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Ready to score against Social Exclusion:

**An analysis on how football can offer avenues of social inclusion
for street children in India**

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the role of sports, especially football in the lives of street children and their inclusion into the society and schooling system in India. Twin fold motivation of this research are social inclusion and role of sports in bringing people together. According to the convention of the right to the child, Indian state policies, the welfare street children, and their social integration are paramount. However, existing literature and my personal observation suggest a lot of marginalization and social exclusion of street children in my home state and my neighboring states in India. Besides, while I was working in Bangalore, which is in the neighboring state Karnataka, I was inspired by the activities of the organizations called ECHO and BOSCO. In the process, the aspect of evidence-based welfare policies in the domain of sports education for social inclusion was intriguing and worth researching in a developing country like India. The research found football can become a tool of social inclusion of street children with the existing educational infrastructure, provided institutional support is adequate, in this case by two NGO's performing their role. The research found overall interest in studying increased. At the same time better acceptance of the street children with their all educational limitations and sports achievements by the teaching faculty at the schools.

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The work with this thesis has allowed me to know and understand the role of football and other sports activities in the lives of street children. I also had the opportunity to know more about how the society can include these street children into the wider community by providing them an education. I feel privileged for having had the opportunity to learn the struggles of street children and how they are determined to overcome their difficulties. Therefore, goes to my utmost gratitude to participants of this study who have shared their valuable experiences, thoughts, and feelings with me.

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Why is this topic interesting?

There is a twin fold motivation to undertake this research in the domain of social inclusion and sports. According to the convention of the right to the child, in the Indian state, the welfare policies with regards to street children and the social integration are very strong. I belong to the southern state of Kerala which is rated very high on the human development index. However, I have observed a lot of marginalization and social exclusion of street children in my home State. Besides, while I was working in Bangalore, which is in the neighbouring state Karnataka, I was inspired by the activities of the organizations called ECHO and BOSCO. Moreover, I am a sports enthusiast and was always eager in researching on the core relation between playing football and social inclusion of marginalized children. Also, the aspect of evidence-based welfare policies in the domain of sports education for social inclusion is intriguing and worth researching in a developing country like India.

Introduction

Across many developing countries which lack a comprehensive social safety net, vulnerable categories such as orphans, children from marginalized sections end up being a victim of their oppressing circumstances. Many of these street children who lack parental care and professional guidance end up committing crimes and become social outcasts. It is then the responsibility of the society to bring them back into the mainstream society by providing them physical and emotional needs.

The legal definition of children in many of the countries is ‘people under the age of eighteen’ (UN 1989). According to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) “children living in poverty are those who experience deprivation of the material, spiritual and emotional resources needed to survive, develop and thrive, leaving them unable to enjoy their rights, achieve their full potential or participate as full and equal members of the society.” (Unicef 2005). Poverty affects individual access to quality education. Low-income families in India are not able to afford the quality education that high-income families are.

According to UNICEF “the term ‘Street Children’ includes a wide range of children who are homeless; who work on the streets but sleep at home; who either do or do not have family contact; who work in open air markets; who live on the streets with their families; who

live in day or night shelters; or who spend a lot of time in institutions (e.g. prison). A large number of street children have contact with their families and spend only a portion of their time on the streets. Those who are homeless or with no family contact are in a minority, but they grow up in an environment that is not favourable for their proper development or socialization” (Wernham 2005).

Street Children in India

According to World Bank, 45% of the world population is forced to live with less than 1 dollar a day, of whom close to half percent are children. (UNICEF 2012). In today’s fast-paced world, millions of children live in urban slums, many of these children lack basic services. Due to this, they are vulnerable to many problems which make them into social outcasts. India is believed to have the fastest growing urban population in the world and it is doubling from a 1990s figure of 250 million to 660 million by 2025. (A Barret and R Beardmore 2000).

Even though there is a lack of availability of the well-structured data and number of street children, it is estimated that there are more than 4,00,000 street children in India. Among these children, more than 18 million work on the streets and 5-20% have no connection with their families. Also, it is interesting to know the fact that the religion of street children in India varies according to the area. Nevertheless, in general, approximately 70 percent are Hindus, 18 percent are Muslims, Christians and other. Children on the streets of India learn to cope with the life on streets very quickly. There are so many activities and occupations undertaken by street children in order to survive on the streets. They include collecting and selling waste paper, plastic, scrap metal etc., cleaning vehicles, selling newspapers, magazines, sweets, fruits, clothes etc. making and selling flower garlands, begging, pimping, pick-pocketing, stealing, working in roadside stalls or repair shops, or working in small hotels. (Abhinav Singh and Bharathi Purohit 2011). It is also estimated that India has the largest number of street children in the world. (Kaur 2014). Most of the street children in India are boys but there are also many numbers of homeless girls. Compared to the condition of the boys, homeless girls are subjected to horrible situations like prostitution, bullying etc. (Kaur 2014). They are deprived of their basic needs for guidance, protection, and supervision and exposes themselves to different forms of exploitation and abuse. For many girl children surviving on the street means begging and prostitution.

Every now and then thousands of rural Indian abandon their homeland to look for pastures in the urban city. In the city when they could not afford to have proper housing or shelter they look for the cheapest option and end up in the slums inside makeshift shacks and shanties under bridges, around public monuments, along railway tracks, outside bus and train terminals and basically anywhere where those makeshift shacks and shanties can be put up. (Chatterjee 1992). Street children in the cities are the most vulnerable as they are easy victims of abuse, inhuman treatment, and oppression especially because they do not have any social status and no family or adults to protect them. Street children in India are “a manifestation of societal malfunctioning and an economic and social order that does not take timely preventive action”. (Bose 1992). In the urban social set up they are quite often engaged in petty theft or prostitution for economic survival. (ChildlineIndia n.d.). All the problems street children face directly linked to poverty, family disintegration, lack of resources, urbanization, and growing population. (Kaur 2014). Criminal activities such as drug abuse, violent hooliganism etc. can become a direct outcome of street children, especially in the developing urban centres. Most of the street children in India are found in the cities and there they struggle for their survival. Overpopulation is the main cause of the increasing number of street children in Indian cities. Moreover, poverty, problem of unemployment and illiteracy and many other reasons lead to this phenomenon. All these causes lead the street children into the slums of developing urban centres. (Behura NK and RP Mohanty 2005).

In their book *Urbanization, Street Children and their Problems*, NK Behura and Mohanty RP illustrate the main problems of street children in India. The weakening of the quality of life of the people starts when they move to the urban centres looking for a way to overcome their poverty. They are often forced to adjust to the slum life and their dreams and hopes become limited. Also in the book, they point out that parents, as well as their children, struggle for their survival while attempting to develop their quality of life. (Behura NK and RP Mohanty 2005). Furthermore, large numbers of family members in a single family lead to a lack of food, shelter and other basic needs. This leads the children to work in the slums or the parents force their children to go work in the slums instead of sending them to school. It is also evident that due to the parent’s alcoholic addiction they tend to treat their children in an unpleasant manner which lead the children to run away from their houses and seek help on the street where they find friends from similar backgrounds. (Behura NK and RP Mohanty 2005). Another important problem street children face is the unhygienic environments. Street children are most often forced to work in an unhygienic environment especially with an

empty stomach and due to this, they suffer from malnutrition and various diseases. They are always exposed to sun, rain and cold and as a result, their life is always in danger.

Moreover, proper clothing is also a matter of concern. Many of the street children do not have the capacity to have proper clothing like pant, shirt, shoes, winter dress etc. (Behura NK and RP Mohanty 2005). Furthermore, the attitude of the public towards the street children is a matter of concern. In India harassment and bullying of street children by the general public, police officers, municipal officials are very common. It is the duty of the police officials to protect the street children from bullying and harassing but they often fail to do so and end up beating them. These children are also being scolded and beaten up by the general public and police officials whenever there is a case of theft. (Behura NK and RP Mohanty 2005).

The importance of education for social development, human capital progress and enhancing social justice has been evident. Lack of proper education among street children can lead to social issues. While looking into the fact that these street children in the future could be one of the contributors to the social development and cultural change, proper educational measures should be taken to include them into the society. Many of the street children are dropouts from primary schools due to various reasons(Zutshi 2001).

Like the other children living with their parents in the society, various resources to meet the physical and emotional needs of the street children are essential. There are basically two types of resources namely internal and external. (Shukla 2005). Internal resources are those which are inside the person, e.g. intelligence, capacity to work etc. On the other hand, external resources are those which can be seen outside of the person's environment such as schools, health services, community organizations and people who care. (Shukla 2005). Most of the street children usually have internal resources in plenty but they often come short of external ones. Consequently, as these external resources are the important ones, street children will have a difficult time learning new skills that would help them improve their living standards. (Shukla 2005). It has been observed that activities pertaining to arts, music and sports have a great impact to change the psyche of the street children. According to Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), children learn best from direct experiences from the immediate environment and meant that learning at the first place arrived from nature, persons in the environment and from objects around the child. In his book about the young boy Emile he showed how the boy learned from exploring the nature instead of learning from books and

by formal learning. (Brodin and Linstrand 2006). But in the case of street children, they learn a lot from nature mostly which are not necessary or in other words which are illegal to the social set up. What is more important for them is to get admitted into a school and start formal learning. It is in this context that education and social inclusion lays its significance.

Many street children are denied the access to a healthy holistic environment which reduces their capacity to learn and increases their propensity to indulge in anti-social activities which push them down further on the path of social exclusion. Even though there are many NGO's and welfare agencies to safeguard the social welfare of the children on streets, it is not often going well for the street children. (Shukla 2005). Everywhere street children are socially excluded and the exclusion begins with the unavailability of proper access to birth certificates and registration documents, lack of residence, proper education and health care and as a result, these street children are deprived of citizenship rights. According to the United Nation's convention on the Rights of the Child, protecting and providing the children are not only the way to safeguard the best interest of the children but also listening to them and fostering child participation. (Shukla 2005). Child participation and proper intervention while working with street children is very important in order to bring them back into the society. It is observed that projects mainly focused on rescuing street children from the streets to family or back to school have not really provided fruitful solutions mainly due to the fact that they often ignore the views of the children. As pointed out in a Save the Children publication, street and working children are not "objects of concern but people. They are vulnerable but incapable. They need respect, not pity." As a result, over the years the main focus of the research and project design has shifted to working with children rather than for them, thereby giving prime significance to child participation. (Shukla 2005).

Early years of a child is considered as the golden years of learning. Children are always seeking for motivation and require collaborative initiative from parents, siblings, teachers etc. Also, this is the particular and important time that the child is open to new experiences and initiatives. Lack of critical experiences like love, care and nurturance leave lasting impact on young minds. Therefore, factors such as adequate nutrition, good health, clean water, safe environment, proper clothing, an environment free from violence, abuse, discrimination etc. are significant when it comes to the overall development and growth of a child. (Chopra 2015). It is tragic to realize the fact that most of the street children in India

lack almost all these factors and end up in the streets rather than able to build their future. There are many initiatives undertaken by both government and non-governmental organizations to bring these children into the mainstream society. The main challenges they face when they try to bring the children into the society is that they are not motivated or encouraged by anyone. These children find their happiness in doing what they do on the streets. Different aspects have been used by various NGO's to motivate the street children to go to school or learn something. One of the initiatives is bringing together the children to play some team sports and later attract them into the schooling system. Playing different sports has been used as a tool to enhance the social skill of the children along with improving the learning outcome by infusing the element of amusement which sports ensure. Physical activity is important for the social life of children in terms of making and maintaining friends and belonging to various peer groups (Brodin and Linstrand 2006). Thereby playing sports like football can create a strong sense of identity and can facilitate social inclusion among children. Team sports like football can give children fun filled moments that last a lifetime. Despite being one of the main fun filling moment of the life of children, playing sports can act as a tool for the development of important social skill. Sports can teach a child to be competitive, honest, team player, discipline and much more. Also playing sports with other children enhance the healthy relationship and thereby making and teaching the child to be a social being. Here the child, while playing sports learn that he or she does not work alone but part of a team that must cooperate to achieve a common goal. Another important benefit of playing sports together are the building of character. Furthermore, another life skill that sport teach young children is that of being able to play fair. It teaches the child to respect the opponent and behave well. Moreover, an important aspect of achievement is that the child learns to cope with wins and losses. Children are taught to graciously accept a win and a loss. Competitive team sport will expose the children to both and will give the opportunity to observe and learn to master the situation, whether it is a win or a loss. (Koolbreeze 2013). Also, it has been observed that children achieve leadership skills by participating in sports. Acquiring leadership qualities like good character, respecting others, task oriented etc. can be learned from both team and individual sports. Proper coaching and a solid support system can help a child to become a leader. (Pish 2014).

