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## Levels of intelligence and social maturity among normal and street children

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### Abstract

The present study plans to observe and compare intelligence of normal and street children and also to study the association between levels of social maturity and intelligence of the subjects. One of the major social problems found by our nation is 'Street Children'. To tackle this burning problem there is a need to conduct research on various related factors leading children to streets for their rehabilitation. The total size of the sample of the subjects selected for the present research is 175 children of 12-15 years consists of 100 normal children and 75 street children. The children were subjected to Sharma's non-verbal intelligence test to test the intelligence among normal and street children. There is significant difference between normal and street children with regard to their intelligence levels. The findings revealed that since majority of the parents of street children are illiterates, it reflect on the intellectual capacity of their child's life. There is association between social maturity status and intelligence of normal children. On contrary no association was found between these variables in the case of street children.

**Keywords:** Non-verbal intelligence, Social maturity status, Street children

### Introduction

The child be the "supreme national asset and it deserves the best mankind has to give". But society does not treat children as desired, child mal treatment has occurred historically. The majority of the children in India are underprivileged. They live under low socio-economic and environmental conditions which hamper their growth and development. Rapid industrialisation has accelerated the migration of thousands of families from rural areas to cities. The migrants increase the population of urban poor contributing to number of slums and pavement dwellers. According to the reports of UNESCO, UNICEF, ICCW formal policies such as changing school fees, demanding such documents as birth certificates and permanent addresses and requirements to wear school uniforms led to marginalisation of some children are causing them to take to the streets. But this is not applicable to India where free education is provided to children in Government schools with free books and clothes being supplied.

UNICEF indicated major causes of this phenomenon of street children as poverty in rural areas, family disintegration, school dropouts and vagrancy. Families who struggle for livelihood in slums and deteriorating social environment in urban poor neighbourhood also

Non-verbal intelligence is the ability to analyze information and solve problems using visual or hands-on reasoning. In other words, it is the ability to make sense of and act on the world without necessarily using words. The present study plans to observe and compare intelligence of normal and street children. When intelligence was believed to be largely an expression of hereditary potential, each individual, IQ was expected to remain very nearly constant throughout life. The concept of developmental transformations has been introduced to describe the changes in age appropriate manifestations of intellectual competence.

Social maturity is a process by which adolescents acquire the habit, attitudes, skills and standards that their families and social group value for adulthood. The three components of social maturity are Personal adequacy, interpersonal adequacy and social adequacy.

The main thrust of the present research is to study and compare various dimensions of social maturity status and intelligence levels among normal and street children of 12-15 yrs. It also emphasizes on family back ground and life profile of street children. The period of early adolescence was selected because the preliminary survey revealed that majority of the street children are belonging to this age group. And this period is also important due to the impact of peer group on the levels of social maturity and intelligence. The following objectives were formulated for the present study

- To find out the levels of intelligence among normal and street children
- To examine the significant difference between normal and street children with reference to intelligence levels.

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- To study the association between levels of social maturity and intelligence of the subjects.

### Methods and materials used

**Sample:** The study was carried out in the city of Tirupathi in Andhra Pradesh the total sample selected for the present study was 175 children of 12-15 yrs of which normal children were 100 and street children were 75. The subjects were selected irrespective of sex and socio-economic status.

**Selection of sample of normal children:** Two stages random sampling method was used to select normal children. In the first stage, four schools were selected at random. Two private and two government schools were selected and a random of 25 students is taken from each school. Thus, a two stage random sample of 100 normal children is selected for the present study. For Street children in the first stage a random sample of three areas were selected where street children are found. They are Railway station, Bus stand and Koneru Katta. In each of the selected areas a random sample of 75 street children is selected proportionately. Thus a two stage random sample of 75 street children is taken.

### Tools Used

**a) Interview Schedule on Life Profile of Street Children:** It was developed by the investigator. It consists of the components like General information of the subjects, Family background, Living conditions, Health status, Food habits, Education, working conditions/occupations of the subjects, Recreational and socio-emotional behaviour and Future aspirations of the subjects.

### b) Non-verbal Intelligence Test by Dr. Atmananda Sharma

The test is in a special booklet. The booklet contains a series of 25 visually presented problems. The types of problems in the booklet are preceded from simple to complex. Since it does not require skills like reading and writing, this tool is also administered to the illiterates.

### Scoring

By using the scoring key, the investigator gave one mark for each correct answer. The norms for intelligence test have been expressed in terms of standard score norms and the investigator classified the subjects as "High intelligents" and "Low intelligents"

**c) Rao's Social Maturity Scale (RSMS):** To find out the social maturity status of normal and street children. RSMS is a structured questionnaire consisting of 90 questions. The 90 questions of RSMS are in English version. For the purpose of convenience, the questionnaire schedule was translated into local language (Telugu) by the investigator.

The three dimensions of Social Maturity and its components are given below.

- Personal Adequacy (PA): Work Orientation (WO), Self-direction (SD), Ability to take stress (AS)
- Inter-personal Adequacy (IPA): Communication (CM), Enlightened Trust (ET), Cooperation (CO)
- Social Adequacy (SA): Social Commitment (SC), Social Tolerance (ST), Openness to change (OC)

### Scoring

There are 90 items in the questionnaire, each item was accorded a four point response spread the intervals of which were labelled as "strongly Agree" "agree", "Dis agree", and

"strongly Disagree". The successive response intervals were subsequently scored 4,3,2,1 and 1,2,3,4 with the high score responding mature response. Thus it is possible to obtain the scores of three dimensions and the total social maturity score for each observation. The mean scores were taken in order to classify them into two categories as "High" and "Low" levels of Social Maturity.

