# Social Provisions among Street Children

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*Social Provision among street children*
*Social provisions, Street children, Attachment, Social Support*

**Abstract:** *The research presents description of relationship of street children with their parents, peers, friends and others significant people. The study also intended to find out social support system of the street children. A sample of 80 trash picker girls and boys of age range 8-12 years, living with their both parents at their homes was collected from different areas of Lahore. Social Provisions scale Urdu Version (Rizwan & Syed, 2010) and Multidimensional scale of perceived social support (Zimet, Dehlm, Zimet & Farley, 1988)were administered to identify certain type of social support and social support adequacy from different sources respectively. Results indicated that girls received higher social support as compared to boys. No significant difference found on the attachment level among both. Boys scored higher on reassurance of worthwhile girls scored higher on reliable alliance, guidance and opportunity of nurturance. Results also indicated that both boys and girls find equal support from their friends while on the other hand, boys received more support from family while girls from significant others. A positive correlation was also found between nurturance and reassurance of worth, guidance, reliable alliance, nurturance opportunity and family category in both genders. Results are discussed in cultural relevance.*
*Keywords: social provisions, street children, Pakistan, social support, Nurturance*

## I.     Introduction

*"The future might look bleak for street children as long as they do not receive social support. The community needs to nurture its own children since 'nurturing is an important component of any child's growth and thus it is important to meet the psycho-social needs of children'."*

*TAWANDA NYAWASHA*

Youngest age, in Pakistan at which a child can give contribution to family income or survive in a street gang, appears to be about five years and if the child is alone, age can be a year or two older. This statement imprisons the matter of fact style of reporting in Street Children. This, neither trivialize nor sensationalize this topic, but rather carefully explains the complexity of the reasons i.e. how children turn up to the streets, whether they do or do not survive and what situation or strategy has or has not worked to improve their lives.

Generally, Street child is an expression used to categorize the children living on streets, and most of the times devoid of protection and family care. Most of the children found on streets are between the ages of about 5-17 years old, and the number of such children varies between different cities.

The World Health organization defines Street children (1993) as:

"Children who have to work on streets because their families need money to survive, children from poor families who sleep on streets, orphan and abandoned children whose parents have died because of illness or war or to whom it was simply impossible to look after their children".

There are a set of definitions that are widely accepted commonly credited to UNICEF which has categorized street children in mainly two ways:

1.  *On* the street: Those who are engaged in some kind of economic activities including begging or vending. Majority of these children leave for their homes when the day ends and contribute in the family income. Attending school and keeping sense of belonging to a family is not uncommon. These children may ultimately have to choose for permanent street life due to the poor economic conditions of the family.

2.  *Of* the street: Those who live on the street (or outside of a normal family environment). Fragile Belongingness to family may exist and occasional maintained (Snglguy, 2008).

Street children and its related complicated social challenge are observable facts in Pakistan. These children are at a high risk and are increasing in number. This is a distinct social class which has stayed neglected by the society for a long time. The issue remained behind sight till 1996 when UN officially short listed the issue as one of the major social problems and vulnerable community. World has witnessed a rapid increase in the number till these times. Unfortunately, exact number of the street children has never been identified in any part of the world and even they are not a part of census always. United Nations has estimated the population of street children worldwide as 150 million (P A N G A E A, 2003).

Data of street children calculate approximately a number of forty million street children in South America, 10 million in Africa, 25 million cases in Asia, and about 25 million cases in Eastern and Western Europe. While the largest concentrations of street children are reported in Latin and South America (Scanlon, 1998). Asian Human Rights Commission has been attributed to announce 1.2 million children on the streets of Pakistan's major cities and urban areas and is the largest ostracized social group (Manzoor, 2013). South Asia is home to some of the largest numbers of street children in the world (Seneviratne, 2001).

According to a study conducted in 2004, majority of the children come to the street to augment family income and majority of them are males but females are not even exceptional. They are found more in the category of "off the street" i.e. they return to their shelters after spending 8-12 hours in the street. Most of the children among them are males (81%) and they are below the age of 10 years and they are earning about Rs. 40-60 per day (Ali, Shahab, Ushijima, Muynck, 2004). Results of a cross sectional study which enrolled 80 families showed that males worked on streets and females worked as housemaids, shopkeepers etc (Abdelgalil, Gurgel, Theobald, Cuevas, 2003).

