
A Case Study on Problems of Missing Children

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Abstract: *“Children are the future of the country”. They need to be helped to help themselves and to be helped to do it alone, which will give them a good satisfied and improved life. In these days children’s upbringing pattern is changing due to the impact of the modernization and urbanization. Due to these changes children’s education pattern, playing, communicating with others, and use of different media have increased. Children are attracted to momentary pleasures and are prone to child trafficking or kidnapping. We usually see some children who are wandering in and around railway stations, bus stands or work in difficult situation or in beggary. Some children may run away from home or by hostel due to the fear of future and other familial problems. This paper is a study on problems of missing children. Qualitative methodology with case study approach is used for this empirical paper. Three case studies were taken of those children who had run away from home due to the family problem. They are rescued and sent them to a child rehabilitation centre. Our intension is that to give a real insight on missing children’s problem for the people to help in intervening these missing children’s problem.*

Key words: *Missing Children, Family Problems, Child Rehabilitation Center, Real Insight.*

Introduction

A report on the status of missing children in the major cities in India indicated that the majority of the identified missing children in the cities where “on the street” category of children. The first time that missing children came to be seen as an issue of serious public concern in Bombay was back in 1969, when Datta Tamhane, a counsellor, raised it in the Maharashtra Legislative Council. The late Bal Thackeray was also actively involved in the issue around that time. At a meeting held that year on missing children at CKP Hall in Dadar, the Shiva Sena leader had even demanded the setting up of an independent police department to trace missing children.

Most of the missing children “on the street” category go home at the end of the day and contribute their earnings to their family/relatives. They may attend school for a short term during the academic year and they may keep contact with the family. These children may eventually opt for a permanent life on streets. Children “of the street” actually live on the street or outside of a normal family environment. Family ties may exist, but are tenuous and are maintained only casually or occasionally. Majority of the missing children ‘found on the streets’ and its vicinities are ‘run away children’ and they commute by train, buses, trucks to reach the city. Major crimes against children include trafficking, kidnapping, rape and infanticide, while the girl child is affected the most due to the propagation of sex work in cities.

The missing children are badly treated by adults, care takers and become victims of all kinds of exploitations. Due to their life style and deviant or negative behaviour, they are separated from the regular world, some children develop negative self image in the society. The children find it herculean to access social support system and they finally take to substance use, unwanted sex, robbery, etc...to find happiness and to camouflage their sorrows and craving for love and attention.

In most of the missing children cases, there is a strong desire in the children found in the area to earn money and lead a luxurious life with instant gratification that the street offers. The number of runaway or unaccompanied children found in the area is less. While there are some children who are trafficked for jobs and are taken to small scale industries, the possibilities of interventions on behalf of such children are intricate as they are invisible. Missing children do not approach to any health care settings for their health needs and are at high risk and prone to diseases as they eat unhygienic food and sleep in open places.

The different bureaus has been trying to conquer the hitches of missing children – innovative programs have been designed to address the needs of the various categories of children found and rescued from the streets of big cities like Bangalore, Mumbai, Pune, etc., all over nation.

About two years earlier, the Central Government had set up the Jyotna Shah Committee to study the issue. One of its recommendations included an independent department to investigate these cases. Though there is a Missing Children Bureau at various Police Commissionerates across the country the rate of Missing Children is still increasing.

Review of Literature

The facts and figures have changed since then, but the problem of missing children continues to grow, feeding into the weaknesses of our child protection systems. News report addressing multiple angles of the child cases have forced many questions into the realm of public awareness.

A leading daily undertook a sustained series of reports around the country and presented what is visible of the situation. Such a spotlight plays a critical role in raising consciousness levels, but also indicates that there is far more that is invisible and unknown (CHILDLINE, 2007).

Missing children is often subsumed into the overarching issue of missing persons. The leading ACPO working definition of a 'missing person' is "anyone whose whereabouts is unknown whatever the circumstances of disappearance. They will be considered missing until located and their wellbeing or otherwise is established" (ACPO, 2005).

Media and civil society are actively discussing the role of politics, administration, economics, social structures, development priorities and legal systems in protection of child rights.

Primary statistical data and documentation available with CHILDLINE for a period of three years from 2003 to 2006, has been the basis of analysis and discussion that has provided inputs for 'CHILDLINE Perspectives'.

"On an average, over 40,000 children in India are reported missing every year, of which approximately 11,000 remain untraced. Where do they go?" (Haq: 2005).

The 'Search Wing' in the Crime Records Section of NCRB coordinates and transmits information to other places. It is expected only to be a 'documentation centre' or at best, a 'transfer desk', because, as of today, NCRB does not investigate or monitor or facilitate recovery of the missing persons as a proactive organization. Therefore, nothing more is done in the NCRB to follow-up on the missing persons till they are traced.

The police stations do not give any feedback to the NCRB (National Crime Records Bureau) when the missing person is rescued or returned and, therefore, the NCRB, despite being the national repository of 'crime data', is unaware of the current status of those reported missing (CHILDLINE, 2007).

“According to the National Human Rights Commission’s report on trafficking of women and children, in Delhi alone, an average of 6,227 children goes missing every year”(Express News Service ‘Missing children figures in Delhi rising each year’ January 25,2007).

The Government, the Allied services, the Corporate, Development and Citizen sectors, need to converge to achieve a common goal-the protection of the rights of children who may be lost, missing or separated from their guardians and families.

