

# Public Attitude Towards Street Children and How Street Children Understand Themselves: The Case of Nekemte Town

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## Abstract

Street children are common phenomena throughout the world facing a lot of challenges in their life. People especially local community have controversial attitude for this children while the majority perceive them as the trouble and burden to the societies life few of the community have positive attitude. The main objective of this study was identifying the attitude people for street children and the attitude street children for themselves. So, to attain this objective, a cross-sectional study design was utilized. The researchers used mixed approach and both quantitative and qualitative tools of data collection were used. The researcher relied more on qualitative method due to the nature of the issue under investigation. The data was collected from 100 street children and other 10 concerned living in Nekemte Town. The researcher observe the town first and communicate with different people to identify the areas where street children highly concentrated and based on that three areas namely Bus station, around Miriam Church and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street of Nekemte town were selected. In order to collect the data three types of instruments were used which includes questionnaire, interview and focus group discussion. Hence, the results of the findings go in line with the objectives of this study. Almost all of the children participated in this study argued as as the local people have negative attitude for them although their attitude contradict with the realities street children life. Different people interviewed also justified as people ignore street children standing form their behavior and street children's engagement in delinquent activities. They also depicted as street children have positive side especially their ups and down activities to overcome their and their families' problem.

**Keywords:** Public attitude, Street Children, Street children attitude

## Introduction

Street children's as a social problem are a global problem encountering countries of the world. From these children, certain numbers of them are living in the streets, they sleep in the open or in empty buildings, and they have no one to support them in their daily struggle for their survival (Hatloy&Huser, 2005). Throughout the world in general and Africa in particular were witnessing rapid and wide ranging of socioeconomic and political changes with both positive and negative consequences, from which the negative consequences of these changes leads large number of children to end up on the street (Kopoka, 2000). The problem of street working children affects directly or indirectly the academic, economic, social and health development of millions of children around the world and due to these aspects of society's interlocking existence. The phenomenon of street children is considered as a frightening social problem facing children today in both the developed and developing world even though the degree of the problem varies from country to country (UNICEF, n.d; Altanis&Goddard, 2004). As Ferrara point out, the presence of street children may be noticed in developed as well as developing countries, however, the majority of street children are living in developing countries (2005). Asia, Africa, and Latin America are famous for having the largest percentages of street children in the world although the proportion is high in Africa (Souza, Castelino, and Madangopal, 2002).

## Public attitude towards Street Children and how street children understand themselves.

Street children constitute a highly vulnerable; most deprived and marginalized section of the society, whose rights are constantly violated with impunity. Even though street children face many challenges from the community in general and their friends in particular, the intervention provided for them is very minimal in comparison the problem. In addition to this most of the time the public and authoritarian have negative perception about this group of people. As in most places in the world, street children are not perceived positively by society in Nekemte town. They exhibit behavior that doesn't agree with the general image of the "good child" in society, including the belief that a child should be with his family, should go to school, should not use drugs, should not steal, should not be violent and should not hang around on the streets (Strehl, 2010).

The surrounding communities of the world have both negative and positive attitude towards street working children. Certain groups of people relate the problem of street children as due to the personal problem of the children themselves rather than structural problem including economic problem of the country. While the others groups who understand the problem of street working children from positive perspective regard the problem is not from the children themselves rather from the inherent problem in economic, political, family, and social structures of the community. The image of street children in their communities is often negative and based on stereotypes. Commonly held stereotypes tend to associate them with criminal activities such as pick-pocketing, car thefts, robberies etc, but it is wrong to assume that all street children engage in such activities all the time.

Obviously, extreme deprivation and social exclusion create opportunities for street children's involvement in crime. However, in contrast to mentioned little evidence exists to suggest that street children actively or deliberately plan criminal activities (UMP, 2000).