The key function of people around us is to help each other in deal with the problems. Society is often taken as facilitating to all the people in psychosocial crisis. It is the society that sometimes even creates problems i.e. complicate grief, inhibit social support or debilitate the sick. Social support has been helpful in making susceptible children and orphans adjusted to their grief and dilemma (Nyawasha, 2011).

People of all ages and belonging to all social status have the tendency to form social relationships and wish to attach themselves with other people for their wellbeing. Same is the case with children whether they are living in happy families or they are away from their homes. Whether they are facilitated by their parents or they are doing pity jobs like trash picking to aid their own selves financially.

We depend on society to strengthen ourselves emotionally and it is affected by cultural influence as well. Strength of ties is related to expressive actions (sharing life experiences, emotional support). A longitudinal study has been done which concluded that the people who were having weak and low social or community relations died in the follow-up period than those who had widespread associations (Berkman & Syme, 1979). Generally, four basic categories of support are identified that one can get from others:

1.  Information
2.  Companionship
3.  Emotional aid
4.  Material aid (money, service, goods)

Social support is important to many people who are interested to explore physical (e.g., death) and mental health (e.g., Frustration). It is a kind of physical and emotional comfort provided to an individual by the friends, family and society. A wise saying is that "man is a social animal" and we live in a community where we receive and expect love and care from other people. People wish that other people acknowledge our ideas and thoughts. Three distinct sub-types of social support are identified and each has important ties with health in different ways:

✓  A support recipient's perception of social support,
✓  The specific supportive actions received, and
✓  The extent to which a person is integrated within a social network.

An important aspect of psychosocial support is that a message or unrestrained experience does not constitute support unless the receiver views it as such. According to Cohen and Wills (1985), social support can be seen as a multidimensional construct including the structural and functional quality of a person's social relations network.

Structural social support is concerned with the existence and form of the social network while functional social support is concerned with how the network serves to provide different kinds of support. On the other hand Terrence, Amick and Judith (1994) suggested that social support is the degree to which a person's basic social needs are met through interaction with other people. It's(includes) the resources both tangible and intangible that other people provide. It's a perception of a person that he or she can count on other people for help in the time of crisis.

According to this theory, there are six different social provisions that can be obtained from relationships among human beings. These provisions are guidance (advice or information), reliable alliance (assurance that others can be counted on in times of stress), reassurance of worth (recognition of one's competence), attachment (emotional closeness), social integration (a sense of belonging to a group of friends), and opportunity for nurturance (providing assistance to others). It is important to have different provisions in various stages and circumstances of lives, including their personality and developmental stages they belong to, peoples need these provisions in order to feel being adequately supported by others and being socially functioning members of the society they live in. the concept of social support has long been studied as an important construct and consistently found to be related to mental health (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Kertesz,

Larson, Horton, Winter, Saitz, & Samet, 2005), subjective and psychological well-being (Cohen, Gottlieb & Underwood, 2000; Henderson & Brown, 1988), higher levels of psychopathology (Kilbourne, Rofey, McCarthy, Post, Welsh, & Blow, 2007; Pierce, Frone, Russell, Cooper, & Mudar, 2000), depression (Bayat, Erdem, & Kuzueu, 2008; Talaei, Ardani, & Saghebi, 2008), suicidal ideation (Kimbrough, Molock, & Walton, 1996), self-esteem (Eckenrode & Wethington, 1990; Gottlieb, 2009; Malik, 2002) and anxiety (Bayat, Erdem, & Kuzueu, 2008).

Interpersonal relationships that provide social support in terms of information, help, expressions of care and promote health by imparting feelings that one is being cared for, beliefs that one is esteemed, and a sense of belonging to a reciprocal network (Cutrona & Russell, 1990). Constant with this view, cognitive constructs such as internal control, beliefs, dysfunctional attitudes, and self-esteem are more highly correlated with perceived social support (Lakey & Cassady, 1990).

Evidence also suggests that when individuals confront a stress-inducing experience, the mere presence of other people can be comforting, even if these people are strangers (Schachter, 1959).

