

Study On Socio-Economics And Environmental Factors Contributing To Health And Nutritional Status Of Street Children in Bandung

**Rita Patriasih,S.Pd, M.Si¹⁾, Isma Widiaty,S.Pd,M.Pd²⁾, dr.Mira Dewi, M.Si³⁾
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The important reason for the study on socio-economics and environmental factors contributing to the health and nutritional status of street children is the social phenomenon that the social function of children is disturbed. Children should be at home, school, or in a playing atmosphere in which there is a conducive interaction for the physical, social, psychological, and moral developments of children. However, such condition is not experienced by street children. The goals and objectives of the research were : 1)To analyze the educational aspects (formal/informal education, educational perception, and educational expectation) of street children; 2)To analyze the socio-economic aspects of street children and their households; 3)To identify the activity, frequency and duration of street children living on the street, 4)To analyze the living environment (sanitation, personal hygiene, and availability of water) of street children's households, 5)To analyze the health status (diarrhea, acute respiratory infectious diseases, and skin infection) of street children, 6)To analyze the nutritional status (Hb status and BMI/A) of street children, 7)To analyze the factors that cause children to live on the street, 8)To analyze the factors affecting the health and nutritional status of street children, 9)To analyze the effectiveness and the benefit of governmental and NGO programs for street children

The research was carried out in the City of Bandung, West Java. As the capital city of West Java, it is the biggest and densest city with the highest number of street children. This research was in the form of a survey. The respondents (street children or their parents) were visited for the data collection through observation, interviews and measurements. The research lasted 12 months. It included field inspection, sampling, making of questionnaire, data collection, data processing, report writing, and socialization of research results.

The population in this research refers to a group of children doing activities on the streets. Street children are defined as children whose major activities are on the streets. In this case, frequently they do not go to school and obtain income by becoming street singers, beggars, shoe polishers, and other services. Their ages are below 18 years. The sample consists of 232 boys and 92 girls. The sample represents the west, east, north and central parts of Bandung. A sub sample of parents with a total of 30% sample (90 households) was drawn purposively based on accessibility.

The conclusions are as follows:

1. The results revealed that only 49.8% of street children were at formal school, 26.5% of them followed the activities at the learning homes and 23.4% joined training activities held by the halfway house. Dropout rates at primary level were relatively high and largely due to the lack of fund. Perceptions about the education by street children included that the education would improve their insights and that the knowledge and skills would make a person become more appreciated. Expectations of street children to education included that the majority of street children (79.4%) had hopes of going to school and 71.3% expected to follow the training activities or courses. This is closely related to improvement of life in the future that they will get if they have a chance to obtain education and training.
2. The average age of male street children was 14.2 years whereas that of female street children was 12.3 years. Their average income reached Rp16,047/day or approximately

Rp481,410 per month. Nearly half of the income was given to their parents in order to help the family economy whereas the rest was spent for transport. They also had a habit of saving although it was only a little amount of money.

The average age of street children's father and mother was 40 years old and 43.8 years old respectively. The education of the father and mother was only primary level, and this affected their work in which some of them work as a singer. The income of the parents of street children was Rp197,343/capita/ month. In general, they lived in a rented house with an area of 20 m² and the number of household members was around six people. Their average food expenditure was Rp133,195/capita /month while that for non-food expenditure was Rp248,947.

3. The male and female street children had been living in the streets for 3.6 years and 3.9 years respectively. On average, they spent time in the street for 6 hours/day and 6 days/week. Activities they generally did included singing, cleaning vehicles, selling, providing umbrella loan service and helping to bring the groceries of other people. They, in fact, did not wish to carry out these earning activities, and it is evident that 81.2% of the male street children and 82.4% of the female ones did not want to work as street children.
4. About 81.8% of the families of street children had been using tap water, 73.9% of them used protected water for cooking and drinking, and 96.6% of the water was cooked before it was consumed. As much as 57% of the respondents washed clothes in the bathroom, and as much as 41.9% of them washed in the well and only 1.2% of them washed their clothes in a river. The majority (89.9%) defecated in the bathroom; however, a small number of the children (10.1%) did so in a river or a ditch.

The behavior of street children in maintaining personal hygiene was relatively good. However, only 61.6% of them washed their hands before eating, and 26.3% of them used soap. Moreover, 44.7 % of the children had the habit of cutting nails which was carried out once a week.

5. The most common diseases suffered by the respondents were child acute respiratory infections (ARI) (47%). In addition, 22.7 % and 18.4 % of them suffered from diarrhea and skin diseases respectively.
6. The haemoglobin level of the average street children was 12.9 mg/dl. The boys had higher hemoglobin level of 13.2 mg/dl while the girls reached 11.9 mg/ dl, and this occurred because the street children especially the female women generally teenagers and suffered from periods. Blood haemoglobin status of street children shows that the incidence of anemia was 29.3%. Based on gender, the percentage of female respondents was higher i.e. 39%, while that of the male street children was 23.4%.

The average weight of the male street children was 40.5 kg and the height was 148.3 cm. In contrast, the average weight for female ones was 35.8 kg and the height was 138.6 cm. Based on the classification of nutritional status, 42.7% and 80.4 % of street children were underweight and stunted respectively.

According to the data collected, less than half of the total percentage of parents of street children (37.9 %) listened to their children's complaints. As a result of this, more street children preferred their friends to share stories. The results of the analysis revealed that the attention of parents contributed significantly to the presence of children in the streets. 15:03 % of the respondents stated that attention from their parents might reduce their presence of children in the street. Efforts to improve attention of parents toward their children can be a major consideration in reducing the presence of children in the street. For the result, it can be

said that the attention of parents of street children was still not optimal.

7. Whether the street children were still attending formal school or not has been the most dominant factor in the presence of children street in the street i.e. 23.12%. The street children who were in school lived less longer in the street i.e. 2.25 years. Directing street children to attend formal education is a most effective way to reduce street children living in the street. Older street children lived longer in the street than the younger ones, and only a few of them followed formal school education.
8. Attention given by parents of street children is as much as that given by other parents. 79.4% of the street children parents expected their children to pray regularly, to do good things for others (84.1%) and be honest (90%). In terms of education, 72.6% of them always reminded their children to learn and tried to provide their children's school supplies (51.4%). They reminded their children to get along well with their friends (83.3%), to be obedient to their parents (88.8%) and not to use drugs/glue (74.8%). 70.1% of the parents still met the needs of food and 71.3% of them forbade their children to work in the streets when they became sick. However, in terms of communication, only 37.9% of them took the time to listen to their children's complaints.
9. The role of the government of Bandung in the handling of street children was still limited to guide them not to go to the streets anymore; however, the government, in fact, does not have a social institution as a place for the guidance of these street children. Nevertheless, the NGOs play an important role in the programs of the handling of street children. The street children development activities were centered at the CPH (Children Protection House) as an informal process that provided facilities of the socialization process as a means of early stage development of street children. Beside at the CPH, the realization of activities was conducted in the streets (street-based activities) and sought for the involvement of the community and industry. The services provided to the street children were as follows: 1) direct services (education, skills, health, resocialization); 2) case services (medical action, the law); 3) special need fulfillment (high-risk children and sexual harassment); and 4) participation of the children in the NGO programs.