The Juvenile Court and the Law in India.

The history of Indian juvenile system can be considered as a complex process. It has evolved and matured over the years. With regards to the legislative development in the Indian legal system, the history of the Indian judicial system can be divided into three time periods. 1 – pre 1850, 2 – 1850 – 1949, 1950-2013. (Marvin D. Krohn, Jodi Lane and Suman Kakar 2015). In the year 1960, the first Children Act of 1960 was passed by the independent India. The fundamental objective of the Act was to “provide for the care, protection, maintenance, welfare, training, education and rehabilitation of neglected or delinquent children and for the trial of delinquent children in the Union Territories” (Children Act, 1960).

Determining the age of a juvenile has been one of the major challenges of Juvenile Justice Act. In India, the implementation of the Juvenile Justice Act requires the formulation of the state rules and the setting up of the juvenile justice system machinery, namely and most importantly the Child Welfare Committees and the Juvenile Justice Boards. (Marvin D. Krohn, Jodi Lane and Suman Kakar 2015).

NGO's in India

Proper planning and ground level initiatives have to be implemented in order to overcome the problems faced by street children and bring them into the mainstream society. Many NGO's, organisations and government agencies try and work hard to rehabilitate the street children in India and give them proper education. (Kaur 2014). Over the past two decades, India has set in place different types of public policy with regards to the street children but they have not been so fruitful because of the lack of government intervention and inefficiency. (Abhinav Singh and Bharathi Purohit 2011).

NGO's working for children in India concentrate on different aspects of the child development and rehabilitation process. Most of the NGO's try to provide basic needs like food, shelter, clothing etc. to the children on the streets. They also try hard to bring the children into the mainstream society through education, training, and awareness programs. It is also commendable that almost all the main NGO's in the world have their rescue operations in India either by themselves or with the co-operation of the government.

Bangalore, one of the fast growing metropolitan city in South India is home to millions of street children. There are a number of NGOs working for the betterment of these street children. ECHO (Empowerment of Children and Human Rights Organization) and BOSCO (Bangalore Oniyavara Seva Coota) are the two main organizations inspired me to do this thesis. Both these NGO's have been on the street of Bangalore for long and they have succeeded in many ways with regards to the inclusion of street children into the society.

ECHO, Bangalore, India.

Empowerment of Children and Human Rights Organization (ECHO) was founded in the year 2000 by Rev. Dr. Fr. Antony Sebastian O. Praem, Advocate. His Master thesis 'An Echo of The Cry From The Streets Of Bangalore: A Study Of The Problems Of Street Children – A Legal Perspective' (Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, sponsored by the Government of The Netherlands) gave him perceptivity concerning problems that street children encountered, legal inadequacies concerning them, non-implementation of legal instruments and possible intervention by voluntary agencies (Sebastian 2000).

The main aim of the organization is to empower Children in Conflict with Law and Children in need of Care and protection under the Indian Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children Act 2000). The implementation of this act forms the framework of the activities of the organization. Concisely, ECHO gives voices to thousands of neglected and delinquent children through legal aid, counselling, releasing children from Government observation home, reception centre and Children's Home. Legal proceedings for the transition of children to ECHO's Transitional Home and Rehabilitation Centre are undertaken. The centre also succeeds in providing informal education, vocational training, job placements and follow-ups to monitor the released juveniles. Through the successful network of NGO's, ECHO attempts to influence Central and State government to implement laws concerning Child Rights. Moreover, the organization also undertakes to train on the juvenile justice system to police personnel, magistrates, and government officials. (Sebastian 2000).

It can be seen as one of the major projects of the St. Norbert Priory, Mananthavady, India where much more personnel could be employed and projected as one of the main

ministry of Norbertines to the modern world. There are 30 staffs employed in ECHO. As a figure of expansion, ECHO is divided into 6 centers all over Karnataka. ECHO Sparsha at Kammanahalli, the transitional home for boys, ECHO Special Home at Sumanahalli, a center for children convicted under the Juvenile Justice Act, ECHO Spandana at Mysore, a rehabilitation centre for boys, and Happy Kids at Lingarajpura, a preventive program. Each centre encompasses its own directors, caretakers and inmates. (Norbertines 2010).

Dr. Antony Sebastian, the founder of the organization, says the divine guidance has paved way for the foundation of ECHO. He says “the inspiration goes back to the days when I was doing my Law in Pune University, India. Deeply introspective on the subject of children in conflict with the law, my eyes captured the sights of groups of half-clad slender children with marks of tears on the face and dust-covered bodies being carried away by the railway policeman. I felt moved and tearful. Why don’t they have a choice? I asked. What other options do they have? The very origin of ECHO (Empowerment of Children and Human Rights Organization), was a response to my experimental research on the plight of street and working children ‘An echo of the cry from the streets of Bangalore: A study on the problems of street children, a legal perspective’ undertaken as part of the post-graduate studies in Sociology at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague. ECHO came into being as an expression of this commitment and concern towards these children.” (Sebastian 2000).

Unlike other NGO’s the main concentration of the ECHO is mainly to provide legal assistance to juvenile delinquents and child labourers. The children rescued by them are mainly in the 16-20 age group and many are orphans or runaways. “The children have become delinquent because of the negative environment in which they lived”, Father Sebastian said. “They can become productive citizens if we give them a positive environment”. (Sebastian 2000).

BOSCO (Bangalore Oniyavara Seva Coota)

Bosco is a non-profitable charity organization constituted in 1980 in Bangalore by Salesians of Don BOSCO. Their main concentration is towards the young at risk like- street children, child labourers, abandoned/ orphaned children, victims of drug abuse, victims of child abuse, begging children, rag pickers etc. Bosco has now centres across the city of Bangalore through 7 rehabilitation centres and 6 street presence locations. The Mission of BOSCO is “To encourage the young at risk to join the mainstream of society as educated and productive citizens by partnering with the children in their daily struggle to go off the streets.” (Bosco u.d.).

Main services of Bosco include counselling, tracing missing children, home placement, education, vocational training, advocacy, health care, child labor eradication, HIV/AIDS awareness and much more. The main aim of the organization is to rescue the children from the streets and give them a proper education in order to bring them up as capable citizens. Home replacement is one of the important aspects of social inclusion that Bosco does so well. It is believed that the child belongs to his/her home that is where the children can grow up best. Therefore, Bosco finds it extremely important to reinstate the children after the rehabilitation process back in their homes at the earliest. Another notable service is that to trace the missing children. Bosco is the nodal agency for the Karnataka State for the missing child bureau as per the proceedings of Government of Karnataka. Moreover, Bosco also intervenes the legal matters on behalf of the victimized children. They intervene in cases like where the children are treated unjustly by employers, exploited by traffickers and abused and send petitions to Child Welfare Committee (CWC). (Bosco u.d.).

Theory and key terms:

In this session, I will concentrate on the main concept that I will use as a lens when approaching and analyze the data I collected.

Theoretical framework:

The research largely draws inspiration from Honneth theory of recognition(Honnoth 1995)and how dignity has been proposed as the basis of social interaction. The theory shy away from justice based other theories such as Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mills until Rawls whereas it takes a different view than capabilities approach. Credit to Fraser(Fraser

1996), 2003¹), the theory of recognition has fasted to more than what Honneth perhaps thought of but never the less, the theory has achieved a distinctive place among the research communities and left-liberal politics.

Honneth's (Honneth 1995) was inspired by Hegel, who claims that the philosophical inspiration of society must be based on some ethical standard but not assertive individualism. Honneth describes two different ways to understand recognition: either as an *attributive* or a *receptive* act, bridging a cognitive relation between the persons involved in the social interaction (here, the street children, the children staying under some roofs, school officials, etc.). In the first case, recognition of a positive quality of a person (here street children) whereas the second case is understood as a perception, meaning that qualities the person already possesses are strengthened or manifested publicly when arrangements prescribed the philosophy applied to social relationships and institutions. It follows a top-down approach where principles will be applied at the institutional level and then trickle down to practice in day-to-day social interaction. Honneth emphasises importance of dignity in social relationship and summarises, "*Moral quality of social relations cannot be measured only in terms of the fair and just distribution of material goods, rather, our notion of justice is also linked very closely to how, what subject mutually recognize each other's*" (Honneth, 130).

Honneth's thesis on recognition can be also interpreted as focussing on the concepts of *basic self-confidence*, *self-respect* and *self-esteem*. (Brink van der B., & Owen, D. 2007) consider these as three axes of recognition. Self-confidence relates initially to the relationship between mother and child and later to any other dignity based social relationship, which Honneth describes as 'conceptually and genetically prior to every other form of recognition' (Honneth 1995). The recognition of *self-confidence* is an ongoing activity continuously carried out between parents, friends etc. inside schools, on the streets, in living rooms, and public eateries. The legal component of recognition demands by the theory as *self-respect*, enables a person to exercise her rights and stand up for herself in public interactions. A struggle for respect/recognition is marked by a generalisation such as street children as a label and /or de-formalisation of rights (Brink van der B., & Owen, D. 2007). The applied

¹Fraser, Nancy. 1996. Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition and Participation', The Tanner Lectures on Human Values delivered in Stanford University, April 30-May 2, 1996. Accessed on 22 June 2016 at <http://tannerlectures.utah.edu/documents/a-to-z/f/Fraser98.pdf>

Fraser, Nancy. 2003. "Social justice in the age of identity politics: Redistribution, recognition and participation." In *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, edited by Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, 7-109. London: Verso.

hypothesis that the football works improving self-confidence and dignity find a lot of strength from such clear proposition. Honneth means by *self-esteem* a practical relation-to-self in which one's abilities and traits are valued. He argues, 'Relationships of this sort can be said to be cases of "solidarity" because they inspire not just passive tolerance but felt concern for what is individual and particular about that person' (Honneth 1995), p. 136).

The theory has been tested in the context of street children's participation in physical activities i.e. football. Honneth does not talk about children except in the context of primary relationships of love and care and that too between mother and children mostly. This is one of the dominant assumptions of social and political theories that children entirely excluded or regard them only as adults in waiting. Honneth argues for;

Just as, in the case of love, children acquire, via the continuous experience of "maternal" care, the basic self-confidence to assert their needs in an unforced manner, adult subjects acquire, via the experience of legal recognition, the possibility of seeing their actions as the universally respected expression of their own autonomy. (Honneth 1995)p. 118).

The question of human rights is also numbly discussed;

"It must always be asked of a universally valid right – in light of empirical descriptions of the situation – what the circle of human subjects is, within which, because they belong to the class of morally responsible persons, the rights are supposed to be applicable (Honneth 1995)p, 113).

My starting point here, different from Honneth's, is: (i) street children constitute a morally responsible individual and have enormous potential, and are therefore rights-bearers (at the school and in the civil society they live) and entitled to respected and treated well; (ii) that street children are people with abilities and capabilities, who contribute and will contribute in the future in a variety of ways to society and culture and are therefore should be exposed to various faculties of life and skills. Here the rights of the street children have entered the realm of law neither in public consciousness nor in practice. Once these are put into context, it then becomes possible to examine children's place in society using the concepts provided by Honneth's recognition theory. The research asks 'when, where and how they achieve give-and-take recognition' (i) as confidence, (ii) as optimism (iii) as esteem.

Key terms:

This section consists of the key terms that are associated with the research.

