

## SELF-ACCEPTANCE OF STREET CHILDREN

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### Abstract

*The present study has been focused to assess the self-acceptance of street children and to study it according to their age, gender and education. Self- acceptance is accompanied by personal security and acceptance of others. Seventy five street children (50 boys and 25 girls) of 10-19 years age group are selected purposively from Bus station, Railway station and Koneru katta areas of Tirupati, Chittoor (district), A.P. General Information about the subjects is gathered by an Interview Schedule developed by the Investigator. To assess self- acceptance, Kakkar Self- acceptance Inventory (1984) is administered individually. Appropriate statistical techniques are employed and the results are presented.*

### INTRODUCTION

Self –acceptance is the “degree to which an individual having considered his personal characteristics is able to and willing to live with them“. Self – acceptance and understanding of self are closely associated to accept him, the growing person must be aware of him.

Self-acceptance is defined as affirmation or acceptance of self in spite of weaknesses or deficiencies. Although this term has been often understood in common sense way, researchers have defined it formally in terms of positive and negative self-concepts. According to Shepard (1979), self- acceptance refers to an individual’s satisfaction or happiness with himself, and is thought to be necessary for good mental health.

Self-acceptance involves self-understanding, a realistic, albeit subjective, awareness of one’s strengths and weaknesses. It results in an individual’s feeling about himself that he is of “unique worth”.

In clinical psychology and positive psychology, self- acceptance is considered the prerequisite for change to occur. It can be achieved by stopping criticizing and solving the defects of one’s self, and then accepting them to be existing within one’s self. That is, tolerating oneself to be imperfect in some parts.

Self- acceptance, in other words, requires awareness and perception. Jersild (1971) explained that the self- accepted person has a realistic appraisal of his resources combined with the appreciation of his own worth; assurance about standards and convictions of his own without being a slave to the opinion of others; and realistic assessment of limitations without irrational self – approach. Self- accepting people recognize their assets and are free to draw upon them even if they are not all that could be desired. They also recognize their shortcomings without needlessly blaming themselves.

The conditions favorable to self- acceptance are given below

- Self understanding
- Realistic expectations
- Absence of environmental obstacles
- Favorable social attitudes
- Absence of severe emotional stress
- Identification with well- adjusted people
- Self perspective
- Good childhood training
- Stable self- concept

Self –acceptance and self-confidence, feelings of adequacy tend to be associated with personality integration and effective adjustment, whereas self- rejection and feelings of inadequacy are commonly associated with maladaptive behavior.

Every child has the right to opportunity and facilities that enable education, play, recreation to be protected against all forms of neglect, cruelty and by parents and society and subject themselves to exploitation due to economic distress. One among such children are street children.

UNICEF (1992) defined street child as any minor for whom the street has become his or her habitual abode and who who is without adequate protection, supervision or direction from responsible adults..

Street children in the developing world is growing social problem which has a tremendous impact on the development and prosperity of the nation. UNICEF (1992) defined a street child as any minor for whom the street has become his/her habitual abode and who is without adequate protection, supervision or direction from responsible adults.

Broadly street children are categorized into children on the streets with family contacts of more or less regular nature, children off the streets with occasional family contacts and abandoned children who have severed all family ties or had no family at all.

UNICEF (2003) estimates 30 million street children in the world, of which 11 million are in India (Gopinath,1998). In six major cities of India – Mumbai, Chennai, Calcutta, Hyderabad, Bangalore and Kanpur, (Maran, 1997) accounted the number of street children to be 4,14,700.

The causes that compel children on to the streets are both social and psychological. Social- structural causes includes industrialization, urbanization, migration, economic compulsions, the quality of education, lack of schooling, lack of useful occupations, natural calamities and traditional compulsions.

Psychological causes include poor parenting and negligence of children, intolerable situations at home, cruelty on children, sexual abuse and peer group influence. (Agarwal, 1999).

Studies of Pandey (1991), Rao and Mallick (1992) reported that the street children are submissive and suffered from inferiority complex to a large extent. Street children also had feelings of inadequacy, insecurity, poor social adjustment which made them to be unhappy and unsuccessful in life.

Apparently, the street children may have tendency to be neglected by the society which leads them to be socially maladjusted. Self- acceptance is accompanied by personal security and acceptance of others, which may be low in street children. Hence the present study is an attempt in this direction.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the general information of street children
2. To assess the self-acceptance levels of street children
3. To study the self- acceptance of street children according to their age, gender and education

## METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of present study the total sample of 75 street children (50 boys, 25 girls) of 10-16 years age group are selected purposively from Bus station, Railway station and Koneru katta areas of Tirupati, Chittoor district, A.P.