In terms of cognitions, interpersonal relationships play a very powerful role in the shaping of human thoughts. For example, individuals tend to interpret their relatives and friends as more favorable than the strangers. Similarly, group membership can also cause biasness in cognitive patterns by producing group-serving attributions that place group members in a positive light (Zander, 1971). Interpersonal relationships have also been reported to produce stronger emotional responses. The presence of constantly stable bonds is responsible for profusion of positive affect (e.g., feeling good), but meanwhile, disturbances and threats to these social attachments can also be a major source of negative affect e.g., anxiety, jealousy (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

In general, Baumeister and Leary (1995) have suggested that being accepted and included leads to a variety of positive emotions, whereas being rejected or excluded leads to a strong potent negative feelings.

## Rationale of the Study

Huge literature is available that is based on social support of human beings and the consequences of its poor perception but there is a very scarce literature relevant to social support of street children. No dimension of their relations is given worth by the researchers in our society. Some of the foreign research findings and strategies have been practiced in our culture. According to Ali, Shahab, Ushijima, Muynck (2004), although children belonging to foreign countries are facing the same risk factors but their social treatment and values are quite different from us. We should keep those differences in view while studying or planning for our children. This is a very hopeless situation that the population which is responsibility of every individual of the society is most ignored. We unfortunately, don't own them as a part of our nation(society). They being youth are no doubt, building blocks in the progress of any country. Present findings will help in identifying the social alliances of street children and how can we help them to manage their social relationships. Identification of social alliances would help in providing them psychosocial support as there would be a base line for their problem management. Social helplessness and poor perceptions make a child psychologically misfit.

Social support has a strong positive correlation with subjective well being. It was concluded that subjective well being of both men and women is significantly affected by support and it may be a beneficial promoter of subjective health as well (Okamoto & Tanaka, 2004).

Street children are not seen as individual cases but they are social subjects and become as a result of social influences. Social support and its strength is a big indicator of the behavioral and emotional stability of a child and especially of the child who lives on street in the society for whole day long and is dependent on other behaviors. The difficult thing in conducting such researches is availability of data or any platform which can facilitate to reach these children where they can respond without any hesitation.

## Research Objectives

Current study was conducted to profile the social relationships of street children with their family, friends and other people around them. The study has provided a review and explored the conditions under which the street children found themselves in street and being marginalized, victimized or exploited. Study was conducted to compare their strength and dimensions of perceived support between boys and girls, where possible.

## II. Methodology

### 2.1. Participants

Total 80 Participants (boys = 40, girls = 40) of age range 8-12 years were selected through purposive sampling technique. The children belonged to the group who worked on streets for 8-12 hours and return back to their shelter after work. They own families and live with them but due to certain reasons, they have to do pity jobs. None of them was visiting school and few of them even left in a very early times(age).

*2.2. Measurement Tools*
*2.2.1.* ***Social Provisions Scale Urdu Version (Rizwan & Syed, 2010).***

Social support is well established as a defensive factor. The Social Provisions Scale was chosen because it is based on theory, has good psychometric properties, contains simple worded questions, and is relatively brief and also available in translated form in Urdu.

The scale consists of 24 items, four for each of the following: Attachment (emotional closeness), Social Integration (a sense of belongingness with other friends), Reassurance of Worth (recognition of one's competence), Reliable Alliance (assurance that others can be considered at the time of stress), Guidance (information or advise), and Opportunity for Nurturance (providing assistance to others). Half of the items describe the presence of a type of support and the others describe the absence of a type of support. This is a four point likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). A high score indicates a level and strength of perceived social support. Cronbach alpha for the scale is .70 which is an indicative of high reliability. The scale is also valid and norms referred in this culture.

*2.2.2.* ***Multidimensional scale of perceived social support (Zimet, Dehlm, Zimet & Farley, 1988).***

The scale consists of 12 items designed to assess perception of social support adequacy from the sources of friends, family and other significant people around. This is a 7 point scale ranging from very strongly disagree to very strongly agree(don't use very). The scale is having good internal and test retest reliability computed cronbach alpha as .89 and .76 respectively. The scale has high reliability and validity for Pakistani adults.
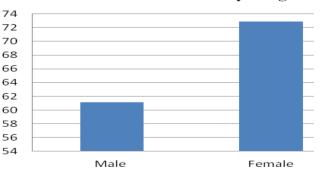
Inclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria for the study were street children who belonged to poor families and roamed on streets in search of their earning so that they can support their huge families and satisfy their hunger at least. The children were between the age ranges of 8-12 years. None of the child was visiting school due to job nature and they were unable to read even Urdu but all of them had good understanding of the language. They could understand what they were asked. Physically or psychologically handicapped children were not included as sample of the study. Runaway children or the children out of their homes were not the part of sample.