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre will play in supporting the good work already being undertaken in the statutory and voluntary sectors and how it will work with practitioners in those sectors to protect and safeguard more children and tackle those who would seek to abuse them (CEOP, 2011).

CEOP intends to bring a different approach to this problem; one that seeks to use the limited resources available nationally to target problems that have a national/international complexion; require specific oversight and coordination; suggest some form of serious and/or organized criminality; and recognizes that it is more economic to provide specialist resources at a national level to support local activity.

The approach will be partnership-driven, working with existing national and local organizations that already do valuable work and identifying new partners who may be able to help. The aim will not be to replicate that already being done but to deliver complementary activity (CEOP, 2011).

In 2009/10 there were an estimated 360,000 missing person incidents, of which approximately 230,000 (64%) related to a child under the age of 18 (NPIA, 2011).

Methodology and Research Design

It is a study on problems of missing children aimed to give a real insight on missing children’s problem for the people to help in intervening these missing children’s problem.

Objectives:

- To know the problems of missing children through case study
- To assess the level of problems of missing children

To identify the reasons for problems of missing children

To address the needs of the various categories of children found and rescued from the streets

A Qualitative research design with case study approach is used, having the universe to be considered for the study would be street children intervened by BOSCO Bangalore. Three cases are taken to analysis in this paper.

Data Analysis

During the year 2013-2014, 3887 children were rescued through the help of CHILDLINE and BOSCO. There is emerging consensus which suggests that many of the exploited children identified go missing from home or care centers, often for short periods. Three of the studied cases are highlighted in this paper.

Case 1

Boy named Gopal (mock name) was born in a poor family. His father had two wives, for this reason his mother left the home. After this his father also neglected him. The boy had elder brother and younger sister; both were working for daily wages. He also worked in so many places like chicken farm, electrician shop and for some days he worked in agriculture sector. In these days he searched his mother, but his mother was not found anywhere. He was not adjusted to his home because of the negligence showed by his father and his second wife. Both were addicted to alcohol, gave him more forceful punishment like beating. That is why he left home and he came to Bangalore in search of a job at Anekallu, as he was new to Bangalore majestic bus stand, he was confused..... So in search of a job he came back to Bangalore railway station at that time child help line staffs observed and rescued him. Social worker intervened and helped him to know about his problems as well as his needs.

Case 2

There was a boy named Shahid (mock name) who was born in a poor family at Chikkaballapura. His father was addicted to alcohol and he had behavioural abnormalities. His father was beating his mother, siblings and also punished them. The boy and other family members were not given sufficient food. When he was in S.S.L.C. his mother expired and thereafter no one was there to support him at home. As he was scared by his father's behaviour

he left home. He continued his studies in a college which was near his place by staying in principal's home. Principal was a good person; he helped this boy in many things and also by giving place at his home to study. But principal's wife was narrow minded lady and she didn't allow this boy to continue there. So he went to boy's hostel and continued his studies. During his mid-term holidays he went to his home. But his father didn't allow him to stay at home. So he went to Bangalore and worked there in a Dabha. But at the end of his mid-term holidays he was unable to return home due to lack of money. So he continued his work there in the same Dabha. So at the end of one year he earned Rs. 40000. After working for one year he developed a sort of interest in studies. So to continue his studies he planned to go back to his college. So he went to the bus stand where he was rescued by BOSCO child help line staffs. Social worker motivated the boy to get education and to overcome from his problem. A psycho social intervention also has been made.

Case 3

Mahesh (mock name), was 17 year old, living at Ananthapura district Andhra. His father was alcoholic and his Mother-left home when he was a child. He has one elder brother and one younger sister. After the school days due to bad company he started to consume alcohol and started smoking. There was a leader who took care of him. He started to sell belpuri and later took a train to Bangalore and reached city railway station. During this time the BOSCO and child Line caught him at Bangalore railway station. Social worker helped the boy by motivating him and training him about the problem of alcoholism and use of drug.

Discussion, Findings and Results

Reasons for problems of missing children

The reasons leading to problems of missing children include, parent negligence, poverty, human trafficking, love affairs, peer group influence, negative impact of social media, environmental problems, emotional distress and substance abuse in search of occupation and education.

In our case study we found that, the risks to missing children are more ranging from sexual abuse and exploitation, violence, drug and alcohol addiction, involvement in petty crime, sexually transmitted diseases and in rare cases murder.

Problems of missing children found during case study:

The problems of such missing children are due to lack of basic needs, educational problem, health problems, emotional problem, physical problem, societal harassment, lack of parental love and affection, substance use, stress due to various reasons, and child labour.

Suggestions

Major survey is needed to get effective result on the problems of missing children, more qualitative reference is needed for the further studies, comparative study should be done in research field. It is also necessary to make a distinction between cases of long and short term missing children. Medias should specially focus on problem of missing children in various regions. Social worker have to play a vital role to create awareness among people of the society about the problems of street children.

Conclusion

A child goes missing is primarily a matter for local services to react and to manage the investigation and the searching of that missed child. It is evident that there are specific threats to children that causethem to go missing, or are a consequence of the missing episode itself, which have a cross boundary, jurisdictional or even international characteristic. In these cases it is important that such problems are reacted within this context and that a national overview of these problems is essential. This is particularly important when it comes to developing an understanding between the victimology and offending behaviour. It is only with this understanding that policy and operational response can be properly shaped at local, national and international level.

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