A Research On Sociality Of Learning And Success  
-Istanbul Street Children Case-  
Somayyeh RADMARD*, Nurettin BELTEKİN

Abstract

Education is one of the fundamental(s) of human rights. It is an important opportunity especially for growing children living in disadvantaged social conditions. Education is accepted as a means for social mobility that allows children a better life. However, the number of school dropouts named as “street working children” and “child workers” are increasing in the world. These children at the age of compulsory education are being forced to work instead of spending their times with constructive games and activities. Although some of them are attending school their working life is precluding their school life. Working out of school influences children's educational performance negatively. The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between school attendance, learning, achievement, hard living and working conditions of children working on the streets. This research is a qualitative study and the description of the current situation is aimed. The population of the study is the children working in the streets of Istanbul. The sample includes 78 children. They are selected through convenience sampling method among the children who are working on the streets of Istanbul. In-depth interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview form. For the analysis of the data, descriptive statistics were calculated and content analysis was conducted for the open-ended questions. Most of the children working on the streets are at primary school age and are from the eastern and southeastern regions of Turkey. Generally, they are the children of the uneducated and poor villagers who have been obliged to evacuate their villages because of the war. The children are working as bagel sellers, shoe shiners, tissue paper sellers, plaster sellers, water sellers and some of them were picking waste paper. School dropouts and absenteeism are a high rate and the success rate is quite low. Most of them don’t have enough motivation to continue with their education. Street-working children are in families that don’t have enough social, economic and cultural capital. So they cannot use the benefits of basic education right. The most important result of this study, learning and success are not only school-related process but is also a social process. Therefore, in order to use the right to education and the achievements, the children’s families living conditions must be improved and children’s security must be ensured.

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* Corresponding Author: Somayyeh Radmard.
E-posta: somayyeh92@yahoo.com
The number of children who work in the streets have been increasing all over the world. Street children and children workers in the world, constitute apart of political, economical and social problems such as emigration, poverty and war, especially in developing countries (Erkan, Sümer & Ünver, 2002; Şişman, 2004; Açıkalın, 2008; Alpekin, 2011; Baltacı, 2011; Köksal, 1992; Atauz, 1997). Displaced families and their children have to work in the streets under difficult circumstances. As a result of this, children lack education and they are exposed to sexual harassment, rape, drug and alcohol addiction. They also face persecution (Suchas porn industry, organ mafia and to be a slave laborer) (İçli, Arıkan vd., 2007, s. 37; Altın, 2000, s. 296).

United Nations Children's Rights Declaration (Article 9) contains protection of children from every kind of outrage and exploitation. A child can not be a subject of any trade. Children under a certain age can not be employed. However, according to the IPEC data (2010), there are 127 million children worker between the ages 5-14 in Asia Pacific countries, 17.4 million in Latin America and Caribbean, 13.6 million in Middle East Countries and North Africa and 2.4 million in East Europe countries, and 2.5 million in developed countries.

The worst form of child labor in Turkey is working on the streets along with child labor in the rural areas and rural area jobs (Bilgin, 2008, s. 23-26). These children sell chewing gum, water, baloons and bagels, work as shoe shiners, porters, garbage collectors, florists; and they suffer a variety of accidents. Children work in a risk of physical and sexual abuse. Children working on the streets are up against police officers and municipal police, they are ill-treated by various individuals, they enter street gangs and use harmful substances. Children working in hazardous environments on the streets often have to leave school, run away from home when they have problems with their parents, and they spend the majority of their time on the streets. According to TUIK (2006) datas, 84,7% of working children attend a school, but 15,3% of working children do not attend a school.

Unfortunately, the regulations about Turkish children working on the streets, which has become a very serious problem, are not sufficient to rescue children from streets. Whereas, the right to education, which is one of the fundamental human rights, is a great opportunity for the children growing-up in disadvantaged communities. Education is accepted as a social mobility method that provides a better life to the children. (Tezcan, 1997, s. 159) Those children at the age of compulsory education are obliged to work and spend their time with work rather than playing developing games and (doing) activities. Their working life becomes more important than their education life, even if they attend a school. Bourdieu (1996, 2007, s. 88) emphasizes that the gains at the school are related to social, cultural and economical capital of the children. In other words, learning and achievement are both significantly related to the life which that person belongs.

The Aim of Study

The purpose of this study is to research the connection between harsh living and working conditions of the children working on the streets and their educational achievement. In this context, demographic characteristics of street children, their reasons leading them to work on the streets, their experiences on streets, family characteristics, educational experiences, perceptions of the future and their expectations from life are aimed to understand.

Method

This research, is a qualitative study in a scan type. The cosmos of the research is children working on streets of Istanbul. 78 children were included in the research with random sampling method. Interviewed children, were determined by using purposive sampling (Kümbetoğlu, 2005, s. 98) technique. Face-to-face interviews were
conducted with the interview form. Descriptive analysis technique were used for open-ended questions, frequency and percentage distributions are utilized for analysis of the data and questions about personal information.

**Findings and Interpretation**

According to the results of the research, 81% of the group (more than four-fifths) were male, 9% of the group (close to one-fifth) were female. It is clear that a significant number of the children are male. According to analysis of age distribution, more than half of the people in the group are between the ages of 11-15, 25% of the people in the group (one quarter of the group) are between the ages of 7-10. The ratio of children between the ages of 16 years and older is relatively low. Most of the children (89%) between the ages of 7-15 are of primary and secondary school.

According to the distribution of the level of education more than half of the group (52%) consist of the children who do not attend the school. (Children who dropped out of primary school, children who finished primary school, children who dropped out of secondary school, children who finished secondary school and children who dropped out of high-school).

According to the distribution of the place of birth, 44% of the children in the research group are from The Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia Region. The birthplace of one-third of the children is Istanbul. 14% of the group consist of children from the Mediterranean region. Istanbul and The Mediterranean region receives intensive migration from The Eastern and Souttheastern Anatolia Region. According to this information, it can be said that almost all of the students are from The Eastern and Souteeastern Anatolia Region. It is understandable considering the last thirty five years of war and stale of emergancy in the region.

A significant number of children working on the streets had dropped out of school for various reasons. The reasons they mentioned are: Financial difficulties, failure, disliking the school, reluctance of the family, being forced to work,* and war. A large number of children attending school (46 people) mentioned about their failure in school.

17 children signify their success in school. Successful children describe their achievements with the expressions such as: "I am good at my lessons, because my teacher always gives me chocolate." "My grades are good, I have eight 5's " and "I am succesful when I study". Children who describe theirself as unsuccessful say: "I feel unsuccessful, desperate and dispirited", "I was going to school under difficult conditions, the food was not enough and the house was crowded." "I had no time for my lessons" and "I can not study a lot." It can be easily seen that harsh living and working conditions break their motivation and makes the idea of school bad for them. In spite of this, some of the children become succesful with motivation and interest of their teacher.

**Conclusion**

Children working on the streets lack social, economical and cultural capital that arise from education, because of social constraints of their families. In spite of their awareness of importance of social mobility provided by school, the motivation of most of the children is not enough and inefficient for schooling. Still, it is identified that some of the children can continue their school life with help and provision of assistance. Thus, it is necessary to improve the living conditions of families for children's right to education. This research indicates that, learning and success is about intramural events and also society.

**References**

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