For example, a sweeping and negative commentary that treats all street children in Egypt as though they are the same noted that these children represent a severely complex problem. They bring the Egyptian society health, psychological, and social disasters (UNICEF, no. d: 19). The public perception and hostilities against street children is as a result of the children being treated in aggregate, and the total disregard to their individual and personal predicament. Society tends to view these children as troublemakers, a nuisance or menace that needs to be taken off the streets (Kopoka, 2007). Thus, irrespective of the unique characteristics and predicaments of each child, they are all lumped together and treated with ridicule. As it was reflected in Bibars's study, 'the term street children in itself has very negative connotations, especially as "the street" is correlated with crime, vagrancy and deviance' (1998:201). This anecdote is an object lesson in both attitudes to street children and the interpretation of information about them. It is a common assumption that children who live and work on the street either have no moral values or is antisocial; nonetheless the children's attitude shows a high degree of social sensitivity and dignity (Ennew, 2003).

The problem of having negative connotation and assumption about those children working on the street is not only limited to the ordinary community but also to the general community and the government of the country. For instance till the past two decades the government of Egypt and the public at large have very negative connotations about such children, especially as "the street" is correlated with crime, vagrancy and deviance even no effort was made to differentiate between juvenile delinquents and the children who live and work on the streets or remain there during the day (Bibars, 1998:201). As it is reflected in UN (2012), there is a misperception of street children as engaged in substance abuse, early sexual activity, delinquency, and either orphaned or abandoned. These stereotypes reflect public attitudes towards street children more than the reality of individual children's lives. Such representations are problematic because they fail to capture diverse realities of children's lives. Children seen as "victims" are more likely to be treated as passive objects of welfare rather than as rights holders, while children seen as "delinquents" are more likely to be subjected to violence and to end up in the penal system.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Study Design**

The study has employed a cross-sectional survey research design. The researcher employed mixed method design in which both qualitative and quantitative aspects of information were gathered. Mixed research methodology was selected for appropriate collection of data and for the validity of the research. However, it is more of qualitative due to the aim of the study to explore and gain insight of communities have into the perception of the phenomenon of street children with little inclusion of quantitative approach. The researcher also used quantitative method helps the researcher to make wider the sample size of the study which in turn increases the depth of the information. The larger the size of the sample would be the more precise and better to make estimation for the larger population size (Polland, 2005). In addition to this, Yount (2006) also argued as the larger the sample size, the better it represents the population. The use of multiple method in investigating social problems provide for a diversity of viewpoints, expose researchers to different and wider bodies of knowledge, and enable them to investigate their subject matter in a more complete manner (Slonim-Nevo and Nevo, 2009).

Moreover, triangulating data sources helps for the convergence among qualitative and quantitative methods and appreciated as an effective means to compensate the inherent biases in respective methods (Creswell, n.d). Different authors point out in the work of Lee and Greene that the use of mixed method enable the researcher to develop a better understanding of complex phenomena which can be obtained by triangulating one set of results with another and thereby enhancing the validity of inferences; by using one set of results to generate explanations of another set or by invoking a "third" integrative paradigm that can generate "the most informative, complete, balanced, and useful research results" (Lee and Greene, 2007).

### **Study Population**

The population size of this study would be the total number of street children in Nekemte town, different concerned bodies of both from governmental and non-governmental organization working with children and community member of Nekemte town.

### **Sample Size and Sampling Techniques**

Since it is difficult to get the sampling frame of the subjects under study due to the nature of subjects' life, mobility and day to day addition of subjects, the researcher decided to use non-probability sampling. From non-probability sampling, the researcher employed availability-sampling technique for street children living in Nekemte Town. Availability sampling is used for this study as a result of street children move from area to area to search what is needed for their survival. For the selection of concerned bodies of governmental and non-governmental organization working with children as a result of their direct work with children and key

informants of the town who are knowledgeable about the problem, purposive sampling technique were used. The three potential areas were also selected purposively by observing the concentration of street children in the town and collecting information from the community; where the children are highly concentrated. Based on what the researcher observed and the information gathered from the community the following areas were selected: Bus station, around Miriam Church and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street of Nekemte town.

