

## CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF RUNAWAY CHILDREN CRISIS: EVIDENCE FROM BALOCHISTAN

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**Abstract.** The problem of runaway children though seems very general as an issue but in fact is too complex to be analyzed because of the multitude of factors — social, economic, institutional and administrative — responsible for such phenomenon. The study conducted was mainly designed to understand the magnitude of the problem of children running away from homes as well as to bring to light the factors responsible for the incident and to get the responses of state institutions, communities and families towards these children. The methodology regarding the assessment of these mentioned aspects related to the situation was based on the diversified opinion on the issues of the key players. Children, their parents/guardians and neighbours, centers/NGOs working for the rights of children, orphanage houses, police officials, lawyers and judges were interviewed to get the required information. The study reveals that the highest number of runaway cases took place due to the punishment both at home and school and the next highest due to educational compulsion. Strict behaviour towards the child, loose supervision over the child and continuous punishment to the child have been quoted as major mistakes. The major improvements suggested can be presented as: the upbringing of the child be based on provision of good education, proper and systematic guidance, home supervision in a good and conflict-free atmosphere, attitude though strict but free of physical punishment.

### I. INTRODUCTION

The principle of ‘first call for children’ states that the essential needs of children should be given high priority in the allocation of resources at national and international as well as at family levels. The aspirations of the

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international community for the survival, protection and development of all children are best reflected in the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted unanimously by the United Nations General Assembly in November 1989. Pakistan, having an estimated population of 167.8 million, with an annual growth rate of 1.9, and an under-18 child population of 78.4 million, is facing important challenges in guaranteeing protection of children's rights. Some estimates state that there are more than 3.3 million children in the age group of 4-14 years who are engaged in child labour at the cost of their education and health. Apart from child labour, children are abused, kidnapped, exported to the Middle East as camel jockeys, and commonly seen begging, collecting garbage.

A study conducted by the research and publication unit, Department of Social Work, University of the Punjab, entitled as Lost/Kidnapped/Runaway children, gives the reference of a study "Situation of the Child of Punjab" prepared by Dr. Rukhsana Zai and her project team. The study states that the well being of children in the age limit of 0-6 years in Punjab is better than other provinces of Pakistan, nevertheless, it is unsatisfactory compared to CRC standard to which Pakistan is signatory. The current efforts of both the Govt. and private sector to enhance child's well being are both fragmented and inadequate. There is dire need to raise awareness in the family, community, Government and private institutions that are responsible for the pre-school education and health of the mother and child. Currently all efforts are fragmented, they need to be integrated and interconnected to generate synergy. The study recommends adopting a child-centered approach in all the relevant institutions that are directly or indirectly responsible for child's well being. The child grows within a family; therefore, raising awareness in the family about the child's healthy development is quite crucial. The family unit is an integral part of a community; therefore, community awareness in terms of child's well being is significant. Many problems of individuals and families cannot solve or easily handled by the communities, so community participation in the child development issues is inevitable. Another area of improvement is the area of equal opportunity, which means disadvantaged sections of the society have to be given special priority.

Another study on 'Negheban Centers', conducted by the Department of Sociology, University of the Punjab in 1998, pinpoints that lack of coordination exists between the centers and other public service institutions like police, labour department and NGOs.

Immediate dealing of parents of lost, runaway or kidnapped children was found the announcement at mosque, then physical search with friends

and reporting to police was formal and least resorting. Report indicates the causes of the lost, runaway and kidnapped phenomenon in the way that parental violence, family dissolution, extreme poverty, physical or sexual abuse as determinants of issue.

Deeni Madrassas were also considered by researchers as places where real hostility among children is planted by bounding, forcing, and punishing for this education.

Due to abject poverty some parents were least interested in monitoring the activities of their working children. They were only interested in getting money consequently a child is left on the disposal of circumstances which lead him to be misleading badly. The study recommends that if sometime parents are not identified or do not accept that child then some rehabilitative arrangement should be made by these institutions.