Exercise and Physical activity

The World Health Organisation categorises physical activity for young children as “For children and young people physical activity includes play, games, sports, transportation, chores, recreation, physical education, or planned exercise, in the context of family, school and community activities”. (WHO, Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health 2016). Physical activity and exercise are two important aspects of good health. The World Health Organisation finds the lack of physical activity as the fourth-leading risk factor for global mortality. Physical inactivity is considered as the important cause of approximately 21-25 percent breast and colon cancer, 27 percent of diabetes and approximately 30 percent of ischaemic heart disease (WHO 2010). The World Health Organisation further explains the importance of physical education for young children by giving three essential guidelines for young children:

1. “Children and youth aged 5-17 should accumulate at least sixty minutes of moderate to vigorous-intensity physical activity daily.
2. Amounts of physical activity greater than sixty minutes provide additional health benefits.
3. Most of the daily physical activity should be aerobic. Vigorous-intensity activities should be incorporated, including those that strengthen muscle and bone at least three times per week”. (WHO, Global Recommendations on Physical Activity for Health 2010).

Exercise and physical activities are an essential aspect which helps in improving both physical and mental strength. Cotman et al argue that exercise helps in improving mental health through directly and indirectly improving brain health. (Cotman CW et al u.d.).

Plato, one of the most prominent Greek philosopher considered routine physical activity and exercise are crucial for children’s education. Researchers point out that the amount of time that children engage in physical activity, exercise, sports, and physical education is constantly relative to their academic performance. That simply means that the more children are engaged in physical activities and exercises the better their academic

performances are. Also, it is evident that giving children breaks during the school day have been effective in enhancing the mental function and academic performance of the children (Tomporowski et al 2015).

Children are always eager to learn things from their experiences and what they see from. They also try to do things by imitating their parents or fellow beings. When we think about studying and learning, the most important thing comes into our mind is education- that is what we learn from books and from teachers. Researchers argue that increased participation of children in sports and other physical activities improves intellectual functioning, memory, concentration, behaviour and academic achievement. (Martin 2011). Various researchers have conducted studies examining the association between physical activity, fitness, exercise, cognitive function and academic achievement. Many researchers also have tried to understand the reasons for child obesity by inventing research designs that can be made use in the school system. (Joseph E Donnelly, Kate Lambourne 2011).

The fruitful relation between fitness, sports, exercise and academic performance offers an exceptional prospect to use physical activity as a mediator in order to enhance the academic and health accomplishments of the children. Nevertheless, the time allocated for physical activity in the schools every day has been decreasing over the years due to the over importance is given only to academic achievements. Because of this reason physical education teachers are faced with overcrowded situations and limited equipment in many of the schools. (Joseph E Donnelly, Kate Lambourne 2011).

Shephard has argued that increased physical activity can help in reduce boredom in the classroom, which could lead to increased attention and concentration. Shephard also argued that improvement in the activity levels of the children in the classrooms might be related to increased self-esteem, which would improve better behaviour in the classroom and better performance. (Shephard 1996). Better and improved academic performance can be gained through energetic activity acquired outside of school. Various findings suggest the importance of vigorous activity in physical education classes and its positive impact on academic achievements. (Dawn Pudulke Coe et al, James M Pivarnik, Christopher J Womack, Mathew J Reeves, Robert M Malina 2006).

Sports as a motivating factor to go to school

It is believed that children who are physically active and fit can learn and maintain the information obtained in the classrooms effectively than children who are not fit. (Reynolds 2013). This indicates the importance of sports and physical fitness in the schools. Motivation is one of the important factors when it comes to getting the children to stay in the school and finish the studies (Barkhorn 2014). A new study from the University of Kansas by Angela Lumpkin, professor of health, sports and exercise sciences and Rebecca Achen, doctoral candidate and graduate teaching assistant at Kansas University show in their research that students who participate in athletics and sports had more attendance than those students who do not show interests in sports and athletics. The students in grade nine through twelve for the 2011-12 school year were under study during their research (Krings 2014).

This indicates the importance of sports and other related physical education activities in the schools. Especially, in India where the importance of sports and fitness education are limited than the normal education. As a result, many students drop themselves out of the schools because it is not entertaining. But if the schools give them reasons like the right equipment and atmosphere to play football and engage in other leisure activities more children would come to school especially the street children.

There are many stories that indicate the importance of football and going to school. Football also motivates children to read. By playing football many of these children are motivated to read about everyday news on their favourite teams, players, and the match results. This helps them to develop a habit of reading newspapers and other articles. One of the examples is that Author and Football Journalists Dan Freedman inspires pupils with stories of his former career. He used to work as an official reporter for the Football Association. Racheal Graham, of De Salle College, said about Dan Freedman's visit and the project, "In an age where computer games and electronic devices seem to have taken over, it can be difficult to spark an interest in reading for pleasure within young people, especially within young boys. With the spotlight in the education system being increasingly placed on literacy, encouraging reading for pleasure has never been more important, or more difficult. Dan's visit encouraged a wide group of boys to read with enthusiasm and, perhaps more importantly, it encouraged our young readers to share ideas about what they had read when not within a classroom setting". Dan Freedman's words also can be seen as a motivating factor for the students. He said, "As I grew up, it took me a long time to discover the joy of

reading but when I finally did it, it changed my life. In the end, my writing and my words took me to the World Cup as a football journalist and allowed me to meet and interview incredible sporting achievers like Beckham, Ronaldo, and Messi. I try to use those experiences to write the kind of books that will inspire the kids who are just like I was. (Trust 2015).

Most of the children enjoy sports in schools and it acts as an attraction towards schools that can have a positive outcome of the children's academic career. (Tony Fahey, Liam Delaney, Brenda Gannon 2005). It is a striking activity in schools among children and is used as an encouraging factor to attract children to health and education programmes. Sports also targets to encourage two other important aspects of education such as school attendance and leadership (Sportsanddev u.d.).

Social Inclusion

One of the necessary principles of social inclusion is participation. It is very important to have everyday activities that children can 'fit in and join in' with their friends and that can be a motivating force in their lives. Children's social activities can be restricted due to the lack of adequate opportunities for participation. Especially those children on the streets and poor, it is extremely difficult to get access to necessary resources for social participation. Poverty is considered to be the most important reason for the lack of participation among children. Restricting opportunities for the children to have social experiences unlike the other affluent children can have a negative impact when it comes to development and social relationships. (Tisdall 2006).

Children all over the world are the victim of social exclusion and it acts as an interruption in the way of their well-being. UNICEF explains, 'All children, like adults, have a right to an acceptable standard of living, access to social services and to a life free from bias and stigma'. Discrimination and poverty stand in the way of children and it affects their overall productivity. Everywhere in the world poor and marginalised children are the ones who are not healthy, have very limited opportunities to learn and are always at risk of exploitation. (UNICEF, Social Inclusion of Children: The Case for Support u.d.).

Dr. Monica Barry, principal research fellow at the school of Law, Strathclyde University, in her book explains the role of education in supporting and enhancing young

people's social inclusion and civic engagement. She further explains, "the narrowing of the focus is brought about by:

- Conflating inclusion with employment;
- Limiting the scope for current social inclusion (where education is concerned this is by focusing the debate on attendance and school-based achievement); and
- Being concerned with 'at-risk' children and young people.

Some of the effects which result include:

- Differing young people's social inclusion until adulthood;
- Emphasising deficits by positioning people as recipients of services;
- Individualising the debate on problem youths; and
- Not recognising the importance of the process of becoming socially included."

According to Monica Barry, the evidence cited above explains "how young people learned to participate in networks in a way that enhanced their chances of becoming more socially included. This learning, however, needs to be understood using alternative frameworks to those usually used to shape policy and professional practice. As we shall see social inclusion or integration is an ongoing process that affects young people both now and in their future lives" (Barry 2004).

Research Questions and Objectives

Research Questions:

1. How can football/sports be used as a means for social inclusion for street children in India?

This research question aims to find the role of football or other sports related activities in the lives of the street children in India and how it is helping them to be active players in the society.

2. Under which conditions are sports education and playing football most likely to foster the involvement of marginalized street children in the school system across India?

This research question aims to find the reasons why football and other sports encourage or act as a motivating factor to draw the marginalised street children into the schooling system to continue their studies.

Objective

- a) To know if sports activities can increase social inclusion between the street children and the wider community.
- b) To know sports activities can be used in the process of motivating street children back to school.

Methodology

The purpose which led to this research was to know more about the understandings on street children and their inclusion into the mainstream society through sports. Especially, to understand how football can be used as a medium to attract marginalised street children into the schooling system and thereby setting up the first step towards social inclusion. Also, the role of NGO's in the lives of the street children has also been researched. To be able to understand these questions I had to get in touch with street children, volunteers and football coaches and talk and listen to them. This chapter will explain the procedure and the methodological choices and considerations of the research I have had while developing the research questions, approaching the field and collecting, analysing and interpreting the data.

As my high-level theory, Critical Theory has been used. Critical Theory has both narrow and wide meaning in philosophy and in the history of social sciences. When it comes to the narrow sense Critical Theory entitles numerous generations of famous German philosophers and social theorists in the Western European Marxist tradition also known as the Frankfurt schools. These philosophers further explain that a critical theory is practical which has determination. A theory can be critical only when it has the ability to free human beings from the circumstances that make them slaves. (Horkheimer 1982), 244).

One of the characteristics of these theories is that it tends to change circumstances that make the individuals slaves. These theories have been evolved due to the social movements that identify the different aspects of domination of individuals in the society. A critical theory acts as the provider of normative and descriptive foundation for social inquiry resulting in reducing domination and increasing freedom. In the words of Horkheimer in order for a critical theory to be sufficient it has to have three criteria. Firstly, the theory should be explained, secondly, the theory should be practical and thirdly normative. Also, it is important to have these criteria together at the same time. The theory has the responsibility to identify the confusion in the society for the situation in the society can be changed by understanding and identifying the factors. In other words, the theory has to encourage criticism and should set goals that can be achieved and as a result social change can be attained. As Horkheimer further explained it in his writings as Director of the Frankfurt School's Institute for Social Research; "Any critical theory of society which is true has its

object human beings as creators or producers of their own historical form of life”. (Horkheimer 1993)p, 21).

I have chosen to use a qualitative approach because of the nature of my study. The design aims to find out how people give meanings to their actions and issues that concern them (Daniel F. Chambliss and Russell K. Schutt 2010). The research tries to highlight the importance education in street children’s lives and how football act as a medium to fascinate and attract the children into the schooling system and thereby into the society. The rationale to engage qualitative research design is that it is more applicable where very little is known about the phenomenon under study. This research design will be helpful in developing the base for important studies in future which will consist of a larger set of data. Moreover, such design will develop epistemologically rich and in-depth understanding of the social phenomenon from the point of view of the actor. (Daniel F. Chambliss and Russell K. Schutt 2010).

I have used the interviews as a principal method to collect data. Framed a set of open questions about the role of football in bringing the street children into the schooling system and into the society; Street children’s experiences and their circumstances before and after going to school; the positive and challenging aspect of football and education; hopes and uncertainties they have etc. The nature of the interviews was in-depth and open-ended because I aimed to attain rich data and rich descriptions. The interview schedule helped me to keep the project in mind and given me the wisdom of route while I was keenly listening and encouraging the participants to share their experiences.

I have also visited the NGO’s and streets where the marginalised children live and had the opportunity to explore the lives of street children after they are ‘rescued’ from the streets by using football and other sports and extra-curricular activities. I also got the opportunity to engage in healthy conversation with them and had the chance to play football with them. These might have built trust and sympathy between the participants and me.

Tools of Data Collection

In-depth interviews were conducted in order to analyse the experiences of the respondents with playing football and social inclusion, how football and other sports encourages them to go to schools. Specific importance was given to the ways in which respondent's social attitudes and behavioural nature towards football and school life and how football and other sports and extra-curricular activities strengthen education and social inclusion. Interviews were particularly focused towards respondent's explanations of their experiences with the society after and before the social inclusion. Also, a semi-structured interview guide was used to encourage the respondents to produce detailed sketching of their lives experiences.

I got the opportunity to interview many of the children and volunteers from organizations dealing with street children which help them get education and purpose in life. Also, I got in touch with football coaches and physical education teachers. These participants gave me an in-depth understanding of the concept. I also made use of the snowball method where I was able to get in touch with key persons from NGO's which led to meeting more participants. In engaged with the participants using in-depth (two hours) one-on-one interviews with eleven street children, two sports teachers, two priests working for the NGO's and one teacher. Therefore, the data collected in this section reflects a total of sixteen one-one-interviews.

Respondents selection

Respondents were mainly identified through rapport building with NGO's and School's resource persons. Snowball sampling also has been used. I have conducted interviews with the street children, their physical education teachers, volunteers from the NGO's and parents. Most of the participants are children, few of them are orphans and others lived with their parents or relatives in the slums. The interviewed children aged between 14-17 years.

