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Research Papers

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## SOCIAL AND MORAL VALUES AMONG STREET CHILDREN IN CHENNAI

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### ABSTRACT

*The present investigation aimed to study the level of moral and social values among street children in Chennai city with reference to their gender and family bonding. A sample of 120 street children were selected from Chennai city, consisting of 60 males and 60 females, belonging to the age group of 10-15 years. The tool was developed by the investigator to elicit the information on social and moral values of children. The results revealed that gender had a significant effect on social and moral values of street children i.e. female street children had better moral and social values than their male counterparts. Family bonding had a significant influence on social and moral values of street children.*

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### INTRODUCTION:

The UNICEF in the year 2002 has referred the term street children as to those children for whom the street more than their family has become their real home. It includes children, who might not necessarily be homeless without families, but who live in situation where there is no protection, supervision or direction from responsible adults. Hence the present investigation was undertaken to study the social and moral values among street children with respect to their gender and family bonding. Family bonding means the presence or absence of parents of street children.

Needs are fundamental to the development of values. The manner in which an individual's needs are met by him, determines the direction of his values. The child in general is provided with the values expressed at home, play grounds, schools, theatres, films, books, television etc. Moral development of a child may be described by the process which the child acquired the values by his community, how he acquires a sense of right or wrong in terms of those values and how he learns to regulate his personal desires and compulsions so that when a situational conflict arises, he does what he ought to do, rather than what he wants to do. Cheney(2010) noted that it is a common assumption that children, in particular, who live and work on the street have no moral and social values and are usually antisocial.

The development of values are based on the social-economic status of the child, where parental guidance is minimal or non-existent and where adult models are often undesirable. A research study by Aptekar(2000) documented that the families of street children vary considerably, but many of them are coping adequately with poverty, encouraging their male children to find a way to help their families economically, while teaching their female children, typical female roles and protecting them from the vagaries of the streets.

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**•OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of the present study are;

- to assess the effect of gender on the social and moral values of street children.
- To determine whether family bonding has any influence on the social and moral values of street children.

**METHODOLOGY:**

120 street children were randomly selected, of which 60 were male and 60 were female street children. A social and moral values scale devised by the investigator was administered to these street children to assess their social and moral values. The collected data was statistically analysed to interpret the results.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:**

The effect of gender and family bonds on the social and moral values of the street children are presented in the following tables.

**EFFECT OF GENDER ON THE SOCIAL AND MORAL VALUES OF THE STREET CHILDREN:**

The following table provides the details of mean scores, standard deviation and 't' test of social and moral values of street children with reference to their gender.

**TABLE – 1**  
**Effect of gender on the social and moral values of the street children.**

Gender	Social Values			Moral Values		
	Mean	S.D	't' Value	Mean	S.D	't' Value
Male	5.3	1.6	12.3**	5.6	1.5	17.5**
Female	6.8	1.4		7.6	1.3	

Note:- \*\* Significant at 1% level of significance.

A perusal of table 1 revealed that female street children had relatively better social and moral values than the male street children, as the 't' value (12.3 & 17.5) are highly significant at 1% level. This finding is supported by Mathur (2009) who revealed that gambling, watching films and television, smoking and drinking and taking drugs were common modes of entertainment and relaxation for majority of male street children.

**EFFECT OF FAMILY BONDING ON THE SOCIAL AND MORAL VALUES OF STREET CHILDREN:**

Table 2 provides details of mean scores, standard deviation and 't' test of street children with reference to their family bonding.

**TABLE – 2**  
**Effect of family bonding on the social and moral values of street children.**

Family bonds	Social Values			Moral Values		
	Mean	S.D	't' Value	Mean	S.D	't' Value
Presence of parents	7.0	1.6	14.7**	8.1	1.5	12.8**
Absence of parents	5.3	1.2		5.8	1.2	

Note:- \*\* Significant at 1% level of significance.

It can be deciphered from table 2 that presence or absence of parents has an influence on the social and moral values of street children. Children with parents had slightly better values than their orphan counter parts. The reason attributed to this finding could be that street children have strong family ties are provided with love & care, support and recognition by their parents and siblings which gives them a sense of belonging and responsibility. Parents, no matter how they lead their lives, want their children to have socially accepted values and conduct and expectation for social ascension.

**CONCLUSION:**

The conclusion drawn from the present investigation revealed that female street children had better social and moral values than their male counterparts. With regard to family bonding, street children with parents had better social and moral values than orphan children.

**IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY:**

Keeping the above results in mind, it can be deciphered that all children during the growing years need love, care and constant supervision by adults. If that is denied children do not have a role model to follow and fall a prey to anti social elements. Hence, the government has to make stringent efforts, in collaboration with NGO's and voluntary organizations, to provide shelter to the street children or place them in the orphanages under adult supervision, so that the rate of crime and vices may be brought down considerably, in the country.

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