The above research studies clearly demonstrate that the problem of runaway children though seems very general as an issue but in fact is so complex to be analyzed because of the multitude of factors; social, economic, institutional and administrative responsible for such phenomenon. The factors responsible start from home where the harsh as well as unguided attitude of the parents does not provide the opportunity of better brought up and lays down the foundation for the runaway of the children from home. Not only this but the malnutrition of the child, the poor education of the parents and elders, poor living standard and low social status of the family members are the factors at home level aggravating the sense of runaway within the child. At the school level the child carrying the psychological pressure from home is faced with another institutional problem, *i.e.* punishment and harsh behaviour of the teachers. Again the child is vulnerable to another issue of being unable to resist the mentioned pressure of punishment for poor performance here. The major point emerging is, that the inability of the child to resist pressures both at home and school leaves him with no option other than running away from home. This indicates that the two institutions home and school are the places where a child needs the proper guidance, sympathetic attitude and problem-solving environment for his successful brought up and capacity building to understand and face the problems at his early age.

## **II. DATA AND METHODS**

The main objective of the study is to understand the magnitude of the problem as well as the attitudes and causes/factors leading to children running away from homes and to get the responses of state institutions,

communities and families towards these children. The methodology adopted for the study has been mainly dependent on the use of questionnaires for children, parents and guardians. Interview guides were also used to cover up the institutions such as: Edhi Centre, and Orphanage House etc.

In order to get information about the cases of runaway children, police department was identified as the main source of information where such cases of children are registered generally. Furthering the first hand information gathered from police stations regarding the addresses of the children, the required information was collected through instruments mentioned above from the children affected, parents/guardians. Twenty eight children, their parents/guardians and neighbours were interviewed in detail to get the required information. Incharge Edhi Center, Quetta, Incharge Orphanage House, Quetta, NGOs working for the rights of children, a number of police officials, lawyers and judges were also interviewed to have their feedback.

Keeping in view the widespread province of Balochistan having long extended borders with not only all of the provinces of Pakistan but also with two neighbour countries: Afghanistan and Iran over and above its 700 km coastal borders, it was difficult to take minimum sample area for the purpose of analysis of issue such as runaway cases of children. However, an attempt has been made to identify areas which were easily accessible and also have the potential to serve the purpose to a greater extent. Therefore, Quetta, the capital of the province, Loralai town close to the border of Punjab easy to escape for the children and Sibi town being a gate way to bigger cities of the Sindh province particularly Karachi and Hyderabad have been chosen as sample sites for conducting the study. These places were identified also with the intention to cover the cultural and ethnic diversity in the province to a greater extent. These sample sites were also preferred from the point of accessibility to other areas facilitating the children who runaway from their homes.

### **III. CHILD AND FAMILY PROFILE**

#### **Child Profile**

The child profile has been designed to have relevant important information explaining the language status, sex, ethnic distribution, age group, family system, education and health condition of runaway children. This profile highlights the socio-economic features not only of the children included in the study but also enlightens the reader about the area in terms of its socio-economic characteristics to some extent.

On the average, children picked under this study were 96% male and 4% female. Out of 28 children only one was female as the girls rarely go through this practice.

The linguistic distribution of the children studied highlights the fact that in total 56.1% of the children were Pushto speaking, 5.4% Persian speaking, 1.2% Brahvi, 3.9% Balochi, 4.8% Urdu, 11.4% Punjabi, 11.3% Sindhi speaking and 6.0% others including Siraiki and Makrani. This indicates that the highest number of children were Pushto speaking followed by Punjabi and Sindhi. The percentages of the languages are more skewed towards Pushto and the next one Punjabi because of Quetta, being the capital and having the highest population.

The age group data reveals the fact that the highest number of children falls into the age group of 9-11 years. On the average, 21% children fall into the group aging up to 6 years. Under the age group 6-8 years 18%, under the age group of 9-11 years the children are 22.4%, while under the age group of 12-14 years, there are 20% and under the last group of 15-17 years, 18.5% children. Analyzing the data gives the clue that under the runaway situation the lowest number of children is under first two age groups, up to 08 years.