I wanted to do interviews with street children both boys and girls who are living in the streets of Bangalore or inside the orphanage or care homes. I aimed to conduct interviews with eleven street children. They included six boys and five girls. I also aimed to interview

who were engaged in volunteer work and working for the NGO's. I wanted to interview physical education teachers and football coaches.

Interview Setting

The interview setting had to be not only a physically safe and secure place for the participants but also a place that feels informal and open to express their feelings and personal experiences without hesitation. I suggested that the interview could be carried out inside the NGO's, schools and in the football field but also open to suggestion from the participants about their preferred place. All the interviews with the children and the football coaches were carried out inside the NGO's campus or in the football field. Volunteers interview were conducted inside NGO's and the interview with the physical education teachers was carried out in the schools. Also, after the interviews, some of the participants had approached me and given me additional information.

I also wanted them to feel that I needed them and feel that they could trust me. All the participants in my study got to know that I might contact them during the process of writing to give them a chance to read the material. Also, whenever they wanted to clarify their doubts or had any questions, related to their study, they were free to contact me. I informed the participants that their right to withdraw from the interview process anytime. I used my mobile phone to record and make sure that I did not miss anything.

Plan of Analysis of data

In the analysis of data section, I have defined key concepts and the meaning that respondents pointed to and redefined them after the interview procedure with the new attained information and facts. The data was categorically indexed and analysed under the four main themes. (Mason 2002). Even though there was scope for many themes, most importantly I am looking for the following themes.

1. Give confidence:

Street children gain confidence through playing football and other sports which will encourage them to interact, cope poverty, confidence to go back to school and confidence to talk to unknown. In other words, how playing football and learning go hand in hand which will then make the street children a positive social being.

2. Give Hope:

How playing football and other sports give hope to the street children. How football increased hope that they become real friends in the future. Gain hope that parents would allow these children to continue with their studies because they are not engaged in destructive or negative activities. Also hopeful that teachers will accept them more since they have become active players in the classroom and in the playground and finally, hopeful that the society will not treat them as anti-social.

3. Unproductive activity:

This was one of the negative aspects when considering the theme. Children were concerned mainly due to the fact that playing football and studying do not pay them anything and do not help them get a foot. Another negative thought from the children was there is no possibility to become professional football players

since the coaching is not high standard. Moreover, they were concerned because their parents do not see sports activities help them in building their career.

4. Uncertain:

Another negative theme emerged was the uncertainty among the children. They were uncertain about whether the local people are happy that they play football in the streets. They were also uncertain about the volunteers. The possibility of becoming good friends in the future or continue their friendship was also their concern. Furthermore, uncertainty prevailed when talked about becoming professional football players in the future.

Limitations

There were numerous practical situations reduced the scope of my project. Duration of the field work was one of the serious limitations due to the various social and political situation in the country. The interviews were conducted from June 2, 2015, to 9, 2015, which was a very limited period for qualitative research. Moreover, due to the political situation in Bangalore: different political parties were having strikes and because of that reasons roads were blocked and offices were closed. It was also difficult and unsafe to travel. Despite the schedule was very narrow, fortunately, I managed to complete my field work.

Moreover, the literature source used in the study were mainly collected from online published books, journals and other documents as those source materials were very scarce in the libraries of Oslo. Also, I had to limit my interview scope to a specific number of respondents from a quite large number of street children and other interviewees. Another important limitation of the study is that I studied street children only associated with two NGO's and hence cannot say the experience of the children throughout the country. Since I was concentrating only the street children associated with NGO's, not sure about the experiences of the children under civil society organisations.

Furthermore, the research project was not able to adopt member checking because of the limited resources available. Considering the limited time and expenses, I was not able to go out into the field and conduct member checking again. Also, I did not send the transcribed

data to the participants due to the fact that most of them do not know to read and write in English. Most of the children I interviewed speak different language since they were from a different state than mine. I had to use a translator to talk to them and acquire the necessary information.

Ethical consideration

There have been numerous ethical dilemmas in the research that needed to be taken into consideration. Ethical issues related to values, rules and guidelines for evaluating what is the right one and what is wrong are essential when collecting data, as a qualitative researcher have to carry a difficult array of various responsibilities. This includes facing the values of my respondents and the relationship we keep when entering into the study (Silverman 2011). As a researcher, I tried to establish mutual consent, trust and respect etc. with my participants.

It is important to be aware of the fact that most of my participants were vulnerable due to their lives as street children. They were always under oppression, discrimination, unrest etc. During the interviews, it was difficult to ask some questions to my participants that reminded them of their problems, struggles, and their vulnerable situation. In some of the interviews, I could observe that the participant felt it difficult and did not want to talk about the problems he or she experienced or faced. Also, some of the participants reported about their struggles and traumatic events and reported symptoms of anxiety and depression. It was very crucial for me to be careful and sensitive to the difficulties and the experiences of my participants since I am not very professional in dealing with such situations. I also was careful about the situation of bringing the negative feeling that may arise after each interview. Nevertheless, I tried to protect the emotions of my participants and show them respect and consideration. I also aimed to take Precautions ensure that the confidentiality and safety of qualitative research respondents, according to Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) guidelines. I did make all the efforts to avoid demeaning or shaming language throughout the research and dissemination process.

The interview process and the study period was emotionally difficult time for me. It has affected me in various ways and I have had feelings of hopelessness, anger and sadness. I have talked to children who have aspirations and hope which they could not achieve due to their lack of things like money, shelter, job etc. My emotional participation in the research

has at some point resulted in a sense of shame and anger at the society and government in which I live that keep a blind eye on the sufferings of the street children.

Data Analysis

This section has four parts. Each part having different themes and their explanations.

Give confidence

a. Confidence to interact

During the interviews, I came up with street children overwhelmingly indicating about increasing confidence after being involved in sports activities. One of the respondent Mr. Rajesh, age 14 said “You know what? Sometimes I like to play football and I like it very much. I call all my friends and in the evenings we play football and it feels good. When I meet those friends later I don’t feel uneasiness while talking to them even though there are senior people who fight with gang”. Another respondent named Parvathi, age 16 says “Sometimes I used to go and watch the boys play but I don’t really know the game. I think it is a nice game and I see that all the boys talk and laugh loudly while playing football. Also, when I go there, there are some girls around and we start playing some volleyball. We didn’t have volleyball first when the Brothers from ECHO came to our street and they gave us so many volleyball and football. We were really happy when we finally have the volleyball and football. They also teach us how to play different games and sometimes one of the girls even ask us to watch television with us and we all go to her house and watch some serials together. When we are together playing or watching television we are very happy and we become more strong friends”

Here we can see how these children interact and build self-esteem which leads to confidence. A close friendship can give confidence. When friends talk each other about different topics, it gives them confidence. Like Shivan, age 15 said “Before going to school we meet each other and talk about exams and share

things and this helps us a lot. We are very good friends. Sometimes together we go and talk to our teachers. When I go alone to talk to the teacher or principal I feel afraid but when I do some things together with my friends I don't feel afraid. I met all these friends while playing football first and later we all became friends in school too. These friends help me in everything. They are my best friends". Although most of the time we have documented friendship build during sports activities and increases confidence to interact with the participants and to exterior agents, like teachers, there are exceptions too. Amal, a 17-year-old boy said, "...our friendship ends at the playground".

Also echoing the same sentiment, Sumi, a 15 years old girl said, "When at the playground everyone talks to us but after the game most of the students go away from us. I don't know why they are going away without talking, may be because we are poor. But my friends from the same place where I am coming from, we stay together for some more time at the playground and we talk each other a lot and laugh together. Even we try to buy cinema ticket from the boys".

Also, we hear from Ahamed aged 14 years "We try to get the cinema tickets and come to the playground to take the girls to the cinema hall. We watch the movie together but not always because if the old people see us they will scold and spank us. When we are in groups and go together for the movies we are not afraid of anyone". When asked what are you afraid of the reply was, "If our parents or elder brothers come to know that we went to the movies and spend the money, they don't like that. They will ask so many questions and they will beat us and scold us. When we work and make some money they will always ask for that money".

It is evident that these children have a special bond with each other and that helps them in building the confidence and especially confidence to interact with the fellow beings. Another girl named Veena, age 16 said, "When I go alone to the market to buy some things people try to bully me and say bad words, especially the boys but when we go together they don't try to bully us. One day when I was going alone around 6pm to the market to buy some banana, some boys from the rich area try to follow me and bully me. I ran away from them and from that day onwards I never went to the market alone. I always call my friends if I am

going because when I am with my friends nobody can bully me”. This incident encountered by Veena indicates that how the society treats these street children. This is just a small incident but there are many such incidents happen all around on the streets of big cities every day. Also, these incidents can make these children bold and increase confidence in interacting with people. They know whom to talk to and whom to avoid.

Another example of confidence which helps the children to interact can be seen from the words of Ali, age 14. He said “After school I straight away go to the playground and start playing football. Most of the-the days, before the game our team conduct meeting and we talk to each other. At first, I was afraid to talk to people when they are listening to me. Sometimes I feel like the words are not coming out from my mouth but now after talking many times I don’t feel that. I can talk to a group of people without fear. My sports teacher helped me a lot by encouraging me”. When asked can you talk to your headmaster without fear the answer was no. It made me curious in attempting to understand the limits of confidence and in which what the student meant by people. Ali, further described his circle, “I am always happy to be around my teammates and sports teacher. Also, I like to talk to my friends on the street. I don’t like to talk to some of my classmates because they are rich and they never try to talk to me. I like my sports teacher a lot and he helps me in everything”. The more I talked to my responded the more I started to understand that the social circles of these children, indicating potentiality of sports activity in increasing social capital.

According to almost all the children I talked, they were not confident enough to interact with other students in their own classroom. They were shy to ask or talk to their own teachers. One of the respondents, Lakshmi, age 15 said, “I didn’t want to go to school but when Brothers from ECHO told me it is really nice at the school I suddenly wanted to go to school. When I am at school not many students talk to me. I try to be always with my best friends who are also from my place. I don’t like when the teacher asks me questions. Even though I know a little bit of answer I don’t get to say it. But one day my class teacher talked to me and asked me about my problems I became happier and slowly started to talk to other classmates. She is really nice and she talks to me every day. Also, my other classmates talk to me and play with me now”. This indicates that there are

possibilities of confidence to interact through sports activities which throughout this study we have examined to understand if this is the case.

b. Confidence to cope poverty

While talking to the street children I realised that they find solace in sports to build confidence to manage poverty. Poverty is one of the main problems faced by these street children. According to Praveen, age 16, poverty was the main reason he is on the street. He said “My mother didn’t have enough money to give me good food and clothes. Our house was always leaking during the rainy season. I ran away from my village looking for good food and to make some money to help my mother and my younger brothers because my father drinks a lot of alcohol and does not bring any money home. In the beginning here on the street, it was not easy to find a good job. But finally, I got one of selling water bottles to the train passengers. I make some money now and at least eat food every day. When I started working and earn some money I became happy and I go to my village to meet my mom and my brothers with some money every three months. My mom is very happy now and she really likes me a lot. Also, she is really happy to know that I also started to study and learned reading and writing. I feel confident now that I can find a good job after I complete my studies”. Here Praveen talks about him being able to manage poverty by working hard and building confidence in him. Being poor can lead to in lack of confidence especially among children.

Sports activities among street children help a lot to cope poverty and instil confidence in them. Another respondent named Amal, aged 17, shared his story. He said, “I used to play football when I was very young and later when I went to school my sports teacher helped me a lot. He said to me that I was playing football really well and should practice every day. My parents didn’t have enough money to buy me boots and football but my sports teacher came to know about it and he gifted me one. I started to train every day and when I started my grade 8, I was selected to the school football team. In the school team, I was the best player. I used to score lots of goals. One small club came to know about me and later they

selected me to train with them. Now I am part of that club which gives me some money whenever I go to play some match for them. I am making some money by playing football and working at an eatery. I am happy now and dream of playing for Indian football team in the future”. This shows that sports activities can help the children to maintain confidence to cope poverty. Another respondent Praveen said, “When I play football with my friends, I forget everything. I forget the things that my father used to do after drinking lots of alcohol. I am afraid of my father because he drinks a lot of alcohol and spansks or beats me if I go to play football and not to work but when I am playing football I forget everything and only football is in my mind. Also, I don’t feel hungry when I am with my friends playing football”. He continues, “At school we also have our own team and we play matches with other students who are rich. We always win against them and this will make us happy. Most of the times I never used to eat anything before the match. So I feel tired but as soon as I am on the ground and start playing, I don’t feel hungry. When the rich students in the school see that we play better than them, they come and try to learn the tricks from us and finally we become friends. Then, we don’t feel that we are poor”.

