the number of street children in the country to 150,000. Moreover another survey conducted in eight major cities of Ethiopia in 2003 estimated the number of street children to 100,000-200,000 with potential of 500,000 rural school dropout children living under absolute poverty, 800,000 HIV/AIDS orphan children, all of whom are at risk of joining to upgrade the country number of street children (ESPR, 2008:199). Based on the above statements, it is possible to presume the catastrophic nature of the problem that this poverty ridden country in general and children in particular are experiencing.

There are various factors that lead children to street life. World Health Organization (WHO) noted that every street child has a reason for being on the streets (Apteker, 1992b). Apteker (1992b) further indicated that while some children are attracted by the promise of excitement and freedom on the street, the majority are pushed onto the street by desperation and a realization that they have nowhere else to go. Emebet, et.al (2012) indicated that for some children the street is an escape from broken families and domestic violence, while for others is a means of supplementing family income. In the same study Emabet, et.al also indicated that for some children, street is a luxurious place to be enjoyed at, killing time and even having fun. UNICEF (2000) indentified factors such as: poverty, family disintegration, the decline of traditional child care, death of parents, large family size and early marriage to be the major factors that lead children to street life in Ethiopia. Consortium for Street Children (2009) further indicated that natural catastrophe such as drought and famine and man-made causes such as civil wars and ethnic conflicts are other responsible factors for child streetism.

Based on the aforementioned statements, this sociological study intends to examine the contribution of socio-economic background of parents and child personal expectation of improved life along the street to child streetism among urban children of the study area.

### **Statement of the problems**

It is common global experiences that to observe greatly increasing children living, working, and experiencing acute socio-economic problems (Kilbride, Suda & Njeru, E, 2000, Lugalla & Kibassa 2003). The studies further indicated that there is variation in the magnitude of the problem, with less developed countries facing more acute problem than developed one. Similarly, it is generally acknowledged that such children represent some of the most vulnerable social groups in the world today (Lugalla et al., 2002). Mbunda (2000) asserted that street children are disadvantaged group who suffer a double jeopardy, first as children and secondly as street children. Even though street children are the marginalized children who need enormous assistances (Lugalla et al., 2003); they are often the least assisted in a society.

The studies about street children in Ethiopia is by far centralized and concentrated at the capital and major regional cities in which the same results were assumed to be replicated in different parts of the countries and urban centers, based up on which the national policy is framed. To the contrary, the researcher assume that cross cultural studies will indicate variation in the contributing factors, challenges, and other differences of street children which dare for holistic and different approach to the issue under investigation. Moreover it is assumed that different towns are endowed with various socio-economic and cultural resources that should be accommodated by national social policy in general and about street children in particular.

Therefore the issue about street children at zonal and smaller towns in the country is yet not attracted the attention of scholars for study. Therefore, this study examined the contribution of socio-economic backgrounds of parents to child streetism in one of the western Oromia urban, Ambo, of Ethiopia.

### Research Questions

In this study the following questions were used to guide the researcher:

- What is the collective contribution of variables of socio-economic background of parents to child streetism among urban children of Ambo town?
- Which of the variables of socio-economic factor background of parents will predict child streetism among urban street children of the study area?
- What are the relative effects of variables of socio-economic backgrounds of parents to child streetism?

### Methods

To see the collective contribution and relative influences of variables of socio-economic background of parents to streetism, the study employed cross sectional survey research design. Five point likert scales was used to design the questionnaire. The target population of the study is street children in Ambo town. Using availability sampling technique, 526 children were selected for the study. Moreover 21 items survey questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondent children directly. The data was collected by data collectors purposely recruited for the target. Moreover, the collected data were analyzed with the help of multiple regression analysis that was computed by using SPSS version 16. Finally the tests were carried out at  $\alpha = 0.05$  level.

### Results and Discussions

#### The collective and relative contribution of variables of Socio-economic background of parents to child streetism.

In order to see the collective and relative predictive effects of variables of socio-economic background of parents to child streetism, multiple regression analysis was employed and the result has been indicated in the following table.