Observing the educational status of the children, the highlights are: on average, the highest numbers of children are 'under primary' (32.5%), the next higher (24.2%) are 'illiterate' where the highest number of children (18.5%) is with primary education. As further detail the children with 'middle education' are 9.2%, with 'Matriculation' education 4.5% and the children with only 'religious' education are 11.2%. Other than the overall average, incident-wise distribution can be expressed as, the highest number of runaway children are 'under primary' being 50%.

The health condition of the children under study were found to be either of good health (45.3%) or in the category of average health (51.7%), only one child (3%) was found to be of poor health.

### **Family Profile**

The family profile of the child has been considered on one hand, to have an idea about the family where a child is a part of it and has the greatest impact on the child's life and on the other to know about domestic environment shaped by the socio-economic features of the family. The important considerations in this regard are; the family size, educational status of the family members, family system and income group where the family falls.

The family sizes of the children reveals that the bigger the family size, the lesser the chance of better vigilance over the child and better supervision of the child as well as family. The overall average tells about the highest number of families of the child falling in size group of 6-8 members, followed by next higher 10-20 members of the family. Considering it from the runaway situation, the highest number of families (32%) falls in the group of 10-20 members,

On the education side, the education of parents/guardians is being discussed over here being the key persons in the brought up of the child. The mother's and the father's educational status has been taken into consideration and in case no parents, the guardians have been considered. On average, 77.3% of the mothers have been found without any education where 18% were found to be either primary or middle and the rest 4.5% with religious education only. The fathers of the children on average, for all the three types were found to be 59% with no education at all, 13.6% with matriculation, 9% with intermediate qualification and 9% having graduation and the rest into primary, middle and religious education. A comparison of education can be done from the angle of the type of children. The highest number of fathers under runaway situation are matriculation qualified (17.9%), ignoring the percentage of uneducated (46.4%).

The family system of the children under discussion for runaway situation was found to be mainly a 'joint family system' in practice in 89.3% families where the rest 10.7% families were found to be under 'nuclear system'.

The families of the children studied were also analyzed from income point of view and the conclusion in this regard came up as; the highest number of families (31.7%) on the average, were found to be in the income group of Rs. 7,001 and above the next higher percentage of families (28%) were identified in the income group of Rs. 3,001-5,000 and the third higher number (17.1%) fall in the income group of Rs. 5,001-7,000. However, 13.5% respondents did not respond to the query of income status due to some apprehensions. Among the runaway children's families, the highest number falls in two groups Rs. 3,001-5,000 and Rs. 7,001 and above.

#### **IV. VIEWS AND PERCEPTION OF THE CHILDREN**

##### **School Going Status of the Child**

The school going indicator has been included in the study under discussion on one hand to know about its link with the performance of the child in

education and, on the other, to understand the level and seriousness of supervision by the parents/guardians over the child. In other words, the issue was thought to be tackled from the point of view to assess its impact on the case of runaway children in terms of pattern and degree of supervision and the resultant change in child's attitude. In this regard, an interesting conclusion was derived which states that the number of school going children increased after the incident compared to situation prior to the incident. The percentage of school going children increased from 67% to 76%. This arising situation of increased number indicates the seriousness of the parents and school teachers about the child supervision and guidance on one hand and the better response to such guidance from the child side on the other after the incidents. However, this needs to be taken serious in the light of realization about effective and improved supervision of the child and the family as well.

### **Educational Performance**

Education plays a pivotal role in the life of every human being particularly child whose life moves around the process of learning very importantly till maturity stage and education releases serious effects and after effects on his/her life. Education has been picked on priority to see the educational performance of the child impacting his/her life as well as to assess the picture of education in the light of; its effects on the life of the child, the response of the child towards this sensitive indicator, adjustment of the child towards schooling, education as a compulsion factor disturbing the child's life and forcing the child to disconnect relation with education through some undesirable action such as runaway leading to aggravate the tense situation within the family. The educational performance is mainly considered to be the determinant of relationship and treatment of the family with the child. This is not only applicable to home but also to school where the relationship between the teacher and the taught (student) is established. This turning point in the child's life particularly, brought up is important to be analyzed properly. Therefore, in this study queries have been made to understand; the perception of the child about his performance in education, parents point of view about the child's performance enabling us to compare the two point of views and also the assessment of parents awareness regarding the child's performance as well as school going status of the child.