Talking to these children on various matters have given me much useful information. The shame that these children have is very evident and they do not like it. Sports and other such activities are a kind of relief for these children to cope poverty. Lack of confidence among these children is the product of poverty. They see themselves as not capable of doing great things because of their family background and their parent’s inability to support them. This type of situation leads the children to embrace sports and other activities where they have an upper hand because of the physicality and dedication. Compared to the normal children, street children are physically fit due to the type of work they do at home or on the street. They tend to outperform their fellow students when it comes to sports activities. This gives them confidence and they also feel that they can do something and they are capable. One of the respondents Shivan, aged 15 was full of joy when asked to compare the performance of sports with other children. He said “We play football and cricket better than them. We always win and they are afraid to play match against us”. But when asked to tell about the academic performance Shivan became bit confused and shaken. He continued, “When in the

classroom most of us do not study well. Other children perform better than us and we are jealous because of that. They mock us and tease us telling us about our marks. We don't like that. So we always challenge them to play football and cricket”.

Another boy named Ali said, “My friends always tease me when I receive my marks card because most of the time I would fail but when I play football everyone likes my style and I am happy. One day we had a class test for Mathematics and I failed the test. Everyone started to bully me and tease me especially some group of boys. The same day evening we had a football match with those group of children and my team won the match. I scored two goals in that match and I was really happy. After that incident, we all became good friends and they help me to learn mathematics. They now help me in every subject whenever they have time. They are very good in studies because they get help from their parents and brothers. They also have tuition for all the subjects. We do not have tuition because our parents are poor and they also did not go to school. But I am happy as long as I play football and cricket. It gives me happiness in my life. Now we have some people coming to our homes from ECHO and give us football, cricket bats, and balls. They also help us in our studies and they give a class to our parents too”. He continued, “They always tell us that in order to become a good football player or cricket player we need to also study hard and learn to read, write and speak very good because when we become good players and play for India or other clubs there will be lots of interviews happening on the Television etc and there we have to speak in English. Also, I know that when I start playing for my country or some clubs I will become rich and everyone will respect me. I can buy my favourite shoes and car. I can build a big house for my parents. I am confident that one day I will play for my country”.

- c. Confidence to go back to school even though most of the students are smarter than me.

All the respondents were of the opinion that they have gained the confidence to go back to school even though other students are smarter than them. This confidence they have gained is the outcome of sports activities especially

football and cricket. In almost all the sports activities they are far better than other students and that give them confidence. When asked about how much he likes to go to school one of the child Rajesh, aged 14 answered with enthusiasm, “I never liked to go to school because I am not very good in studies. I always failed in the exams and teachers used to scold me and beat me. But when I moved to grade seven and started playing football I always wanted to go to school because that is the only place I get a football to play. Earlier my parents used to push me every day to go to school but I didn’t want to go. They tell me “Rajesh get ready and go to school, there you will get lunch”. But I didn’t really like the food they gave me. The smell of the rice was really bad and most of my friends also did not like it”.

He continued, “After starting my UP school (Upper Primary school), I get to play with a real football. In our school, we get a big real football only when we move to grade 7. So I was really excited and happy when I got to play with my friends for the first time with a real football. Our sports teacher was also very good and always gave us training and taught us techniques and skills. He gave us training every day from 4-5 in the evening. I started to learn all the techniques and skills and my sports teacher used to tell me to practice every day. Those days I was very much happy to go to school just because I knew that in the evening I could play some football. Our sports teacher always told us one thing, “If you play football well you also have the ability to study well. Also, he used to encourage us to concentrate on our studies while we are in the classrooms. He always told us that a good sportsman is good at everything”. One particular thing that can be noted is the enthusiasm these children have when going to school. This is mainly because they can enjoy some entertainment facilities that is otherwise unavailable to them. These entertainment factors like sports, cultural activities, social activities etc. are the main reasons that drive these children to the school.

Another instance of this can be seen from the experience of Parvathy, a girl aged 16. She said, “I very much like to go to school because there are many sports activities and group activities with my friends. It is really fun and we all enjoy a lot there in the school. Before I never liked to go to school and I did not have many friends in the school. You know? Now I have lots of friends and the teachers help us to study hard in different ways. We are also given training in athletics and different sports like football and cricket. I like to participate in

everything but my parents are angry about it. They always ask me if I played some sports and if I say yes they would shout at me by saying that sports and athletics are only for boys and not for the girls. But in the school, our sports teacher encourages us to play football and cricket with the boys. We enjoy so much and learn many things while playing together. When I was in grade 8 we never used to play any kinds of sports or athletics and I didn't go to school those days. But when our new sports teacher came we were divided into many teams and we had matches everyday each other. This became really interesting and fun. Many of my friends started to come to school when I told them about the games and sports we play and the fun we have there. We also have quiz competition and the winning team gets prizes. Teachers will tell us about the quiz competition before one week and then we would start practicing for it by studying and discussing among our groups. Each group has also given one teacher to help us and guide us. It is always fun at the school these days and we all like it".

Many of the boys I talked were of the opinion that they liked going to school just to play sports especially football and cricket. Girls on the other hand, even though they liked playing football, volleyball, and cricket, the main driving factor was extracurricular activities like dance, music, quiz etc.

Another girl named Sumi, age 15 responded about the fun activities and extracurricular activities when asked about the things she liked in the school. She said, "I like to go to school because of many things. One of the reason is I want to see my good friends every day. If I don't go to school one day, then the friends would ask me why I did not come. Also, they tell me about the fun they had the previous day. I feel sad about it and will try not to miss another day. Another thing I like about the school is the activities we have every day with our friends and teachers. We practice drama, dance, drawing, music etc. I like music, dance and drama and whenever there is a competition I would participate in it. I also win prizes and I have represented our school drama team and dance team in inter-school competitions. Our school team is very good when it comes to drama, dance, and other competitions. We always win First or Second place every year. Our teachers are also very helpful and they encourage and motivate us by spending time with us when we practice. They also talk to our parents to send us for learning these things because most of our parents do not encourage us to

participate in it. But after the teachers call them to the school and have a meeting with them they are okay about it and they say yes”.

Sumi then continued, “I also like to have more playing time in the school. Earlier we did not get much time to play and have fun in the school. Teachers always used to tell us to study... study... and study. I didn’t like it then because I am not very good at studies. Especially I am not good at Mathematics and English. But for the last two years, we have been having a lot of time to play and have fun in the school. Every day we have one hour for games and activities. During this hour, most of the boys will play football and cricket but the girls are not very much interested in playing these sports. Instead, we go and play volleyball or handball. Also, my friends and I like gardening. We have a small garden in our school and every day we spend 15 minutes of our playing time with the flowers and plants. We also have named the plants and we are very happy to look after these plants. Every day when I come to the school in the morning my friends and I go into the garden and look for new flowers. Also, I have started to make my own garden at home and I am really enjoying it”.

d. Confidence to talk to unknown.

During the interviews, I came across many children talking about their increased confidence to interact and talk to students or people they did not know before. They were particularly enthusiastic about this because they could make lots of good friends in the school and outside of it especially where they played together or had some activities together. I could realise that joint sports activity and social activities enabled these children to interact each other which consequently resulted in more social interaction and social inclusion. Shivan, a boy aged 15 and studying in grade 9 shared his experience. He said, “In the school I have so many friends and we have lots of fun together. I was shy to talk to strangers and I only talked to my close friends. But when I was sent to this school and started playing football with all the other friends I was feeling better and started to mingle with everyone. Here at the school our teachers, especially our sports teacher calls for meetings and discussions after each game. At the meetings

or discussions, we are asked to talk about the positives and negatives of our team. At first, when I was called to talk it was not easy for me but after talking in front of my friends for many days, I feel confident now”.

When asked about how he felt after being in the school and meeting new friends, Amal, aged 17 talked with confidence about his experience. He said, “I stopped going to school three years ago when my parents died during rainfall and flood that year. I did not know any other relatives and therefore came to Bangalore city looking for some food. After searching for many days I was given work in a small eatery. There I used to get food three times a day. One-day people from BOSCO found me begging on the street and they talked to me and asked me if I wanted to go to school. They also took me to the nearest hotel and gave me good food. When I left my village, I had just completed my 7th grade and always wanted to continue my studies. I could not do so because there was nobody to give me money or buy me uniforms. I was really happy when I heard from BOSCO people that they wanted me to continue my studies. I said yes to them and they sent me to this school. I remember the first day at school after a long break. I was really shy and I could not talk to anyone. My class teacher came to our class and asked everyone to introduce themselves but I could not talk a single word that day. Everything changed when I started to play football because I was really good at it and everyone liked my style and they told me that I played like Messi (smiling). Because I was good at football, everyone wanted to see me and talk to me. This gave me energy and confidence. I made lots of friends and even I was invited to many of my friend’s home and I get to talk to their parents and brothers and sisters”.

Also, there was another girl named Lakshmi, age 15, echoed her experience with regards to increased confidence when talking to unknown due to the involvement in sports and going to school. She said, “When I was sent to this school for my high school (From grade 8) it was really tough for me because all the children have nice dresses and good school bag. I was not ready to talk to anyone because I was shy and did not have the courage. But things changed when I started to go for sports with my classmates. It was real fun and everyone was smiling and laughing each other. Then I started to mingle with everyone. During the physical education hour, our PE teacher used to give us instructions and asked

us what we think or feel about the game. We were given chances to talk in front of our classmates and that took my shyness away. He also used to encourage us a lot. Also after each game we used to discuss the merits and demerits of our game and found out remedies to improve the game next time. When we play against other school teams, everyone from our school including the teachers used to come and encourage us. This gave us confidence. Also after winning the game we were given prizes in front of everyone during the school assembly”.

Give Hope

- a. Hopeful that someday they can become real friends with playmates or classmates.

While talking to these children I could sense that they were hopeful of making real friends and continue this friendship in the future. Many of the children were of the opinion that they felt the friendship they gained through playing sports would last forever. They also felt that the bonding and the unity they achieve while playing sports is really great and this is the best way of making friends.

One of the participants, Ahamed, age 14 said, “I made lots of friends on the streets and in the school by playing football with them. On the street, there are many friends that I just meet only for playing football. I have so many nice friends there. Our team is really doing good and we always win when we play a match with other teams. We get training, volleyball, football and boots from ECHO and Fr. Joshy Kochupurakal is our volleyball and football trainer. I really want all of my teammates to be good friends when we grow old or move to other places. I am hopeful that our friendship will continue in the future. Also in the school, I have very good friends. Most of them are rich and I hope that they continue their friendship with me even after we complete grade 10 and move to other schools. I cannot think about leaving these friends and going somewhere. I am really sad when I think about it but it will be awesome if we all can be real friends in the future. The main reason I am going to school is to play with my friends. It is really fun playing with my friends”.

It was again evident that many children were hoping to take their friendship to the future. They strongly believed that their friendship will last forever. After talking to many children I noticed that there was a great desire for the children continues their friendship. One of the children named Veena, age 16 was very sad about separating from her friends because this is her last year in that school but at the same time she was happy about making so many friends here and wants to keep in touch with them in the future. She said, “I feel very sad about leaving this school because I have so many good friends and I am going to miss them. But I also feel that these friends of mine and I are going to keep the friendship and we will be phoning each other and meeting frequently. I made lots of friends in the school and we used to do so many activities together. We used to play volleyball, football, and cricket. Also, we participated together in many cultural activities like drama, dance, quiz competition, gardening, NCC (National Cadet Corps) etc. We all enjoyed a lot by spending time together and hopefully we will be able to continue this friendship and become real friends in the future.

- b. Hopeful that the parents will allow them to continue with their studies since they are not engaged in destructive or negative activities.