An Interview Schedule prepared by the investigator was used to gather general information about the sample. To assess self-acceptance of street children Kakkar Self-acceptance Inventory (1984) was administered. It is a self – administering inventory initially adapted from the California Psychological Inventory and later simplified by Kakkar (1984). A large test covering a self-acceptance and providing wide survey of an individual from social interaction point of view, was pre-tested, redesigned and standardized on children.

Self- acceptance as measured though this inventory is an assessment of factors such as sense of personal worth and satisfaction with self.

The inventory consists of 34 statements with space to record the responses (true/false) along side of each statement.

The total score for each sample was obtained by adding up the score obtained for individual statements. The total score can range from 0-34. The scores obtained were categorized into four groups as given below.

Scores indicating very low self- acceptance	0-10
Scores indicating low self-acceptance	11-16
Score indicating high self- acceptance	17-22
Scores indicating very high self-acceptance	23-34

The suitable statistical techniques were employed like Percentages, Mean, SD and t -test to analyze and interpret the data.

## MAJOR FINDINGS

### General Information of Street Children

Majority (60 %) of the street children are in the age group of 10-13 years than 14-16 years (40%)

Out of 75 street children, 66.6 per cent are males and 33.4 per cent are females.

Higher number of street children are middle born (48%) firstborn (45.33%) and last born (6.67%)

Street children belonged to Hindu families (68.3%) are higher than those from Muslims (20%) and Christians (11.7%).

More than half of the percentage (54.67%) of street children is found to be Scheduled Caste, 24 per cent Scheduled Tribe, 13.33 per cent Backward Caste and 8 per cent from Other Categories.

Eight percent of street children speak Tamil indicating that they are migrants from Tamil Nadu and rest of the children's mother tongue is Telugu

A higher Percentage (70.67%) street child is from nuclear families with family size ranging from 4-7 members.

A majority (62.67%) of the parents of street children are illiterates and rests of them have education up to secondary level.

A higher percentage (61%) of the parents of street children are employed as servants and sweepers.

A majority (45.4%) of street children is rag pickers and remaining percentage of them are helpers in varied occupations and self- employed.

More than half of the percentage (53.33%) of street children has average working surroundings, 26.67 per cent of them have unhygienic working surroundings and only 20 percent are working in good surroundings.

Nearly half of the percent (53.37 %) of them work to supplement family income and the rest of them to fulfill their own needs and wishes.

Street children are from low income families and earn a meager income of Rs 10-20 per day.

A higher percentage (82%) of them has very poor personal hygiene

A majority (60%) of street children have suffered from fever, 24 percent from cold and headache, 16 per cent from minor skin diseases.

A higher percentage of boys (73.4%) and girls (60.6%) are immunized and the rest of them are not immunized.

Only 70 per cent of street children have attended school up to 5<sup>th</sup> standard and remaining 30 per cent of them are illiterates.

### Self-acceptance of Street Children

When the Self-acceptance is positive, children develop such traits as self-confidence, self-esteem and the ability to see themselves realistically. On the other hand when the self - acceptance is negative, children develop feelings of inadequacy and inferiority.

Table 1. Distribution of Street Children by their Self- Acceptance Levels

Score	Self- acceptance levels	Total	
		No.	%
0-10	Very low self-acceptance	3	4.00
11-16	Low self-acceptance	33	44.00
17-22	High self-acceptance	32	42.67
23-34	Very high self-acceptance	7	9.33

The table 1 show that 4 percent of street children obtained the self- acceptance scores between 0-10 indicates very low self – acceptance level. This level of self-acceptance group are characterized as highly conventional, quiet, self-abasing, given to feelings of guilt and self-blame and as being passive in action and limited in interests.

The majority (44%) of the street children scored 11-16 which reveals low self-acceptance level. The characteristics of this group are methodical, conservative, dependable, easy going, quiet, self-abasing, passive in action and narrow in interests.

Self-acceptance scores between 17-22 are categorized as high self- acceptance level. In this group 42.67 percent of the street children are found. They possess characteristics like intelligence, out-spoken, short- wild, persuasive, very badly fluent, having self – confidence and self- assurance.

The Self-acceptance scores between 23-24 are categorized as very high self- acceptance level. In this group 9.33 percent of the street children are included. This group may tend to be seen as very sharp, strongly demanding, strongly aggressive and self centered nature and over- confidence.