Regarding the educational performance of the 'runaway children', 33.3 percent children consider themselves performing 'Good' while almost 28 percent assess themselves 'Average' and 28 percent 'Poor'. Surprisingly, only 11 percent put themselves in the category of 'Excellent'. This indicates

that the educational performance of only 44 percent is above average. In case of parents assessing the performance of their children, the response is not much different as they have assessed almost 42 percent of their children above average, being closer to the 44% figure of the children, whereas under the category of 'Poor', there are 38% children whereas the percentage of 'Good' and 'Average' are lower, being 25 and 21 respectively. However, the percentage under category of 'Excellent' is 17 percent, higher than the children's 11 percent which may be due to the ill informed status of the parents.

### **Treatment on Poor Performance at Home**

The factors forcing the children to runaway mainly stems from the stern and harsh attitude faced either at home or at school level on poor educational performance. The bad company, bad habits and non-adjustment at both levels (home and school) generally are the outcome of the poor educational performance of the child. This study has highlighted this dimension of the child for the reason to know that how the children are being treated both at 'home' and 'school' level, the two most important institutions establishing the life characteristics of the child.

The issue of treatment at poor performance of the 'runaway children' out of 18 children the performance of 10 was poor. Putting it differently, 50 percent children were guided while 50 percent were punished in different ways including beating up and torturing.

This indicates few facts that:

- (i) A large number of children under the category of 'runaway' are poor regarding their educational performance (56%).
- (ii) A large number of children are being punished/tortured upon poor performance.
- (iii) There is positive relationship between the 'runaway of children, poor performance and harsh treatment'.

Another dimension of this phenomenon is that, most of the children (60%) are punished rather than guided or ignored. However, the percentage of the parents preferring guidance rather than punishment is not negligible, being 40 percent. It is important to note that punishment at home will be combined in the lines mentioned below to see its repercussions on child attitude.

**Treatment on poor performance at School**

The interaction and behaviour of the school teacher with the child is very important in context of handling the child as this phenomenon not only sets the norm of teacher student relationship but also lays down more or less the foundation of parents and child relationship. But comparatively this relationship releases stronger repercussions on the child's life compared to other factors. Therefore, this factor has been given much importance in the study under discussion. This situation is being depicted in the study as, the children have largely been punished rather than guided or ignored upon poor performance at schools. The responses reveal that, 90 percent cases fall under this category. Taking it the other way round, more than 90 percent are being punished. This indicates that in schools the principals of 'guidance' and 'ignorance' to stop the child from further embarrassment and fear to continue schooling is highly avoided.

This highlights an alarming situation that guidance to give the child an opportunity to mend his/her way and ignorance to abolish the sense of strong fear is preferred more comparatively at homes compared to schools.

**Treatment at Work Place**

The above explanation was for the school going where as in this part those children are being discussed who are not going to school at present but are working somewhere which they have preferred to go to school. The survey revealed that out of 28 runaway cases only 14 percent children were found working at some places like workshop, hotel, garage etc. The nature of these working children, preferring work compared to school pinpoints the fact that the atmosphere and attitude at work place is more favourable compared to home and school. This notion is endorsed by the fact that almost all working children confirmed that they are not being tortured, rather sympathetically behaved at work places. In very rare cases they are warned but not tortured. The sympathetic attitude of employers indicates that the children usually work on very low wages being economical to the employers. This hints at the clue of the child labour too.