### Results and discussion

The data collected was systematically classified, tabulated and analysed. The research findings were discussed with percentages, Z values and chi-square values. The relevant intervention programmes were suggested while discussing the findings.

**Table 1:** Level of Intelligence among subjects

Subjects	n	Mean	S.D	Zo
Normal children	100	22.58	1.37	31.73*
Street children	75	07.98	4.04	

\*Significant at 0.01 level

Regarding intelligence levels among subjects mean, standard deviation and Zo values are furnished in the above table indicated that mean intelligence levels of normal children is greater than the street children. This was clearly evident in the present study that since majority of the parents of street children are illiterates, their lack of understanding about the importance of education may reflect on their child's life. There are other influencing factors for lower intelligence of street children compared to normal children which were evident in the present study. They are educational status of the subjects, ordinal position of the subjects, area of living which creates an environment to develop certain potentialities which are discussed in the tables presented below.

**Table 2:** Educational status of the subjects (In percent)

Educational status	NC (n=100)	SC (n=75)
Attending school	100	
Attended school in the past		20
Not attended school		80

Educations essential for every child. It develops the facilities of a person acquaints him with the world around him and satisfies the need of intellectual development. The above table shows the percentages of educational status of the subjects. Among normal children all of them (100%) attended school and they are still attending schools. Among street children 20% attended school previously upto 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> class and discontinued. The reasons were lack of interest, poverty, lack of resources and responsibility of younger siblings etc. These children do not want to attend the schools. But normal children prefer to continue their studies.

Government of India had been insisting compulsory and free education for all children to achieve the goal of Education for all by 2000 A.D. But mostly due to poverty and lack of encouragement from the parents most of the street children do not attend the school.

Further investigation revealed that in spite of attending school only upto 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> standards (20%) all the street children were able to speak and understand Telugu. 54% of them could read and write telugu. Regarding other languages 18% of the subjects reported that they could speak and understand Tamil and Kannada (9%). They could learn Tamil and Kannada from their peer group because of their continuous contact. On contrary all the normal children could speak, understand, read and write Telugu, English and Hindi. Non-formal literacy p [programmes could be applied to street children for improving their reading and writing ability.

**Table 3:** Reasons for not attending school (in Percent)

Reasons	SC (n=75)
Lack of resources	52
No interest in studies	24
Responsibility of younger siblings	24
Any other	-

Education is prime need for an individual and this can be fulfilled by proper guidance and encouragement which make the child to concentrate on studies and prefer to continue studies.

But results of the present study indicate that street children are

always exposed to the poor situations like lack of resources, lack of encouragement and poor economic conditions. Parents treat them as miniature adults and forced them to do work or to perform certain difficult tasks and to supplement family. All these factors lead to disinterest in studies.

**Table 4:** Ordinal Position of the Subjects (in Percent)

Ordinal Position	NC (n=100)	SC (n=75)
Only child	20	04
First born	30	30
Second born	38	19
Third born	-	20
Fourth born	-	16
Youngest	12	11

In the present study 55 % of the street children were middle borns. It is also interesting to note that 30 % of the street children are first borns and 11% are youngest children in their families. Studies have proved that youngest and eldest in general are taken care better than the middle borns. But the present study reveals that the presence of first and last borns also as street children indicating that parents are not treating them with love and affection and they are following undesirable parenting practices with severe punishment.

The present study also depicts that 4% of street children are only children in their families. Observation of intra familial

relationship indicates that youngest child is normally treated with lot of affection by the parents. When the youngest children are added to the family mothers spend more towards the care of the new born. Due to this behaviour middle borns feel prestigious, envious and jealous leading to socio-emotional problems.

Thus ordinal position also affects the intelligence of the individual. Results of the present study reveal that first borns and middle borns in the family have to support their family by earning money, so they used to skip out school and engage in their own work.

**Table 5:** Association between social maturity and intelligence of subjects

Null Hypothesis(Ho)	Xo	Xo	Inference
For Normal children there is no association between social maturity and intelligence	2.36	3.841 (at 5% level)	Ho is accepted
For Street children there is no association between social maturity and intelligence	10.24	3.841 (at 5% level)	Ho is accepted

From the above table it is clear that for normal children social maturity and intelligence are independent whereas for street children social maturity and intelligence are associated. This reveals that normal children with similar intelligence did not possess similar social maturity scores. They varied in their social behaviour. Hence normal children belonging to a particular level of social maturity had different intelligence scores. On the contrary with reference to street children social maturity behaviour was not associated with their intelligence. Street children belonging to low intelligence exhibited similar social behaviour compared to those of high intelligence.

### Conclusion

The study shows that there is significant difference between normal and street children regarding their intelligence levels. The study revealed that majority of the parents of children on streets are illiterates indicating a positive association between illiteracy of parents and children on pavements/streets which is a contributing cause for low level of intelligence among street children. The present study also revealed that there is association between social maturity status and intelligence of normal children, whereas association was not found between these variables in case of street children.

### Implications

Ever since the days of industrial revolution the children have been found working, living or loitering around in streets,

cross roads, public parks, market places, and railway stations etc. The phenomenon seems to have acquired a gigantic dimension in the wake of the rapid industrialization and urbanization.

Based on the result found in the present study, the following intervention programmes were planned to lift the status of street children.

- Awareness should be created about the importance of the education both for the parents and the subjects.
- Non-formal education and vocational trainings should be given to the street children based on their interest
- Parental protection and affections is very important in order to improve the harmonious personality development of the children. The poor parenting practices of the parents should be changed in order to bring up their children in a proper way.
- The child must be treated as a whole person with attention to his/her psychosocial and emotional needs as well as physical needs.

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