Since there is no previous study done on subjects under study in study area and no accurate figure, the researcher estimates the number of respondents or sample size to be included in this study. Curry (1984) revealed in the work of Yount (2006) as rule of thumb is very important in sample size estimation when there is no research done on the subjects and no accurate figure about the subjects which pointed out as 10 % is needed for the population ranging from 101 to 1,000. Gay (1987) cited in the work of Yount (2006) suggests that 10% of large populations and 20% of small populations as minimums for sample size. In other way Sudman (1976) also suggests that in survey research, a minimum of 100 subjects suggested in each major subgroup and 20 to 50 in each minor subgroup. Then by applying rule of thumb 100 street children and other 10 people from different organization and community members were selected and participated in this study.

#### **Sources of Data**

In order to generate relevant and detailed information for this study, the researcher used both primary and secondary data sources. While secondary data were compiled from sources such as books, journals, articles and internet, primary data were gathered from the subjects of the study.

#### **Instruments and Procedures of Data Collection**

##### **Instruments of Data Collection**

To obtain reliable and valid information, data were collected through different data collecting instruments. For the purpose of this study, questionnaire, in-depth interview, observation and focus group discussion items were developed by assessing different literatures concerning the problem.

The instruments were first developed in English language and then, as a majority of respondents speak and write Afan Oromo, and as it is also the official language of the region, the instruments were translated in to the local language Afan Oromo to make it easily understandable to the respondents. To insure easily understandable nature of instruments and to make corrections, if any, pilot study was done before the actual data collection done on twelve (12) street children for the questionnaire instrument. The pretest helped the researcher in modification and addition of some questions. Three basic instruments were used in the process of gathering the necessary data for the study.

**Questionnaire:** The close-ended and open-ended questionnaire was prepared and carried out by 62(49 males and 13 females) street children were selected and participated in this study.

**In-depth Interview:** Four types of unstructured interview questions were prepared for government offices, non-governmental organization, and key informant of the town and street children to answer the question raised in research question of this study.

**Focus Group Discussion:** The researcher conducted three focus group discussions; with one group from children of the street which account seven children and two group from children on the street which contained eight children each. The participants of focus group discussion were all boys. Street children girls were not voluntary to participate in FGD due to the nature of their activities in which they are engaged and it was difficult to get them at the same place. This method helped the researcher to collect very detailed information to address the objectives of the study.

##### **Data Collection Procedure**

Both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods were employed for the collection of data on contributing factors, the life condition and other related information concerning street children of Nekemte town. The researcher intended to use this combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods because of their complementary and they compensate one another's bias. The researcher employed the following instruments for the collection of detailed and relevant information:

The researcher employed close ended and open-end questionnaires, in-depth interview and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Questionnaires and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were only for street children living in Nekemte Town. Questionnaires were filled only by the respondents (street children) but, the interviews took the form of a face-to-face conversation which was used to collect the data from street children, government and non-governmental organization and the key informants.

Finally, street children were administered the questionnaire with the assistance researchers and other person from government office who cooperated the researcher, while interview and FGD were made only by researcher and assistant researcher. Besides, the researcher was personally available and made all the necessary efforts to clarify the purpose of the questionnaire as well as to avoid mistakes and minimize the possible misunderstandings.

##### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Since the researcher used mixed method, the information were analyzed and interpreted by using both

quantitative and qualitative forms of data analysis. The quantitative data was analyzed by using simple (descriptive) statistics. This quantitative data were analyzed by using simple statistics including tables, percentage, and frequencies as the main tools for summarizing the data, and supported by the data collected through open-ended questionnaire. While the qualitative data was analyzed by carefully reviewing and examining field notes from focus group discussions and in-depth interview. The information gathered through qualitative instruments categorized according to their similarity in themes and analyzed by narrating, quotation of respondent's information and making explanation in words, textual and structural description of the experience of the participants.