**Child's Activities**

The child's activities have been picked to assess the field of interest showing his/her inclination towards the activities generally. Also to know whether he/she is being deprived of forcing him/her to commit the fault of running away from home or not and also to see the degree of family supervision. The information collected refers to the fact that the highest number of children faced with incident of 'runaway' have more been involved in sports where

from the result can be inferred that the trend of most of such children is towards positive activities and considering it a strength gives us the clue that such children can be put on track back through guidance. This also indicates that the children in general are either not getting the chance to play or they are not being allowed for sports. The percentage of involved children is the highest (38%) in general, while the second largest number (19%) among the runaway children is that of wandering and roaming without any purpose indicating the presence of symptoms of running away. The next highest number of children (15%) is that of watching movies, dish and video games for those who can afford it. In nutshell we can conclude here that the charm of these activities is higher for the children compared to supervised activities in school and home.

### **Family Atmosphere**

Coming down to another important aspect of life having the lasting impact on the life of the child is the environment available to him/her where the child is attached with all the time — the family atmosphere. The brought up and building character of the child is mainly through the institution of 'home' where other factors, elements, institutions and dimensions outside the house are secondary to it. Thus, it is very important to describe the atmosphere encircling the life of the child.

The family atmosphere described by the children has been classified into the categories; loving, compromising, conflicting, average, and tense. Under runaway children situation, 43 percent marked it 'Loving' while 43 percent marked it conflicting and tense, where as 10 percent called it compromising. This indicates that in most of the houses the children are not satisfied with the prevailing relationship among the family members and thus non-conducive rather conflicting environment being non-favourable for the upbringing of the children exists. This is perhaps an indication rather reason for non-satisfactory atmosphere compelling the child to runaway.

### **Meeting Needs of the Child**

The incident of runaway supposedly has some link with the need of the children, therefore, it was considered to be important to know how the needs of the children are met by the parents/guardians. It is difficult to give a standard definition to the 'needs of the child', however, in the study it has been confined to basic needs (food, clothing, shelter, school expenses etc.) plus some pocket money an average child gets from home while going to school. But 'source' as a proxy indicator of financing the need has been emphasized. In our situation, asked from those children who met with the

incident of 'runaway', 95 percent were the children living on or meeting their day to day needs (other than necessary needs looked after by parents) from pocket money received from parents/guardians. Only 5 percent were those meeting their needs out of money borrowed from friends. This means that the children who ran away from home were not satisfied, perhaps due to poverty of the family. But the low number of non- school going but working children does not support the idea though may be that some children could not find jobs during such period even after search.

### **Reasons of Runaway**

The reasons of runaway may be various but it is important to mention those which are the common causes and are generally accepted widely, therefore, the study has depicted the reasons which caused the respondent children to runaway from their homes. The response to this matter is basically the response to one of the objectives of this study, *i.e.* to understand and assess the causes of 'runaway' of children. The major reasons coming up in the light of responses from children are; the punishment at home, punishment at school, punishment both at home and school, education compulsion, friends provocation/temptation and boredom felt at home.

The largest number of children (38%) mentioned the immediate reason of their runaway to be punishment at home by parents / guardians which reflects on the lack of realization and in the result a serious attempt made to help the child mend his/her ways keeping in view the existing weaknesses. No guidance was provided, no proper planning done to remove the weaknesses of the child at home level. Educational compulsion was responded to be second most important reason causing the runaway, the view expressed by (24%). While the third most important reason was the punishment at school where 20% children mentioned it to be the reason for runaway. If we combine the punishment at school with educational compulsion it raises the percentage to 44, emerging as the main reason for the runaway of the child. Another important reason forwarded by the children was the provocation or in other words temptation by his/her friends for taking such serious criminal step of runaway. This raises a serious point about the need of proper supervision of the company of the child where his friends at school or street, or 'muhalla' level be watched causing the absence of the child from school and late coming home.