*Procedure*

Child Protection Centers were visited after getting permission from Global Vision Organization, for the purpose of data collection. Social Provisions Scale (Urdu Version) and Multidimensional scale of perceived social support (Urdu version) were administered on the target children. Their basic information was taken as a formal introduction before scale administration. Consent was taken by their parents and they were assured about the confidentiality of information taken from their children as it involved some questions related to family environment. The confidentiality matter was discussed with the children as well so that their hesitation in correct response can be eliminated. Both the scales were administered individually on the each child so that they can't duplicate responses of the other child.

## III.    Results

Data analysis was conducted by using the SPSS. Sample of eighty children (*N*=80) was taken for this study that were further divided into two groups as forty trash picker girls (*n*=40) and forty trash picker boys (*n*=40).



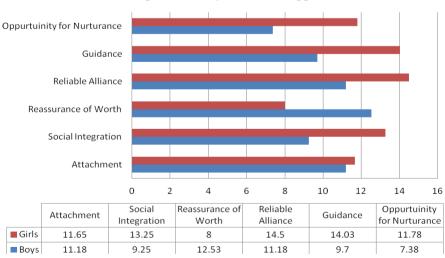*Figure 1*: Mean total social support among trash picking boys and girls

Results indicate that there is a difference between perception of social support among girls and boys. Girls receive higher level of social support as compared to boys working on the street for whole day long and then return to their shelter.

*Table1*
*t-test to compare the means of subscales of total support among male and female children*

**N=80**

|  | **M** | **SD** | **t** | **P** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Attachment** | | | | |
| Male | 11.18 | 2.123 | | |
| | | | -1.219 | .227 |
| Female | 11.65 | 1.252 | | |
| **Social Integration** | | | | |
| Male | 9.25 | 2.790 | | |
| | | | -6.510 | .00** |
| Female | 13.25 | 2.706 | | |
| **Reassurance of worth** | | | | |
| Male | 12.52 | 3.282 | | |
| | | | 7.778 | .000** |
| Female | 8.00 | 1.664 | | |
| **Reliable Alliance** | | | | |
| Male | 11.18 | 2.111 | | |
| | | | -8.086 | .000** |
| Female | 14.50 | 1.519 | | |
| **Guidance** | | | | |
| Male | 9.70 | 3.065 | | |
| | | | -7.184 | .000** |
| Female | 14.02 | 2.259 | | |
| **Opportunity for Nurturance** | | | | |
| Male | 7.38 | .409 | | |
| | | | -8.600 | .000** |
| Female | 11.78 | 2.913 | | |
| **Total Social Support** | | | | |
| Male | 61.10 | 10.242 | | |
| | | | -5.783 | .000** |
| Female | 72.88 | 7.562 | | |

*\*\*P< .01 (1 tailed)*

Independent sample t-test was computed to analyze difference between each element of social support and gender of the children. There was no significant difference $t(78)= -1.219$, $p=.227$ found on the attachment level among boys and girls. There is a significant difference on social integration $t(78)= -6.51$, $p=.00$, Reassurance of Worth $t(78)= 7.778$, $p=.00$, Reliable alliance $t(78)= -8.086$, $p=.00$, Guidance $t(78)= -7.184$, $p=.00$ and Opportunity for Nurturance $t(78)= -8.600$, $p<.00$. Total social support has also been found significantly different $t(78)= -5.783$, $p=.00$ among boys and girls.

**comparative analysis of social support**



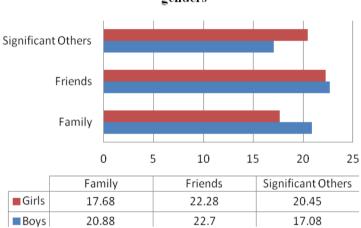|  | Attachment | Social Integration | Reassurance of Worth | Reliable Alliance | Guidance | Opportunity for Nurturance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Girls | 11.65 | 13.25 | 8 | 14.5 | 14.03 | 11.78 |
| Boys | 11.18 | 9.25 | 12.53 | 11.18 | 9.7 | 7.38 |

*Figure 2*: Mean differences of social support elements among boys and girls
Graph above shows the rate and direction of difference on basic elements of social support among the sample.