**Table 1: Summary of Regression analysis on the collective contribution of socio-economic backgrounds of parents to child streetism.**

**Model Summary**

Model	R	Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.821 <sup>a</sup>		.670	.482

\*\* significant at  $P < 0.05$  level

a. Predictors: (Constant), Child personal expectation of improved life from street, Family

education, Extent of parent substance use, alcohol consumption of parents, Prevalence of parental conflict, Family size of the street children, Monthly income of the family of street children

The above table (1) shows that there is positive and significant relationship between variables of socio-economic background of parents and streetism. This implies that these seven variables: Child personal expectation of improved life from street, Educational attainment of parents, Extent of parent substance use, alcohol consumption of parents, Prevalence of parental conflict, Family size of the street children, and Monthly income of the family of street children are relevant and could contribute to streetism among urban children. The above analysis also indicates that 67.4% of the total variance in streetism among urban children is due the seven variables of socio-economic background of parents. This is because the  $R^2 = 0.674$ . Therefore the collective contribution of socio-economic background of family to child streetism is 67.4% while the remaining 32.6% is due to other factors and residuals.

From table (2) below, the R value of 0.821 obtained tested significant ( $F(7,515) = 152.400$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). This reveals that the value of R is not due to chance.

**Table 2: Result of ANOVA of Regression on variables of socio-economic background of parents and streetism.**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F		Sig.
1	Regression	248.321	7	35.474	152.400		.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	119.878	515	.233			
	Total	368.199	522				

\*\* significant at  $P < 0.05$  level

- a. Predictors: (Constant), Child personal expectation of improved life from street, Family education, Extent of parent substance use, alcohol consumption of parents, Prevalence of parental conflict, Family size of the street children, Monthly income of the family of street children.

**Table 3: The relative effects of variables of socio-economic background of parents to child streetism**

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Rank	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta values			
1	(Constant)	1.404	.162			8.673	.000
	Family size of the street children	.474	.033	.435	1 <sup>st</sup>	14.532	.000
	Monthly income of the family of street children	-.291	.026	-.345	2 <sup>nd</sup>	-11.379	.000
	Family education	-.058	.020	-.088	5 <sup>th</sup>	-2.869	.004
	alcohol consumption of parents	.061	.017	.099	4 <sup>th</sup>	3.658	.000
	Extent of parent substance use	.046	.025	.049	7 <sup>th</sup>	1.850	.065
	Prevalence of parental conflict	.122	.025	.141	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4.810	.000
	Child personal expectation of improved life from street	.060	.025	.061	6 <sup>th</sup>	2.380	.018

\*\* significant at P<0.05 level

a. Dependent Variable: child streetism

From table (3), family size that the child belongs to made the greatest contribution to streetism among urban children ( $\beta=0.435$ ;  $p<0.05$ ), while the monthly income that the family of these children earns ( $\beta=-0.345$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) the prevalence of conflict between parents ( $\beta=0.141$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) are ranking second and third place respectively. The fourth contribution was made by alcohol consumption of parents ( $\beta=0.099$ ;  $p<0.05$ ), whereas educational attainment of parents of these children ( $\beta=-0.088$ ; at  $p<0.05$ ) and child personal expectation of improved life along the street ( $\beta=0.061$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) are the fifth and sixth most contributors of socio-economic factor variables to child streetism. To the contrary, among the socio-economic factor variables, the least and

insignificant contribution to child streetism was made by the extent of substance abuse by parents hence the computed values regression value is  $\beta=0.049$ ;  $p>0.05$ .

The above table (3) has also clearly indicated whether the contributions of each of variables of socio-economic background of parents are significant or not. Accordingly, except substance abuses by parents, out of seven variables of socio-economic background of parents all of the variables determine streetism among urban children. These are family size that children belongs to ( $B=0.474$ ;  $t=14.532$ ;  $P<0.05$ ), the monthly income of the family of street children ( $\beta=-0.345$ ;  $p<0.05$ ), the prevalence of conflict between parents ( $B=0.122$ ;  $t=4.810$ ;  $P<0.05$ ), the educational attainment of parents ( $B=-0.058$ ;  $t=-2.869$ ;  $P<0.05$ ), the extents of alcohol consumption by parents ( $B=0.061$ ;  $t=3.658$ ;  $P<0.05$ ) and the child personal expectation of improved life along the street ( $B=0.060$ ;  $t=2.380$ ;  $P<0.05$ ) could predict streetism among urban children because their contribution were significant.