### **Duration of being Away**

The runaway of child brings up an awesome story of the child in the grip of circumstances unknown and unforeseeable to him pinching and torturing not

only the child having a rosy picture in mind but also the family blamed for and marked responsible for the ill deeds of the child who mainly are worried about the safety and child spoiling. This trouble- some stage of misconduct of the child leaves the family in real trouble till the return back or recovery of the child. Not only the child, his/her family but also relatives, friends of parents, neighbours, police and other related persons are involved to search and get him/her back to their parents. The important consideration here is, the length of the period a child is away from home. Longer the duration of being away, the bigger the trouble.

The children who ran away from home stayed outside home for days, months and even years. The survey conducted revealed that 14% children who ran away have not yet returned home and have not been found even after two years. The families after all possible assistance from various sides have either failed or have suspended the search for these children. Almost the same number of children (14%) has stayed away for more than three months but less than a year period. The children being away for more than 3 days but less than a month are 23% of the total runaway children. The highest number is that of 36% who have been at large for one day only where they were detected or they themselves realized the mistake and were back home soon.

### **Satisfaction over facilities**

The runaway children after reaching at the new place were faced with a situation where the surroundings, food, shelter, attitude of the new people he\she came into interaction with are the important factors which definitely might be affecting the feelings and the length of stay at the new place. In some cases the children had preplanned to go to some destination in mind but in most of the cases it was a sudden decision where to go. The study considered this aspect to find out the level of satisfaction of the child at the new place. Any child in general, compares the facilities at new place with that at home though some services provided at home are not properly realized by the child during the stay at home.

The study reveals that most of the children during the shorter phase assessed the surroundings to be either good or normal. The percentage of such children is 75 while 25% marked it bad. Regarding food, 65% children were of the opinion that the food they usually took was normal where as about the shelter the children were also satisfied and the percentage of such children showing the positive attitude was 65 percent while 30 percent pointed it to be bad and 5 percent having not remarks. Coincidentally, 65 percent of the children were positive about the behaviour of the people they came a cross and the rest 25 percent were either not satisfied or they had no

opinion. The positive response of the children under runaway situation mainly seemed to be the reason of having money in their pocket sufficient for their comfortable stay at the new place or due to perhaps their stay with relatives and friends where they got every facility.

### **The Pleasure and Irritants at New Place**

The children reaching at the new place under runaway condition generally expect pleasure at the place. They come across pleasure and irritating situations. The children were involved to explain what came up in the result of their expectations. They responded about the two sides as, the biggest pleasure they cited (26%) was the charm of the new place itself where as 5% each, narrated the 'food' and the 'good behaviour' of the people as the striking pleasure at the new place. Surprisingly, 63% children could not mention the most appealing joy got at new place.

The irritant mentioned by the children mainly was 'home sickness', explained by 21% children, whereas 5% children narrated it to be the 'low quality of food' and the same percentage, 5% claimed it to be the, 'the bad nature of the people' and the 'uncomfortable place'. The highest number of children (68%) could not mention or respond about the major irritant at the new place.

### **Activities at the new Place**

The children who ran away from home had some ideas though different from each other. Some were with the intention to work, some to visit and roam around, some to stay at shrines, some to play games, some to beg and even some to do nothing but to have a free lunch. In reality their ideas did not materialize and the picture came up as: 47 percent were doing nothing just relaxing, the next higher number 22% were busy in visiting and roaming around. Interestingly, 16% were those who involved in games and seemed to be the main interest of the child as an activity. Some 11% each was the number involved in staying at shrines and working for their survival. However, no child was involved during his/her stay at new place in stealing and only one opted for begging. This indicates that more than 80% children were not involved in any paid activity which might be either due to non prior planning or did not succeed to do what they wished.

### **Encouragement for Runaway**

The child usually does not have the courage to commit a big crime or take a drastic step such as that of runaway. There are various possibilities that he/she is instigated and provoked by friends, neighbours, classmates, relative

children or any other related child. The study incorporated this important factor in a way to find out who among the above has/have encouraged him/her for such a terrible step. Our study reveals that 89% children have been instigated by the friends of the child who giving him/her the company to encourage for runaway incident. Only 11% children were encouraged by the relatives of the child of same age. This indicates that the company of the child in street or muhalla is of prime importance to be watched.