Most of the children I talked to were aware of the fact that they sometimes engage in destructive or negative activities which will cause problems to themselves and to the society. Also, many parents I interacted were thankful about the fact that children now show interest in sports activities and attending school because they thought that if the children stayed at home or in the streets they would make so many problems and also would get involved in gangs and drug dealers. Few children were ready to reveal that they used to work with drug dealers and gangs before being rescued by the organisations ECHO and BOSCO.

One interesting story was revealed while talking to Praveen, age 16. He said, “My father did not like me and treated me very badly, especially my father because he saw me working with a man who is infamous in our area for selling drugs. One day I was selling ginger sweets on the buses and he asked me if I

wanted to have more money. I said yes and he took me to a place and asked me to deliver a small packet. I did that the next day and continued for almost 8 months before I was caught by the police. I was in jail for 15 days and was sent to a juvenile rehabilitation centre. Brothers and Fathers from ECHO used to come there to talk to similar children like me. They came to talk to me one day and I explained everything to them. After listening to my story they told me that they wanted me to be out of this juvenile rehabilitation centre and join their institution. They did everything and finally, I was rescued last year and was given advice and training. They also sent me to this school and asked my parents to send me every day to the school. My father did not want me to go to school because I sometimes used to go with him and work. I used to give all the money to my father after work. When I started to go to school and stopped working he did not have the money he used to get from me. At first, I did not like to go to the school but later when I started to play football, I always wanted to go there because I could get the football only from school. My father never bought me football because he did not have enough money. My sports teacher knew about it and he sponsored me football and boots because he says I play very well. I like to play as an attacking midfielder and my idol is Iniesta”.

This and many other stories of these children show us that children are hopeful and expect their parents to send them to school. Another boy named Praveen, age 17 had a similar experience to share. He said, “Two years ago when I was always on the street, my mother used to worry a lot because she thought that I was becoming a bad boy by befriending with other criminal people in the street. I used to work in a hotel and sometimes I used to go see my mother but most of the days I used to stay with my friends on the street. In the evenings, we used to drink alcohol and smoke a lot. We used to fight with other gangs on the street. It was really a bad time in my life and I always wanted to be out of it but when you are into this kind of set up and when you have so many friends, it is not easy to get out of it. But luckily for me, I was rescued by ECHO and was sent to the rehabilitation centre and late to the school. When my mom came to know that I was with ECHO she was happy but she did not want me to go back to the same street after I was finished with the rehabilitation. So she asked the Brothers from ECHO to send me to a school far away from my old friends. My mom thought

that if I was away from my criminal friends I would become a good boy. So she used to tell me all the time to go to school and study. But I did not want to go to school because I didn't like to study. I went to the school for three days and later I was bored and went back to my street. But my mom called the ECHO people and they came back for me. I was reluctant to go with them but when they talked about sports and other extra-curricular activities, I became interested. Later I went with them and started slowly liked going to school because of sports. My teacher came to know about my previous background and they started to talk to me nicely. Now I really like going to school because I can play football and meet my friends”.

- c. Hopeful that teachers will accept them more since they are active players in the classroom and outside of it.

All the children and volunteers I interviewed have given me the insight that these children actually believe that they are active players in their social set up. They think that because of their involvement in sports and other cultural activities, teachers and other staffs in the school are going to like them and accept them more and do not consider them as children of the street or not rich. This hope of pride of the street children is clearly the outcome of more involvement in the schooling system through sports and cultural activities. Almost all the students wanted to continue their studies and always eager to go to the school. One of the sports teachers Mr. Chacko Thomas said that they had seen a decreased amount of drop outs among street children from school over the past three years. He also believed that this is because of the introduction of more time for sports and other activities. Among the interacted children, very few had a bad opinion about their teachers but otherwise, almost all the children liked their teachers and wanted to go to school not only for sports but also to study hard.

When asked about the reason for going to school, one of the respondent Parvathy, age 16 responded with great joy. She said, “I like my school and my teachers there. They are very kind and always help me with everything I ask for. There were many times I felt bad and did not want to go to school because many

students used to tease me and bully me. They used to say I was from the street and did not have enough money. Those days I thought of not going to school but my sports teacher always encouraged me and told me to focus on my running and long jump. In the exams, I used to score very fewer marks and my teachers always used to scold me but when I started to win prizes in inter-school competitions, everyone used to respect me accept me. Teachers and staffs used to come and congratulate me. Teachers also spend more time with me in the classroom to make me understand especially Maths, English and Science subjects”.

Involvement of the children in sports activities like football, volleyball, cricket, basketball, athletics and other cultural activities encourage teachers to like them. Most of the children think that teachers do not consider them as incapable just because they are unable to score good marks and perform badly inside the classroom rather they believe that by actively participating in football and other sports activities, they will get the recognition from their teachers and parents.

This hope of getting recognised and accepted among teachers and friends were further understood after listening to a boy named Rajesh, age 14. He said, “Even though I do not study well and score good marks in the exams, I am sure that my teachers, friends and other staffs in the school like me because I play football very well and I represent my school football team. When I started my school here I was very bad at studying and teachers used to scold me and my friends used to tease me. But after I started playing football and selected to the school football team, my teachers and friends started to respect me and accept me. I feel really happy when my teachers asked about my football practice and games. My sports teacher always encourages me. He always says that I should not only concentrate on football but also my studies. He is a nice teacher and wants everyone in our team to study well too because he says those students who can play well have the ability to study well too. Also, our teachers give us extra class if we miss some important sessions because of inter-school football competition or other sports and extra-curricular activities”.

Another respondent named Shivan, age 15 was also echoing the same excitement when talked about football and school life. He said, “Our principal, teachers and other people in the school like us and encourage us always. Last year,

after competing and winning the first place in the inter-school football competition, our team was asked to come up on the stage during school assembly and were given prizes. Teachers came to encourage us and wished us good luck for the next game. When we win something and back to school the next day we always receive this kind of reception from the school and in the classroom we will be getting sweets which are arranged by our class teacher to encourage us. Teachers also care us more than it used to be and spend more time explaining to us in the classroom. Also teachers, especially our sports teacher always advises us not to go back to the streets and involve in petty crimes and theft. Now I also feel that I should study more and score good marks in exams also. In the assembly, our principal also tells us that we should not only find time to play football but also find time to study”.

d. Hopeful that they will not be treated as anti-social

These children hope that they will not be treated as anti-social in the school and in the society because of their involvement in football and other sports activities. Most of the children experienced a kind of acceptance and encouragement both from their parents and from their neighbours because of their involvement in football and similar sports. In the society almost all the street children are treated as anti-social mostly because of their involvement in petty crimes and thefts.

One of the respondent Ahamed, age 14 said, “Before going to school I used to spend my time on the streets with my friends. I was the youngest and we used to work together to make money so that we could buy cigarettes and other stuffs. Everything changed after I was send to another town to continue my education. Here I am happy because I get to play football every day and I also feel that the people here do not consider me as a bad boy. Also my teachers tell me that if I play football and do my homework no one will scold me or spank me. Also I have many friends and here it is different from my place. We are not treated badly like we used to be back in our place. Fathers and brothers from ECHO give us training and coaching in different subjects. We also get training to

play football, volleyball etc. Also I see that local people come and support us sometimes. They bring us sweets and gifts when we win matches. I also hope that when I finish my studies and go back to my place no one will treat me badly because I will be a very good football player and I will have good education too. I also feel that I will get admission in a very good college after I finish my higher secondary education”.

I could also talk to some girls about their hopes and aspirations. There was this girl named Sumi, age 15 hopeful of getting better treatment from her society and friends. She said, “I will be finishing my grade 10 in two years and will have to move to another place for my higher secondary education. I hope that in the new school I will be treated nicely and I can make lots of friends. I do not like when people telling bad things about me like she comes from a poor village, she was in an orphanage etc. I hope that because of my good performance in the sports I will be getting quota under sports scheme and everyone will be saying that, ‘that girl is very good at sports’. (smiling). I still remember when I came to this school and continued my studies everyone was looking at me and laughing because I came from the slum. Rich students did not want to talk to me or sit beside me in the classroom”.

Another respondent Ali, age 14 was upset and angry while talking about the treatment he received from the society. He said, “Nobody liked me even my parents, neighbours and relatives. They used to say I am not a good boy and I always do bad things. When I hear these kinds of words from the people I get angry and I try to destroy things around me. Because of these reasons I did not have many friends before. Nobody wanted to be my friend and I was lonely all the time. But when the BOSCO brothers came down to our street to help us and teach us, all the naughty children like me became good ones. They came to our street with lots of things for us to play like football, cricket bats and balls, volleyball etc. They also used to give us training in everything. I really enjoy playing football and quickly I learned the techniques and tricks. Now I can juggle the ball without dropping to the ground for more than hundred times. When everyone came to know that I play football very well they all started to talk to me and smile at me. Also after many years, I think I can become a national football player and then everyone in India is going to like me and smile at me”.

Like Ali, I could see many other children talking about their future and longing for respect and appreciation. In the family and in the society these children were suppressed and depressed. They were not given chances to polish their skill sets. Finally, when they got their chances they are full of ambition and determination. Football has installed them a kind of hope and motivation to go further in life and challenge everything they face. They hope and expect that football can change their life. They hope that no one will see them as children of the street or slum or children from the poor family. They are optimistic about the way they will be treated by the society. They think that football will change societies' perspective towards them.

Unproductive Activity

- a. It does not pay them

Some of the interviewed children were also not optimistic about the positive outcome that the football can bring into their lives. Most of these children were working in the hotels or eatery, railway stations etc. and they were able to make some money. But after becoming regular students they do not get time to work and earn money. They now have to rely on their parents or NGO's to help them. Few children were frustrated about this situation.

Praveen, one of the children interviewed showed his frustration because of the lack of money he has. He said, "When I used to work at the hotel I could make more than Rs.80 a day(little more than \$1). That money was more than enough for me to buy ice creams, chocolates, clothes etc. But now, for everything I have to ask someone. I do not like that situation. After classes every day, I do not have time to go and work or do other things. Also these days, in the evenings I play football with my friends and I had to quit the only part time job I had. But I hope that in the future I can join some clubs and make lots of money by playing football".

Another respondent Shivan, age 15 also echoed the same sentiment. He said, "Going to school every day do not help me. I do not have any money with me. I used to sell mineral water in the city and could make some money but after

coming to school I do not have time to go to work. Since I am on the school football team, after every day's practice I get some food to eat but I wanted to have some money to buy me nice boots, football etc. I know that I can only make some money by playing football if I get to join a club in the future. I am working really hard for that dream”.

There were many children who had the same opinion about the unproductivity of playing football and going to school. They were all talking about making money and becoming self-sustained, at least to buy their stuff. This feeling they have is because most of the children used to work on the streets and when they are sent to the schooling system, their income suddenly stopped. They had to then depend on someone for their needs. I could also realise from many students that, their teachers have tried to make these children understand the importance of studying and playing sports to build a career on a regular basis. Also, the NGO's have been trying to educate street children and their parents about the benefits of attending school.

While talking about the same, one of the respondents, Parvathi, age 16 said, “We always have some kind of advice session from our teachers and principal about the importance of going to school and study. Many of my friends used to sit at home for no reason and when I ask them why they were absent they would say, they had got some work. They actually go with their elders or friends to work and make some money. When they get work like washing dishes in the hotel, selling mineral water, selling books on the trains and buses etc. they skip school and do not come to school that day. Brothers from ECHO and teachers often advise these children and their parents not to send them to work but rather send them back to school.

b. It does not help them to get food

It was also very clear that the children were aware of the fact that playing football or other sports and going to school do not help them to get food. Even though there is free lunch available in the school, most of these children do not like it or they wanted to have a change. Usually, children do not like the food that is served in the schools because of the repeated type, lack of taste and variety. As

one of the teachers, I talked Miss Soumya said, “Every day here at the school we see so much food is being wasted because of the lack of interest from children. Earlier the management started to give food to everyone in the school thinking that the students do not have to carry food from their houses. This idea was supported by the committee of the parents. But after one month we realised that most of the students do not want to eat the food given from school and many students started to bring food from home. We then reduced the amount of meals prepared and now we realised that very few students eat from the meals given by the school”.