***Table2***
*t-test to compare the means of subscales of total support among male and female children*

**N=80**

|  | *M* | *SD* | *t* | *P* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Family** | | | | |
| Male | 20.88 | 3.864 | | |
| | | | 3.42 | .001** |
| Female | 17.68 | 4.480 | | |
| **Significant Others** | | | | |
| Male | 17.08 | 3.24 | | |
| | | | -3.87 | .000** |
| Female | 20.45 | 4.47 | | |

*\*\*P< .01 (1 tailed)*

t-test for independent samples was computed to check whether there is any difference between boys and girls in getting support from family, friends and significant others. Results indicate that boys and girls significantly differ *t*(78)= 3.42, *p*=.001 from each other on the category of family and same is the case *t*(78)=-3.87, *p*=.000 with the category of significant others.

### Category strength about social support across genders



|  | Family | Friends | Significant Others |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Girls** | 17.68 | 22.28 | 20.45 |
| **Boys** | 20.88 | 22.7 | 17.08 |

*Figure 3*: Mean differences of social support from three categories of relations among boys and girls
Boys receive more strong social support from significant people other than family members while girls perceive that their family is more supportive for them than any other person. There is not reportable difference on the category of friends for both the genders

***Table3***
*Correlation between social support elements and the support provided by family*

*N=80*

| Variable | Family Support |
|---|---|
| Opportunity for Nurturance | .017* |
| Reassurance of Worth | .005** |

*\*\*P< .01*

Bivariate analysis was computed to check the correlation between social support elements and the family category. Only significant results are presented in *table 3* and the others are given in the *Fig 4*. Both boys and girls get opportunity for nurturance *r* = 0.017, *n* = 80, *p* = 0.002 from family and there is a significant positive correlation *r* = 0.05, *n* = 80, *p* = 0.002 between reassurance of worth and family category.
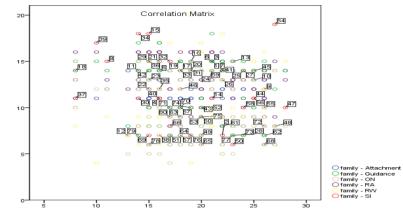
*Figure4:* Correlation between social support elements and the category of family

*Table4*

*Correlation between social support elements and the support provided by family*

| Variable | Total Social Support |
|---|---|
| Social Integration | .838* |
| Reliable Alliances | .735** |
| Guidance | .910** |
| Opportunity for Nurturance | .774** |



*Figure 5:* Correlation between total social support and the elements

## IV.    Discussion

Present study was conducted to explore the level and dimensions of social support among children who are working on streets. It was speculated that boys receive high level of support as compared to the girls but the scale sores and analysis shows reverse. It indicates that girls perceived high level of support from their family and friends. The scale was about perceived support which shows that girls become satisfied on little attention and the boys are more demanding and need a lot of care and attention. They perceive that they don't get appropriate support from the significant people around them. The findings of this study are consistent with the findings of Okamoto M.D & Tanaka (2003) who concluded that women receive higher social support (4.3 ± 1.6) than men (3.8 ± 1.8).

Gender roles constructed and experienced in our society are also a factor behind such perceptions and found harmful for both genders as well.  In this context, boys are frequently expected to work to survive and be independent in early life, as well as appear to be more vulnerable to peer pressure. Societal and parental expectations mean that girls are more likely to remain at home doing housework and child rearing (Raffaell, Koller & Reppold, 2000).

Second analysis was conducted to compare the boys and the girls on the elements of social support. Significant difference was found on all the elements except on attachment. See *table1*. These results are consistent with the findings of Anderson, Holmes & Ostresh, 1999 who conducted research on juvenile

delinquents. They conducted a survey on adolescent boys and girls incarcerated in the Wyoming Boys' and Girls' Schools to examine (a) differences in boys' and girls' level of attachment to parents, peers, and school. The results showed no significant difference in attachment level of both boys and girls. The results of another study conducted on delinquents show no differences in boys' and girls' levels of attachment (Anderson, Holmes & Ostresh, 1999).