### **Ethical Consideration**

Social scientists have an ethical obligation to their research, their study population and the larger society. The reason for this is that social scientists examine the social lives of other human beings. Research ethics provide researchers with code of moral guidelines regarding how to conduct research in a morally acceptable way. Therefore, the researcher takes into account the following ethical issues explained below:

#### **Informed Consent:**

It is essential that street children should have full information about the research in order to give their consent to take part, and that consent is freely volunteered. Since street children have no one to decide for them, they each were informed verbally. Informed consent is not only determined by the age, but also by the maturity of the child to understand the question asked and giving answers. The child should also know that s/he can withdraw at any time. Information presented to the child should explain what type of question to be asked, the importance of the study on which the child can agree or disagree to withdraw at any time.

Local authorities who were concerned about children were contacted and informed about the research. They allowed the researcher to undertake the research on the targeted population identified by the researcher.

**Confidentiality and Anonymity:** Confidentiality and anonymity must be explained in a way that street children can understand. It must therefore be made very clear who will have access to the data and what will happen to the data when the research is completed. Anonymisation is the removal of names. For the safeguard of the participants the source of the information should be codified.

The research should be done in a way of having no impact on the physical or mental of the respondents. While the questionnaires were prepared and the information was gathered, the researcher should care about the impact the research has on the participants.

**Scientific Misconduct:** means avoiding any type of plagiarism. All the information cited in this research was put in the reference.

### **Findings of the Study and Discussions**

#### **Public Perception and Children's understanding of themselves**

Children living and working on the street of the study area were asked about the way they understand themselves and how the local communities perceive them. Knowing about the perception of both the communities and the children themselves was very important to provide them with intervention programs. Most of the times the local communities perceive street children as they are challengers to the life of others, aimless, one who are careless about their future life and breaker of norms of the communities, distraction oriented, but the reality of street children's life is opposite to what was explained. As it was revealed by Saleh in the study done by UNICEF, all categories of street children had commonly shared characteristics, such as rebellion against social patterns and systems, increased mobility, distrust of others, lack of thinking about their future, early maturity, self-reliance, creation of subcultures. Different authors also point out the real situation of street children in the work of Benitez (2007) as follows:

*Street children are typically portrayed as excluded by society. While this is not indisputable, such portrayals are in danger of ignoring children's abilities to plan, control their actions and navigate within their environments. Evidence from countries around the world demonstrates that street-working and street homeless children regularly plan and put into practice survival strategies, navigating risks and taking opportunities presented within on-street and off-street environments. That children can learn to cope in dangerous street conditions is not under dispute and some street children shows well-developed abilities to navigate street risks (9&11).*

Based on the question asked, in relation to in what way the community perceives street children, the majority (56.5 %) of the respondents responded as the community understands them in negative ways. Kopaka (2000) also justifies the way the community understands street children as children living and working on the street are ignored, scorned, mistreated and misunderstood by society and governments. Strehl (2010) also depicts that street-living children have the lowest social status among all people that work on the street, because of the jobs they do, especially if they have reached adolescence. They are often associated with delinquency and drug use and therefore they face discrimination and disrespect.

One respondent who was 13 years old told during the interview, most of the people have no positive attitude

about us which emanate from what other street gangs and in which most of the times they are participated including thefts and they also have no moral values for elder people. Street gangs also snatch what we collect during the night time, but the community took this as all street children are doing. Chetty (1997, 50) also reveals that most of the studies implicate street children in various acts of deviance. Street children's involvement in begging, prostitution, drug abuse and various types of theft is widely documented.