Most of these children used to get tasty and good food while they were working. These children were mainly working in hotels or eateries. Otherwise, they had enough money to buy the food that they like quite often. Everything of these sorts stopped when they started to go to the school. Also after the school when they are back to their home or orphanage, the food is also not that tasty every time.

During the interview, one of the boys Amal said, “While I was working at the eatery I used to eat lots of good food. They used to give me chicken biriyani, beef curry, ghee rice etc. Also with the money I get from work I used to go with my friends to eat at some nice restaurants but now I miss all that food. I do not have money with me to buy those foods and other things. I sometimes miss those tasty foods and other things. When I ask my father for money he always says that he does not have any money with him. That is true always because he works for a construction company. The company does not call him to work every day because my father is very weak”.

Another boy Shivan wanted somehow to make some money and eat his favourite chicken biriyani from his favourite restaurant. He said, “When I was on the street and working, I had enough money with me to buy things. Especially nice foods that I like. Chicken biriyani is my favourite and in the orphanage, I never get chicken biriyani. Once in a week here, we get chicken curry but I do not like the taste of that curry. If possible I like to work somewhere and make some money for me to buy things and eat the food I like. Teachers tell me that if I study hard when I become a big man I can work and make lots of money. Also, my

sports teacher always tells me to practice football every day because he says I could make lots of money in the future by joining a club. I hope that when I become a big man I can make it to a great club like Barcelona and earn lots of money like Messi. But I sometimes think if our school gives our football team members money, I would be getting more than anyone in my school team because I am the best player in our team”.

- c. Since the coaching is not high standard, there is no possibility to become professional players.

Another concern is regarding the football training that the children receive in the schools. The facilities and equipment are not up to the mark. Proper grass root level coaching is not seen in most of the schools in India. Sports teachers and the authorities are well aware of this but they are trying their best to enhance these children’s skill sets with the limited resources available. Government and the management fail to provide enough fund to support the sports facilities in most of the schools. Also, the parents are not very supportive about spending lots of money on extra-curricular activities. They argue that the money spent on sports and other things could be well served for some other study related purposes because they are not optimistic about their children getting a good future by playing football or participating in other sports related activities. Almost all the parents just want their children to score high marks and complete their studies with flying colours. They do not see sports as a good option for their children to build their career on. They also claim that the coaching given in the schools are not high standard and therefore it does not affect the children. Also, there were many children who realised the same about their standard of coaching facilities, probably by overhearing from their parents.

One of the respondents Amal was of the opinion that the coaching facilities are not very good. He said, “Our sports teacher is very good and he trains us really hard. We like his training methods but in our school, we lack much equipment. In the coaching videos, we are seen, we could watch high-quality training field and gym. We do not have grass field so we always play in the mud field. We also do not have any gym facility in our school. I think it will be very

difficult for us to become professional players if we continue to practice using the same methods and equipment. I hope that in the future when I go to a college, there I would be able to train with much better training equipment and methods. Also, we do not have many footballs in our school. When more classes have physical education period, it is difficult for some classes to have real football. They then try to use small cricket ball to practice football”.

Another boy Rajesh had the same kind of pessimism regarding the standard of coaching that he and his friends receive. He said, “We train every day and have play football game every day. We have a very good coach and he knows lots of tricks and techniques. But it is difficult for us to become professional football players as we do not have very good qualified coaching facility. Without high standard coaching facilities and equipment, it is impossible to become great players”. He continued, “When I talk to my friends about becoming a great football player, they will always say to me that I should move to a city for me to get better and professional training. They say that the type of training I receive here is not enough to become a professional football player”.

- d. Parents do not see sports activities help their children to build a career.

Almost all the parents I interacted with had the same belief that playing football or engaging in sports related activities do not help their children to build a good career. Many parents think that sports in schools are there to give the students a break from studies. It is to give them a kind of relief when they are exhausted from long hours of lectures. Parent’s unconcern in a way or another might affect the children and it can result in dropping the interest of the children in sports activities. Most of the parents are mainly concerned about their children’s marks and curricular activities. They also do not see the importance of playing sports and staying fit.

One of the girl respondents Parvathy had gone through a bitter experience. She shared her experience, “When I started to play football and staying after school to practice and train, my parents were not happy about it. They always told me that sport was not going to help me in the future. But my sports teacher has different belief and he says us to practice and train every day so that in the future we will be selected by some top clubs and we can make lots of money. Also, it

would be an opportunity to be part of our state team and then the national team. During the first weeks of my training, I was always hearing bad words from my parents and I was afraid to stay for training, thinking that when I get back home I would be scolded. When my sports teacher came to know about this situation of mine, he wanted to talk to my parents and advise them. One day he called my parents and we all had a small meeting and in that meeting he told them about the good things of playing sports. He also told them that he could see a very good football player in me. Also, he told my parents that one day I was going to be in the state team and then in the national team. I was very happy that day and my parents have been supporting me since then”.

There was another girl I met who stopped playing football just because her parents did not like it. They always wanted her to just study and score good marks but she was not that good in her studies. Fatima age 16, shared her experience “My mom did not like me going for football practice. I was not allowed to participate in the games but sometimes when my mom was not home I used to go play with my friends. I like this game very much. I was also playing in our local team and our coach really liked my style of play. He used to tell me to train everyday with my friends. But since my mom did not like it I hardly get a chance to train with them. It all happened after my father died. If my father was here he would have definitely supported me because he liked football very much. My mom is now afraid about my career and she always tells me to do my homework and concentrate only on my studies. She believes the study is important not sports. But I do not really like to study all the time. In the beginning, I tried to study and it was difficult for me. She also used to show me some examples of other senior students from our slum who studied and scored good marks and went on to work for companies or government. But I think my mom will change her mind when the school reopens because I am going to tell my coach about it and he will talk to my mom. She will also then come to know that I am a good football player and will be making money by playing football in the future. (smiling)”.

I also could meet few children, both boys and girls who stopped playing football or other sports just because their parent did not want them to. Many of these children used to go to school only to play football, volleyball, cricket or involve in some other leisure activities. I could also realise that there were many

cases in which children stopped coming to school because of their parents. These children then either go with their parents or relatives to their workplace or work alone to support their family in their struggle to survive. Another sports teacher Mr. Chacko Thomas said, “We try to motivate our students to participate in sports activities. But many are reluctant to come forward saying that their parents do not want them to participate in any of these kinds of activities. We then realised the fact of having a meeting to make the parents to aware about the importance of sports and fitness in students. There were few positive responses since then but I am afraid that the situation is again going back. Many teachers also complained about less attendance after their omission from sports activities, especially the student from low-income families. This indicates the fact that these children were coming to school just because of football and other sports activities.”

He then continued, “I myself have gone to some student’s houses after they stopped coming for football practice. I could bring back few students after talking to their parents but it was not easy to convince a majority of their parents. At the beginning of the next academic year, we are planning to have a parent’s meeting wherein one of the topics for discussion will be sports and fitness for young children. We are also trying to get some prominent personalities from football or other sports discipline. We will also be submitting a proposal to the school management to implement latest equipment for sports related activities. Another proposal we have is to try and get some fund from the government through our local minister Sri. Jayalakshmi. We have already discussed the same with the minister but she is currently busy with election schedule. Hopefully, after the election, we will get a positive response from the government. Also, our principal and management are very enthusiastic about the idea of encouraging students to participate in sports-related activities, which is actually not the same with some of the other neighbouring schools.”

In most parts of India, especially in the villages, it will take ages to change the concept towards the importance of sports and fitness in schools. Many NGO’s, government organisations and individuals are trying hard to educate the society of developing a healthy culture.

Uncertain

a. Uncertain if the local people are happy

Many children I interviewed had worries regarding whether the local people are happy about them playing football, especially on the streets. Not many people were in support of the training ground made by the organisation ECHO near their residence. I could realise that there were so many reasons behind this. Main reasons include; excessive noise that the children make while playing football; approval of the neighbours; rich and poor playing together; low cast and the high cast playing together etc.

I could hear the complications they have encountered from Fr. Joshy Kochupurakkal and Fr. Anish Karimaloor of ECHO who worked together for building a football/cricket training ground for the street children. Fr. Anish Karimaloor said, “We started the work on the training ground three years ago and finished it the next year. While the construction going on we came across so many obstacles in the form of people. Especially the neighbouring residents. They were not very supportive of this idea because they were concerned about street children coming to their area and there is a chance that their children might join them for football or cricket games and might learn the bad things. We somehow managed to get the approval of many but there were certain people completely against the idea and later to make it smooth we had to go to the court. Even though everything went smoothly still we come across people trying to stop the children from making noise while playing”.

These type of harassment that the children encountered were clearly explained when talked to Ahamed. He said, “After school my friends and I will go to the training ground for football practice. We have practice every day starting at 17:30 and finishing at 18:30. Sometimes we stay more on the ground and play another half or one more hour. We are almost 15-20 children attending the football training programme conducted by ECHO. When we play we make lots of noise and many people live around do not like and sometimes they come and talk to our coach. Also especially after 18:30 when the coach has left the ground, we sometimes stay more and then the noise will be much louder. Most of the training

days, people used to come and scold us while we were having fun by playing football. We do not like them because they are rich and they do not like poor children like us. They also do not send their children to play with us”.

Another respondent was annoyed when asked about the local people’s reaction to playing football on the street. He (age 17, doesn’t want to reveal his identity) said, “Lots of people come and argue with us and threaten us to stop playing football because they say that we are making lots of noise. They also tried to take our football away many times when the brothers or coach were not with us”.

There were also many cases where caste-based discrimination could be seen. As Fr. Joshy said, “When we started the football training for the children in the new training ground, there were many children interested and wanted to join with the street children but they were not allowed by their parents. Their parents used to come and take their children back. They used to tell us so many reasons for not allowing their children to play with street children. Most parents did not like their children socialising with lower caste children. They do not want to entertain their children becoming friends with lower caste children. We could see many cases of caste-based discrimination”.

Fr. Joshy then continued when asked about similar problems they have encountered. “We could also see discrimination in many other areas. There were cases in which rich parents did not want their children to train with the street children saying that this was not good for their children’s health and future. I have seen few incidents wherein the parents forcefully take their children back to their homes while playing football with street children. Even though these children want to train with the street children, their parents or the society do not allow that to happen. Also, we could see gender-based discrimination. We started this training program for both boys and girls but so far we could not manage to get many girls to form a proper football team. Many parents do not actually want their girl child to play football or train with boys. They are afraid of the love affairs that can happen between these children and if that happens they know that the aftermath would be really complicated”.

b. Uncertainty about the volunteers

This is another concern for the children I could hear while interviewing them. The two NGO's I have done my research on are run by priests. ECHO is run by Norbertine fathers and BOSCO is by the Salesians of Don Bosco. Most of the volunteers work in these institutions are seminarians (brothers who aspire to become a priest). They are sent to these organisations mostly for one year as part of their training to become priests. Because of this reason every year, there is a change of volunteers. This can negatively impact the development of the street children in emotional, social and physical ways. They do not have enough time to build rapport with the volunteers. Also, each one has his own way of managing the children. Some volunteers may be friendly and comfortable others may be a bit rude and the children may not like them.

Most of the children I talked to were sad that every year they see their best brothers leaving them. They become too much attached to the volunteers that their departure makes them unhappy. One of the respondents Ahamed said, "We all were very sad when we heard the news that Bro. Jobin left us. He was really nice to us and always wanted to talk to us. He was also a very good football and volleyball player and we could learn new tricks and techniques from him. He used to play with us and gave us guidance. He also taught us English and Science. I cried the day he went back to Kerala for his higher studies because I was very close to him. He really liked me and always used to support me. He also liked my style of football play. My friends and I requested him to stay one more year with us but for him, it was not possible. He always used to tell us to go to school every day and study hard. He also used to show us football training videos after we finish practice every day. It was very useful for us. We used to watch all those techniques on the videos and tried to do the same the next day when we went for training. I hope that one day he will come back to see us all".

Another boy Amal was also sad about his favourite Bro. leaving. He said, "My friends and I liked Bro. Jaison a lot. He was very funny and always had a smiling face. He never scolded us even if we made any mistake. He was very friendly and supportive. He also used to take us for outing every weekend. We

enjoyed a lot when he was around. He also used to come with us for playing football. He was a very good midfield player with lots of techniques. He used to tell us to practice every day to become a great football player. He also used to bring us chocolates whenever we win matches. When we heard that he was about to leave I asked my parents to come and talk to him so that he might stay. But he said he had to move to another place to continue his studies”.