## **Discussion**

To see the collective and relative contribution of socio-economic background of parents to child streetism multiple regression analysis was used. The socio-economic and personal factor variables that were used in the study are: family size that children belong to, educational attainment of the parents, monthly income the parents, extent of alcohol consumption by parents, Prevalence of conflict between parents, extent of parent substance use and Child personal expectation of improved life from street. Accordingly the result of the regression analysis shows socio-economic background of parents and child personal expectation of improved life along the street has significant contribution to child streetism. This implies that the collection of these seven variables: Child personal expectation of improved life from street, Educational attainment of parents, Extent of parent substance use, alcohol consumption of parents, Prevalence of parental conflict, Family size of the street children, and Monthly income of the family of street children are relevant and could contribute to streetism among urban children. The above analysis also indicates that 67.4% of the total variance in streetism among urban children is due the seven variables of socio-economic background of parents and personal expectation of improved life along the street by children. This is because the value of  $R^2=0.674$ . Therefore the collective contribution of socio-economic background of family to child streetism is 67.4% while the remaining 32.6% is due to other factors and residuals.

However when the t-value for each variables is computed, except the extent of substance use by parents, streetism is predicted by the rest of socio-economic backgrounds of parents and child personal expectation of improved life along street. On the other hand based on the computed Beta (Standardized Coefficients) values, the extent to which each of the socio-economic background parents and personal factor variables contribute for child streetism was also different. Therefore the finding indicated that family size that the child belongs to made the greatest contribution to streetism among urban children, while the monthly income that the family of these children earns and the prevalence of conflict between parents were the second and third predicting variables of socio-economic and personal factor variables respectively. The fourth contribution was also made by the extent of alcohol consumption by parents that is



followed by educational attainment of parents of street children. Finally, child personal expectation of improved life along the street ranked sixth in contributing to child streetism, while the least contribution to streetism among variables of socio-economic backgrounds of parents and personal expectation of improved life along the street by children was made by the extent of substance use by parents. Likewise, the studies by UNICEF (1993 & 2005: 42), Hardee & Leahy (2008) Murrell (1974), Gordon (2001), Mthombeni (2010), ESPR,(2008), Sicault (1963), Onyango et al, (1991), Apterker,(1994), Tilahun (2008), Anna( 2003), Densley & Joss (2000), Abro (2012) Elbaum (2005), Guttman (2004), Ducan(2000) and others supported the socio-economic background of parents and personal factors are one of the main reasons why many children are ends up on the street.

### **Summary of the finding**

The study found out that:

- ✓ Variables of Socio-economic background of parents and child personal expectation of improved life along the street had significant contribution to child streetism.
- ✓ 67.4% of the total variance in streetism among urban children is due the seven variables of socio-economic background of parents and personal expectation of improved life along the street by children.
- ✓ Except the extent of substance use by parents, streetism is predicted by the rest of socio-economic backgrounds of parents and child personal expectation of improved life along street.
- ✓ Family size that the child belongs to stands first in contributing to streetism among urban children.
- ✓ The monthly income that the family of street children earns and the prevalence of conflict between parents were the second and third predicting variables of socio-economic background of parents.
- ✓ The fourth and fifth contribution was also made by the extent of alcohol consumption by parents and the educational levels of parents.
- ✓ Child personal expectation of improved life along the street ranked sixth in contributing to child streetism.
- ✓ Extents of substance use by parents made the least contribution to streetism among variables of socio-economic backgrounds of parents.

### **Conclusion**

The study has shown that 67.4% of child streetism was because of the seven variables of Socio-economic background of parents and child personal expectation of improved life along the street had significant contribution to child streetism in Ambo town. Except the extent of substance use by parents, each of the variables of socio-economic backgrounds of parents and child personal expectation of improved life along street independently predicts child streetism. Moreover the extent to which each of the above variables promotes streetism in the study area is also varying. Therefore, appropriate measures should be taken by the concerned bodies to ensure that the variables are adequately and appropriately managed so that their contribution to streetism will be play down or totally eliminated.



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