*One street child who is 17 years old answered whether street children participate in delinquent activities as follows: Since many of us were addicted we engaged in different activities stealing to get money and buy drugs. The activities were illegal from the society's point of view. The involvement in to such activities made the society to hate us.*

The street children are perceived by the public as violent. Most of the communities of the town had negative attitude and perception about street children and their life. Street children participated in FGD stated as they were treated as they are thefts, robbers, delinquents and trouble makers which is not their behavior even though there is cases in which certain group of their friends engaged in the activities lied down above. A study done by (Buske, 2014) also confirmed as once street children were conceptualized broadly, and more specifically as criminals/deviants, victims, or entrepreneurs, the labels then become their "identity" and legitimizes how the public views them and interacts with them. They also stated that other people hates simply based on the place where we sleep, due to many of us are participants of addictive substances, and many of our friends did not respect elder people which may not represent all street children. Generally, if not all, many of our society did not observe our internal (background) problem rather simply claiming about us from outside.

*They also asked how they perceive themselves the also perceive themselves as normal people who are capable of taking care of their lives. They believed that, they only lacked resources otherwise they could make their lives better. As one young child participated in interview argued, they active to change their live like any other human being if they are provide with the required resource and given opportunities. He also gave an example as many street children especial those who are involved in selling different products, shoeshine changed their lives and those who are employed as assistant deriver through their attachments to the bus station.*

The information described above did not show the real behavior of street children. These ideas go in line with what was explained in the study of UMP as follows:

*To the general public, these children are considered as nuisance. Commonly held stereotypes tend to associate them with criminal activities such as pick-pocketing, car thefts, robberies etc. Whereas this happens sometimes, it is wrong to assume that all street children engage in such activities all the time. When such crimes happen, it is often because of opportunity rather than disposition. Obviously, extreme deprivation and social exclusion create opportunities for crime involvement. However, little evidence exists to suggest that street children actively or deliberately plan criminal activities (UMP, 2000:9)*

In addition to what was explained above, one key informant point as they were understood by the public negatively, the reason behind the public perceptions was explained as follows: These children do not worry to clean their cloth, body and hair. If we observe them they are not interesting to see them physically due to their carelessness to keep themselves clean. The way these children act and do things contradict with the culture and life of the community. They are actively engaged in thief, robbing by coordinating themselves in dark areas during the night, betting people and sleeping areas. These behaviors of the children contradict with the culture and life situation of the community. So, the community did not want to hear about these children and have negative perception. But rather than blaming them based on the situation of their cloth, style of their hair, they are not intended to understand the problem of the children and what pushes them to become to the street. But the situation of street children is not the way people perceive. Even though the communities perceive the children as they are distraction oriented, street children replied their positive side as follows:

*As children participated in FGD revealed they are supportive in any type of societal activities. For example in last two weeks fire problem happened in this town and it burned one building. At that times everybody stand and saw the phenomenon, but the "duriye" enter in to the problem with commitment and saved almost everything including the building and the material possessed in that building. Even though we are participating to solve the problem that day, the police are not viewing us in positive way, but the police themselves stand far from the problem. This show even though certain part of the government bodies perceive these children in negatively, the children have positive understanding to solve their problem and the problem of the community. Street children perceive themselves as normal people who are capable of taking care of their lives. They believed that, they only lacked resources otherwise they could make their lives better.*

Opposite to what was out lined above, 24.2 % of the children stated as the community had moderate attitude and the rest (21 %) of the respondents argued as the community had positive attitude.

Regarding the relation street children have with other members of the surrounding community, the majority (95.2 %) of street children have social relation with one another of their respective street children. In relation to this finding, different authors portrayed in the work of Benitez (2007) as street children are often involved in

mutually supportive relationships, with solidarity and self-support amongst children's groups more prominent than violence, even though violence made by their elder street children on smaller children and the newly comer street children also abused both verbally and sexually by those who came earlier to the street. Study done (Buske, 2014) street children in general and girls were treated badly more often than not by the general public. The girls report being shouted at, insulted, beaten, and generally treated badly on a daily basis. As one girl participated in an interview reveals it, "we are not safe on the street because of the maltreatment from the community specially from young boys. Even though, elder people observe street girls in different way from the normal situation." In addition to physical and verbal abuse, she also report being regularly cheated by customers. The general feeling from the girls is that the community "hates us" and "doesn't respect and regard us as humans."