### **Desire to Go Home**

In order to assess the realization of mistake in shape of runaway, it is important to include the assessment of feeling of the child about his/her desire to go home. Therefore, it was considered that the period related to the desire to go back home be given due importance. The response from the children was divided into three categories of raising their desire just after reaching the new place, in the middle of the stay period and in the last days of such period.

Some 44% children responded that they wished to go home in the start of the period they were away, 25% in the middle and 31% realized and wished to go home back in the last.

### **Reasons of Going Back Home**

After the desire emerged among the runaway children, it in other words, initiated the process of going back home. But it is important first, to highlight the reasons, which forced these children to go back home with some exception to those who still were reluctant to go back home due to the fear of punishment by parents/guardians. The children respondents discussed this dimension frankly which was recorded as; 67% in one way or the other were willing to go back home because of the reason that they missed their family (38%), got bored (10%) and disliked conditions (19%). But 33% children responded that they were forced to go back home rather than their wish of staying at the new place to be accommodated. This indicates that 2/3 of the children usually realized to go back home and get rid of the new situation they were trapped in.

### **Contact with family**

The process of contact of the child with the family is a dramatic step sometimes possible by the child him/herself, sometimes through police, through family members, through stranger, friends or Imam Masjid. This has been thought about in the study on the ground to know that who usually are at the forefront to assist the child to establish contact with the family.

Generally, it is an absurd idea that all of these are involved but what in reality is there which highlights the real situation.

The information sought pinpoints that in most of the cases (38%) the children themselves contacted the family without any assistance. The police, family members and sudden contact have equal weight (19% each) in assisting to have contact of the child with the family, where 5% children have been assisted by the friends in helping the child and family contact. This means that in runaway cases other than child him/herself police and family members as well as friends play important role in establishing this contact.

### **Treatment/Reaction of family members**

Before reaching home, the child is usually very scared to face the family members after such act of runaway. Various apprehensions move around his head because of being guilty conscious. Not only parents, the child has the fear to be punished by other family members. Anyhow, the child makes a mind to seek pardon for his act, that's why we mentioned earlier that 1/3 of the children because of this reason don't want to return back home. As per data collected that factual position came up as; in most of the cases (38%) family members advised their children softly to refrain from such step in future explaining its disadvantages, 33% children were pardoned, 19% were beaten up by parents or family members. Some 10% were given stern warning to be careful in future and not repeat the incident to avoid severe action. This raises the point that 71% parents/guardians/family members opted the soft policy rather than harsh attitude.

### **Responsibility Acceptance**

The occurrence of such incidents has reasons behind it explained in back pages. But it is important to raise the issue of fixing the responsibility, elaborating who is responsible. Of course the child is responsible for runaway but parents/guardians and teacher etc. might be responsible for creating an environment forcing the child to runaway. The question is whether anyone accepts the responsibility, this was basically the question asked from the child, parents and also friends. It is important to first focus on the children's viewpoint. The higher number of children (43%) blamed themselves, while 19% children blamed parents, 19% blame friends. Keeping in view the fact that on average more than 50% and in runaway situation 57% children blamed others (parents, teachers and friends) for forcing them through their acts to runaway. It is for the experts and policy makers to review the situation in the light of this fact and remove the hurdles

and hardships created by parents, teachers and friends. In other words the home discipline the school situation and the friends company are the major factors to be looked at.

### **Child's Repentance on incident**

The important nation here is to help the child to mend his/her ways which is possible only through the realization that repeating such incident of runaway will badly harm him. Therefore, assessment was also made to receive the response of the child whether he/she repents on the act of runaway or not.

This effect has been included in this part to arrive at some conclusion where interesting 90% children who passed through the process of runaway felt sorry and repent on whatever they did. They don't want to repeat the incident, which, as per their perception, has spoiled their life. Some 10% still don't repent for the reason that they can earn money necessary for meeting their needs and also to set their future in direction. They are not afraid of facing the punishment from family as the rest 90% have the fear.