On the whole, it is clear that majority of street children have low (44%) and high (42.67%) self- acceptance

Table 2. Distribution of Street Children by their Self- Acceptance Levels According to their Age

Score	Self- acceptance levels	10-13 years		14-16 years	
		No.	%	No.	%
0-10	Very low self-acceptance	1	2.22	2	6.67
11-16	Low self-acceptance	18	40.00	15	50.00
17-22	High self-acceptance	22	48.89	10	33.33
23-34	Very high self-acceptance	4	8.89	3	10.00

It is observed from the table 2 that 2.22 per cent of 10-13 years age and 6.67 per cent of 14-16 years age street children have very low self –acceptance level. Forty per cent of 10-13 years age group and 50 per cent of 14-16years age group fall under low self- acceptance level. Nearly half of the percentage (48.89%) of 10-13 years and 33.33 percent of 14-16 years are categorized as high self-acceptance level. Under very high self-acceptance level 8.89 per cent of 10-13 years and 10 per cent of 14-16 years street children are included.

On the whole, a higher percentage of 14-16 years age group street children have low self- acceptance level than 10-13 years age group. This may be due to faulty parenting practices and negative attitudes by employers at the work environment made the children feel inferior.

Table 3. Distribution of Street Children by their Self- acceptance Levels According to their Gender

Score	Self- acceptance levels	Boys		Girls	
		No.	%	No.	%
0-10	Very low self-acceptance	2	4.00	1	4.00
11-16	Low self-acceptance	20	40.00	13	52.00
17-22	High self-acceptance	24	48.00	8	32.00
23-34	Very high self-acceptance	4	8.00	2	12.00

From table 3 it is examined that boys and girls have equal percentage (4%) in very low self- acceptance level. Forty per cent of boys and more than half of the percentage (52%) of girls are included in low self-acceptance level. Forty eight per cent of boys and 32 per cent of girls are categorized as high self-acceptance level. Eight per cent of boys and 12 per cent of girls fall under very high self-acceptance level.

Girls with a higher percentage are seen in low self-acceptance level may be due to discrimination in the family, child rearing practices, parental attitudes, cultural practices and environmental influences.

Table 4. Distribution of Street Children by their Self- acceptance Levels According to their Education

Score	Self- acceptance levels	Literates		Illiterates	
		No.	%	No.	%
0-10	Very low self-acceptance	1	3.57	2	4.25
11-16	Low self-acceptance	12	42.85	20	44.68
17-22	High self-acceptance	13	46.42	19	40.42
23-34	Very high self-acceptance	2	7.14	5	10.62

It is indicated from table 4 that 3.57 per cent literate and 4.25 per cent illiterate street children have very low self-acceptance level. In low self-acceptance level 42.85 per cent literates and 44.68 per cent illiterates are included. With regard to high self-acceptance level literates are 46.42 per cent and illiterates are 40.42 per cent. Literates of 7.14 per cent and illiterates of 10.62 fall under very high self-acceptance level.

Illiterate street children have low self-acceptance level where as literate street children have high self-acceptance level. The lack of schooling and awareness about importance of education may be attributed to the above finding. Chandra and Devi (1979) also supported the same.

Table 5. Mean, SD and t- values of Self- acceptance of Street Children According to Their Age, Gender and Education.

Variables	Mean	S.D.	t - value
<b>Age (in years)</b>			
10-13	<b>0.42</b>	<b>2.80</b>	0.454 NS
14-16	<b>1.067</b>	<b>5.74</b>	
<b>Gender</b>			
Boys	<b>0.62</b>	<b>4.361</b>	<b>0.99 NS</b>
Girls	<b>0.72</b>	<b>3.527</b>	
<b>Education</b>			
Literates	<b>1.071</b>	<b>5.37</b>	<b>0.66 NS</b>
Illiterates	<b>0.361</b>	<b>2.45</b>	

NS : Not significant at 5% level of significance.

t table value = 1.96

From table 5 it is evident that there is no significant deference in self-acceptance of street children with regard to their age ( $t=0.454$ ), gender ( $t=0.99$ ) and education ( $t=0.66$ ).

## CONCLUSIONS

- Government and non-government agencies should plan and implement the policies and programmes to rehabilitate the street children and integrate them into society.
- Welfare measures for street children should be strengthened so that they can improve their living and economic conditions.
- To develop the harmonious personality of the street children, their parents need family life education and family counseling.
- To improve the self-acceptance of street children there should be awareness and sensitization programmes to the parents, teachers and community on the development of positive and stable self-concept, self-insight and realistic aspirations..

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