In other case, street children value the importance of social relationship for their survival depends on the groups in collective and public space, and they defend these relationships fiercely. This social relation maintained only in their territory but violence is made with outsider street children who were not welcomed and similar thing also takes place from the outsiders (Naterer and Godina, 2011).

*In line to the above explained literature the finding from street children also justifies the above explained information. From street children participated in FGD stated as they did not go from their surroundings to other part of the town. Since street children of the other area and the surrounding community did not invite them in other part of the town; there is a territory demarcation. If we went to others area there is the probability of conflict to be raised between us and other street children found in that area.*

One study done in Namibia showed that more than 80 % of street children operate in groups, which seems to indicate that, once on the street, these children develop supportive systems or networks, which effectively substitute for the family supportive system. In general, the children organize themselves into small groups, pool and share resources, and take care of one another and of those who are not able to take care of themselves (Grundling and Grundling, 2005).

In addition to that, children of the street were more supportive than the other children on the street. As children of the street living around bus station told me they are highly supportive to one other. Especially when one of the children encountered a health problem, they contribute money to take the child to health center due to the fact that they have no someone who care after them. The elder street children whom they call as "duriye" collects money from the surrounding communities by going door to door with the child in the problem. In addition to this when they get new comers they made good invitation. But what I observed while I was collecting the data was that, children on the street are not as supportive and have social capital as that of children of the street. But in contrast to this, what was portrayed above, children on the street did not have culture of supportive.

In FGD with children on street one of them replied for their relation and support of one other as it is low. He replied as there is no joke on money, we did not give money and cloth for one other, but we share food, resolving conflict between street children, play together which implies low social capital between children on the street in comparison to children off the street.

From this comparison it is possible to conclude that children on the street most of the times have somebody to support them and stand behind them when they are in a difficult problem so that they did not need extensive support from other street children while children of the street have themselves for one other so they are expected to support each other.

One street child in FGD stated that even though the police and the surrounding community regard street children as criminals and the breaker of the cultural values of the society, street children are also participate in helping the community on different activities and government in certain activities.

*Regarding the relation street children have different bodies of the government. Those children participated in both interview and FGD argued as they in confrontation with all of the government bodies like police, municipal guards and other security forces The relation that street children have with police on the streets is obviously confrontational and problematic. Children often complained that the police don't allow them to work, chase after them, detain them, maltreat them, insult them or snatch their money. Street-living children have, in general, more problems with police than street-working children, because of the illicit activities they engage in, their drug-use and their social stigma of theft and delinquency.*

The core processor of labor and social affair of the town justifies as street children are very supportive. The core processor argued, when it is necessary our and other offices call them to clean the town, they are also called if necessary for the town's activities and post any government poster. As I understood both from the children and the police of the town, these children are closely followed by the police station of each sub-city which made their participation in community activity very high.

**Table 1.1: Public Perception and street Children’s understanding of their future life**

Variables		Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>What do you think about the perception of local community?</b>	Positive	13	21 %
	Moderate	14	22.6 %
	Negative	35	56.5 %
	Other	-	-
<b>With whom you made relation while living on the street?</b>	Other street children	59	95.2 %
	Tax drivers	38	61.3 %
	shop owners	28	45.2 %
	City police	17	27.4 %
	Others*	24	38.7 %
<b>What do you think about your future life?</b>	Changed and integrated to the community	35	56.5 %
	Remain on the street	27	43.5 %
	Other	-	-

Source: Filed survey, 2012.