## **V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The present study was carried out to understand the magnitude of the problem of children running away from homes, to get the responses of state institutions, communities and families towards these children. It also attempted to bring to light the factors responsible for the incident, persons responsible for and the degree of fulfilling the responsibility by the stakeholders. The major reasons of runaway came out to be the punishment to child at home and school, improper guidance proving as educational compulsion, friends' provocation for runaway and boredom felt at home due to unattractive atmosphere created by other family members. Strict behaviours towards the child, loose supervision over the child and continuous punishment to the child have been quoted as major mistakes. The lessons learnt from the incident are: good and effective supervision is needed, child must not be punished persistently, the genuine demands of the child be met, and check on child's society is must. In order to avoid the incident to take place in future the major improvements suggested include: upbringing of the child be based on provision of good education, proper and systematic guidance, home supervision in a good and conflict free atmosphere, attitude though strict but free of physical punishment.

The recommendations based on the conclusions mentioned in this part of the study have been framed not as policy recommendations for the planners and policy makers at the government level only but also for the voluntary

organizations, civil society, NGOs, welfare organizations, law enforcement agencies, the most close personalities (parents, teachers, friends) to play their role and fulfill their responsibilities. All these segments of the population are being motivated to share responsibilities to lower the intensity of the issue of running away of the children:

1. A strict behaviour from parents and teachers towards the child both at home and school based on false assessment of the child's problem(s) be abandoned to streamline the child in the day to day life, otherwise the imbalance in his/her life activities will jeopardize his/her personality and the incident of runaway is inevitable.
2. The harsh attitude in form of taunting and abusing may perhaps be accommodated by the children in some cases but physical torture in form of beating up, locking up in room, stopping from the food etc. will frighten the child and force him/her to take extreme step of running away or harming him/herself. Therefore, the strategy of guiding the child through torture must be stopped wherever in practice.
3. The supervision of the family needs to be assessed and the problem ensuing in the result be reviewed and concrete steps be taken at home level by the parents. The important dimensions of knowing the weaknesses of the child, taking care of the child's needs, providing child friendly educational environment, check on the friends circle of the child, provision of conflict free home atmosphere and most importantly proper guidance be on priority concerning the supervision responsibility of the parents/guardians which can help in eliminating the chances of runaway of a child.
4. The way of teaching needs to be modified to accommodate the interest of the child lowering the intensity of boredom, fear of punishment and more importantly to accommodate extracurricular activities. Only teaching, proving to be a compulsion can be altered in an interesting mode motivating the child to adjust to the educational environment.
5. To ensure the above steps, for creating awareness and sharpening the realization among family leaders and also to educate them properly about the importance and effective mechanism of handling and supervising the family, a campaign needs to be launched through print, broadcasting and telecasting media enabling the heads of the families to safeguard the future of their children. Such

awareness promotion needs to be accompanied by a series of sessions with parents/guardians and teachers to mobilize the civil society at district level to have face to face interaction with the persons mentioned.

6. The interests of the child related to off school activities emerged as a crucial factor for shaping up the child's life. This has to be taken care of by providing the opportunities of sports facilities enabling the children to spend time in activities of their interest. This will divert the attention of the children from activities releasing negative impact on their lives such as horrible video games, watching terror and crimes promoting dish programmes, filthy movies etc. Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs can play a significant role in this regard.
7. As a result of our investigation in the study, the children who had religious thinking and were practical due to such teachings were not found to be involved in undesirable activities such as: watching the horrible terror dish programmes, filthy movies, cable programmes, video games and also involvement in bad company. Unfortunately, such activities are conducted at the cost of education. Therefore, to stop the children to be engaged in activities mentioned above the religious thinking and practicing needs to be encouraged both at home and school levels.
8. In the cases runaway children during the gap till the establishment of contact with their families, no accommodation is available in form of any center or institution throughout the province, even Edhi Centres do not accommodate such children. Therefore, it is suggested that some center be established at divisional level to accommodate such children for the time span mentioned.

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