Although behavioral difference between boys and girls tend to show that there may be some difference in attachment level among both but researches could not find it scientifically. Boy's anger is thoughts to mediate the attachment strength but overall pattern of results did not provide any evidence or such mediation (Dwyer, Fredstrom, Rubin, LaForce, Kransor, & Burgess, 2010).

The results of *t* test show that there is a significant difference between the girls and the boys on reassurance of worth i.e. recognition of one's competence. Comparison of percentages shows that boys have higher level of self competence. They perceive themselves as more competent in their work. These findings are similar to Jane E. Brody (2006) who found that girls are more critical about themselves as compared to boys. Researches prove the significance of self competence as an important factor in crime and violence. Boys have higher tendency of doing risky things and dealing with dangerous situations. Boys are significantly more likely as compared to girls to do something dangerous. Risky and dangerous activities trigger a 'fight or flight' response that gives a tingle, a charge, an excitement that many boys find irresistible. Boys systematically *overestimate* their own ability, while girls are more likely to *underestimate* their abilities (Sax & Leonard, 2005).

The findings are consistent with the findings of Cooke (1999) who declared that adolescent girls have low self esteem as compared to boys and they have less confidence over themselves and their abilities especially intellectual abilities.

These findings are in oppose to the findings of Inok, 2011 who found in the street children belonging to the city of Chennai city that the level of self-esteem among boys and girls developed is the same. Self-esteem gained by the street children is higher than the children from school.

The other elements where the girls have higher scores as compared to boys are reliable alliances, i.e. they are sure that others can be considered at the time of stress. The Girls are more confident about others help as compared to their own abilities and strengths. These findings are supported by the research findings of Lawal, 2011 who concluded that male children always give worth to themselves and they regard their own strengths as compared to girls and for this reason they look at their own selves first when facing any problem. He also suggested that both males and female street children require support in the area of rehabilitation for practical skills that can make them survive in this depressed economy and enhance their self esteem (especially, the female ones).

The findings are consistent with the findings of a comparative study conducted on brain structures and behaviors. It has been declared that girls often ask help from other people and feel close to their elders especially teachers while asking for help whereas boys **are** do not ask for help from other people to avoid being perceived as "sucking up" to their teachers or elders (sax, 2005)

Findings of the present study found that there is a significant difference between girls and boys on the level of Guidance $t(78)= -7.184$, $p=.00$ i.e. the level of advice and information they receive from their social groups. Girls in our society are considered to be more protected and to be cared and their parents have such high expectations from them as well. They are guided more as compared to boys who are given free hand to deal with the things. They have easy excess to outside environment so they are under less influence of their family.

Findings of this study also suggest that there is a significant difference between girls and boys on the level of Opportunity for Nurturance $t(78)= -8.600$, $p<.00$. Girls are more supportive for others as compared to boys of their own age group. Girls are often reported as more helping and supporting for others. They are thought to comfort and share more than boys although the sex difference is not much large (Eidenberg, Fabes & Spinard, 2006; Russel et al, 2003) and is not appearance(appearent) in all situations (Grusee, Goodnow & Cohen, 1996). People believe that girls are more concerned about others welfare and girls often emit stronger facial and vocal expressions of sympathy as compared to boys (Hastings et al, 2000).

These findings are supported by the findings of a gender fair assessment of altruistic reputation i.e. females are more altruistic than male members (Zarbatany, Hartmann, Gelfand, & Vinciguerra, 1985).

## V.    Conclusion

The study was conducted to check leveled social support among street children and see whetehre there is any gender difference existing among these children. Study findings suggest that there is a significant difference in the level of perceived social support among boys and girls. Boys need more attention while girls stay satisfied for what they get from their family and friends. They vary on different dimensions on social support as well and their perceptions about family and friends, as source of social support are also different.

**Limitations and suggestions**

1. Runway children could not be contacted due to time limit. There must be comparison between these groups so that their reasons for runaway can be identified and they could be facilitated by providing social support

2. A group of school going children should also be included so that there dimensions of support could be differentiated. It could give a getter picture of social provisions and concerns of children living and having different life circumstance.

3. No other scale regarding psychological well being could be administered. There must be some measurement of their psychological well being so that the strength of social support can be used for the purpose of treatment of the suffering children.

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