Others\*-implies local community

In addition to that 61.3 % of them have relation with tax drivers, 45.2 % with shop owners, 27.4 % of them with police and the other 38.7 % of them were related to different aspect of the society. Since it is mandatory for street children to build relation with different groups of people to sustain their life, they intermingled with taxi drivers, motorists, pedestrians, city police, shop owners, business people, tourists, school children etc (UMP, 2000). Naterer and Godina also described as street children have good relationships with one another, performing mutual exchange of information, goods, help and other forms of solidarity which enable to struggle for their existence (2011).

When children are asked how they perceive their future lives on the street of 43.5% of the street children felt hopeless and helpless they mentioned that they had no other option concerning what to do about their lives except to live on the street. However, fifty six and half percent (56.5 %) mentioned that their live on the street would be nice. They argued as living on street is a means to generate income which helps them change the life situation and that of their families.

One key informant who was a trader of video around bus station of Nekemte town has close relation with street children. He told me about one street child history. The historical background of the child that leads him to come to the street is not to regard him as he is came to street by his interest for independent life and as he is deviant. Because from the very beginning this child is following his mental illness mother while he was a child, and latter on she was dead and he was left on the street to struggle for life. This child tries to change his future life than simply continues with the life he is living today and now he is my shop keeper which implies as street children engaged in activities that can change their life.

According one the key informant people have diverse attitude towards these children based on the activities in which they engaged. Whatever they are doing the attitude people for them depends on the relation people have with them. Those who are closely related with children argues as the children do many thing for the public and people can send wherever they want and order them to do what they want to be done. You go and buy your things and you get somebody to carry your things to wherever you are going. So some people think that they serve a purpose. Other people look at them as delinquent children. They think that they are bad that is why they are on the street. So the perceptions are different since these children are without supervision by any adult they are very susceptible to abuse and contempt from some members of the public.

While 4.8 % of the participants did not have the aim to be integrated to the normal ways of life of the community. The reason behind those street children who want to stay on the street was that they were totally immersed in to addiction from which they couldn’t librated and economically they were not in way to change themselves. They also reported that they cannot adjust themselves to the normal life that the other is living so it is difficult to be integrated to the community.

As one respondent who was an 18 years old street child and stayed for 10 years on the street responded, the possibility of returning to the community and his family is very difficult. The reason behind his problem is that he was very much addicted and has no communication with his families. In addition to this problem, he has a well developed social relation with his street friends and has freedom to do whatever he likes. This means he has no body to control him.

In FGD the group revealed their experience as the longer they remain on the streets, the greater the possibility that they will break their relation they have with their families. As they break their relation with families and stayed for a long period on street they start to engage themselves in to illegal; activities. When

legitimate means of supporting themselves become unavailable, illegitimate activities provide a means of support.

In general, from the above information it is advisable to conclude as almost all street children have the intention of changing their life for the future and to be integrated with their community while a very few of the children are not in the direction to change and integrate to the community. In one or other way these children were engaged in different activities to sustain their life and to begin change on them.

### Conclusion

The surrounding communities of the world in general and Nekemte town particular have both negative and positive attitude towards street working children.

Street children who work and live on the streets of Nekemte Town are found to be vulnerable to wide and extreme violations of their rights. They are verbally, physically and sexually abused by their family members, relatives, and by strangers.

Standing from addictive behavior and their behavior observed in their daily activities including style of life and their delinquent activities the majority of the local communities understand these children from negative manner. People perceive them as they are aimless; have no plan for changing their life, anti of the development of the town and spoil the cultural values of the society, and then the communities perceives street children from negative ways. But these street children have strong social relation with different aspect of society for their survival like other street children, tax drivers, shop owners, city police and with other community members. Unlike people's perception the majority (95 %) of street children have positive attitude about their future life to be changed and integrated to the community.

In contrast to communities negative attitude street children themselves have positive for themselves. They argued as they pushed to come to the street due different factors which are beyond their control than their interest. Even the depict as they highly participate in different communities activities.

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