Another respondent Fatima age 16 said, “We have two Brothers from the Seminary this year and we know that they will be going back soon. When we came to know about it, we told them not to go back. But I am sure that they will not stay for another year or two because they have their things to do. My friends and I will miss them for sure. We learned lots of things from them. They used to teach us singing, drama, gardening, etc. Also, they were very good at speaking English and always tried to talk in English with us and encouraged us. I am not sure if we will get another good brother like them.

c. Uncertainty about becoming friends in the future.

Many children were uncertain about becoming friends in the future even though they study and play football together now. Children have hope and desire to continue their friendship but were not sure how that was possible when they go to different places after their studies. They were also concerned about losing their good friends in the future because of work or study related migration.

One of the respondents Fatima said, “I have got so many friends here but we are not sure about becoming friends in the future or continue our friendship. Everyone wants to continue the friendship but it is not easy. Not many of our friends have mobile phones and computers because most of us are poor. So it will be difficult to call or talk each other and keep the friendship”. When asked about how football helps in making friends, she continued, “I am friend with all the members of my football team. We are like a family and we want to continue that friendship. We spend lots of time together training and practicing. We have been practicing football and studying together and that is how our friendship grew”.

Another respondent Lakshmi said, “We hope to continue our friendship and really want to be good friends in the future but we are not sure if that is going to happen. We will go to different places after our schooling here and may not be able to train football together or study together. We become really sad when we think of it. We will try to keep our contact and hopefully will meet in the future. Also, our sports teacher always tells us that we have to be good friends outside the playing ground in order to be successful while playing. He says that if we become real friends then it will be easy for us to train together and play together. He also tells us to come to the school regularly and attend the sessions”.

There were many students with the same opinion about them becoming or continuing their friendship in the future because they would not be playing football together after their school. Most of the street children actually get to play together on the street or on the ground next to their slum or village but they think about not able to play with their school friends after they complete their studies. One of the boys Ali said, “When I complete my studies here I will not be able to play with my school friends. Even though I play every day on the street with my friends there, I am going to miss the friends that I have at school because at school it is always fun and I have lots of good friends there. I will miss those friends for sure after I complete my studies and I am not sure if I will be able to maintain this friendship in the future.

d. Uncertainty about becoming a professional football player in the future

Most of the street children I interviewed wanted to become good football players in the future. But they were not sceptical that their dream is going to happen. Mostly because of the training facilities and method. Also, they were saying that the fact that they are poor and only rich people usually make it to the national team or state team. There were also cases I could hear from the sports teachers and other teachers about children stopping their football training just because their parents and they thought that this was not going to help their children in the future.

Ms. Saumya, one of the teachers I interviewed explained the situation. She said, “We have had cases wherein many students drop out of sports and extra-curricular activities because they thought that this was not a good thing to do to build their career. They were largely influenced by their parents and their particular society. We also had special cases in which parents came and requested us not to partake their children in any of the sports events”.

One of the boys I have talked to was doubtful about becoming a professional football player in the future. Ahamed shared his thoughts, “Our sports teacher always encourages us and motivates us by telling that if we practice hard and study well we could become professional football players. I follow my sports teacher and eagerly listens to him because he is very good. I started going to school regularly and studying well after he told me the importance of education to become a good football player. But I am not sure if I can be a professional football player because of the limited opportunities we have. Even though we practice every day, we do not have enough good players. My brother always tells me that only if I play with good players I would improve. Most of my friends are good players but there are some not that good. Also, we do not have enough football for training. We have only five footballs in our school and our team gets only three for training. There is a private school nearby and I have few friends there. They told me that in their school every week IM Vijayan comes to train them. He is one of the best football players our state has ever seen. Also, they go to another city two times in a month to train with other teams. But we do not have any of these facilities.

Another respondent Praveen was also doubtful about his dream of becoming a professional football player. He said, “That’s all I want to become in life but I am not very sure about it. I think it is not easy for a poor boy like me. My family does not have enough money to support me. And we do not have very good coaching facilities in our school. I want to study very well and when I get good grades I can join a very good college. Then I will be able to train with lots of good players and I will have all the facilities too.

Findings and discussions

Inspired by previous experiences and observation, guided by the research questions, I was determined as ever to approach the research field. The process of analysing data was a mixture of searching data for understanding and defining the context and background of the phenomenon and of collecting structured interviews. Transcribing the interviews helped me to find the important patterns and words present in the data. This later helped me to categorize and arrange the words and patterns in themes and attach to the concept.

It has been depicted in the thesis that street children are the most vulnerable category of all especially in India where the migration to the urban cities is at peak. During the process of settling down into the cities, these children are deprived of their rights and basic necessities like food, shelter, clothing and most importantly education. In the process of survival, education is not an important factor for the street children and their parents. Education is an essential factor which helps social inclusion. Measures have been implemented by the government and non-governmental organisations to make the social inclusion possible. Based on my research and findings, I strongly believe that one of the important means of social inclusion is attracting or encouraging the street children to go to school using sports, especially football. As I have discussed before, I have chosen football mainly because of two reasons. First, one is football is becoming as one of the most popular sports in India and the second reason is most of the young children likes to play football. In my research, I have found out that football helps the children in many ways especially their physical and emotional development. Therefore, my themes are based on these factors. The thesis analysis and findings are discussed below.

One of the important findings I have is that football helps the children to gain confidence. It gives them the confidence to interact, confidence to cope poverty, confidence to go back to school even though most of the students are smarter than them, and confidence to talk to unknown. After carefully analysing the data I realised that the children interact and build self-esteem which leads to confidence. A close friendship can give confidence. When friends talk each other about different topics, it gives them confidence. Like Shivan, said “Before going to school we meet each other and talk about exams and share things and this helps us a lot. We are very good friends. Sometimes together we go and talk to our teachers. When I go alone to talk to the teacher or principal I feel afraid but when I do some things together with my friends I don’t feel afraid. I met all these friends while playing football first

and later we all became friends in school too. These friends help me in everything. They are my best friends”. I could also find out that although most of the time friendship build during sports activities and increases confidence to interact with the participants and to exterior agents, like teachers, there are exceptions too. Few students were of the opinion that their friendship does not go beyond football ground.

Another important finding is that football leads to coping poverty. Almost all the street children area victim of poverty and they are ashamed of it. Feeling of shame is very evident. But there were many incidents in which many street children were selected to local clubs and got paid. One of the respondents Amal shared his story. He said, “I used to play football when I was very young and later when I went to school my sports teacher helped me a lot. He said to me that I was playing football really well and should practice every day. My parents didn’t have enough money to buy me boots and football but my sports teacher came to know about it and he gifted me one. I started to train every day and when I started my grade 8, I was selected to the school football team. In the school team, I was the best player. I used to score lots of goals. One small club came to know about me and later they selected me to train with them. Now I am part of that club which gives me some money whenever I go to play some match for them. I am making some money by playing football and working at an eatery. I am happy now and dream of playing for Indian football team in the future”. This shows that sports activities can help the children to maintain confidence to cope poverty.

I also could found out that football and other sports activities motivate and encourage these street children to go to school and then during the course of time starting to take studies seriously. Another important finding was that the street children gained the confidence to talk to unknown. They gained the confidence to talk to unknown or to their teachers after getting the opportunity to play football and started to mingle with other students. I realised this fact while I was interviewing these children. I could see their enthusiasm and energy backed by confidence while talking to them. They were not shy to express themselves or ask questions to me. They were eager to explore and learn.

The blooming of the element of hope in street children was another important finding of this research. Football and other sports activities instilled street children with hope. They were hopeful of becoming really good friends with their playmates and classmates in the future. It was again evident that many children were hoping to take their friendship to the future. They strongly believed that their friendship will last forever. After talking to many

children I noticed that there was a great desire for the children to continue their friendship. Cementing these findings one of the children said, she said, “I feel very sad about leaving this school because I have so many good friends and I am going to miss them. But I also feel that these friends of mine and I are going to keep the friendship and we will be phoning each other and meeting frequently. I made lots of friends in the school and we used to do so many activities together. We used to play volleyball, football, and cricket. Also, we participated together in many cultural activities like drama, dance, quiz competition, gardening, NCC (National Cadet Corps) etc. We all enjoyed a lot by spending time together and hopefully we will be able to continue this friendship and become real friends in the future.

They were also hopeful that the parents will allow them to continue with their studies since they are not engaged in destructive activities. I could realise the fact that most of the parents do not like their children be at home because when they are on the street and not studying they would be engaged in destructive activities like working for gangs, selling drugs, drinking alcohol and fighting with other street children etc. Most of the children I talked to were aware of the fact that they sometimes engage in destructive or negative activities which will cause problems to themselves and to the society. Also, many parents I interacted were thankful about the fact that children now show interest in sports activities and attending school. Few children were ready to reveal that they used to work with drug dealers and gangs before being rescued by the organisations ECHO and BOSCO.

After listening to stories of different children I could found out that children are hopeful and expect their parents to send them to school. One of the children named Praveen said, “Two years ago when I was always on the street, my mother used to worry a lot because she thought that I was becoming a bad boy by befriending with other criminal people in the street. I used to work in a hotel and sometimes I used to go see my mother but most of the days I used to stay with my friends on the street. In the evenings, we used to drink alcohol and smoke a lot. We used to fight with other gangs on the street. It was really a bad time in my life and I always wanted to be out of it but when you are into this kind of set up and when you have so many friends, it is not easy to get out of it. But luckily for me, I was rescued by ECHO and was sent to the rehabilitation centre and late to the school. When my mom came to know that I was with ECHO she was happy but she did not want me to go back to the same street after I was finished with the rehabilitation. So she asked the Brothers from ECHO to send me to a school far away from my old friends”.

Another important finding, I have had is that most of the children were hopeful that teachers will accept them more since they are active players in the classroom and outside of it. Most of the street children I talked to had bitter experience with their teachers mainly because they were poor in studying. But that has changed after the teachers found out their abilities and started to appreciate them. Also from the society they were not getting better treatment. Most of the people in the society see these street children are a menace to the society. Many incidents were revealed where the street children had come across bitter experience from local people and the police. But after they started playing football and attending school, people began to respect and accept these street children. They started to come to watch them play football and even donated many things like football, boots, jerseys, training equipment etc. for the sake of their development.

During my thesis research, I have had the opportunity to examine the relationship between football and studying at school. In fact, football is a very effective motivating factor when it comes to encouraging and attracting the street children to the schooling system. I found out that so many positive aspects of playing football.

While I was investigating the effects of football on street children I could also find out that, despite having more advantages, few children and parents thought that playing football is an unproductive activity. According to them, there were many reasons behind it and one of the important reasons was playing football does not pay them any money unless they become a professional football player or join a local club. This was mainly the concern of the parents and few children also had the negative thought about it. Some of the interviewed children were not optimistic about the positive outcome that the football can bring into their lives. Most of these children were working in the hotels or eatery, railway stations etc. and they were able to make some money. But after becoming regular students they do not get time to work and earn money. They now have to rely on their parents or NGO's to help them. Few children were frustrated about this situation.

Praveen, one of the children interviewed showed his frustration because of the lack of money he has now. He said, "When I used to work at the hotel I could make more than Rs.80 a day (little more than \$1). That money was more than enough for me to buy ice creams, chocolates, clothes etc. But now, for everything I have to ask someone. I do not like that situation. After classes every day, I do not have time to go and work or do other things. Also these days, in the evenings I play football with my friends and I had to quit the only part time

job I had. But I hope that in the future I can join some clubs and make lots of money by playing football”.

There were many children who had the same opinion about the unproductivity of playing football and going to school. They were all talking about making money and becoming self-sustained, at least to buy their stuff. This feeling they have is because most of the children used to work on the streets and when they are sent to the schooling system, their income suddenly stopped. They had to then depend on someone for their needs. I could also realise from many students that, their teachers have tried to make these children understand the importance of studying and playing sports to build a career on a regular basis. Also, the NGO's have been trying to educate street children and their parents about the benefits of attending school.

After analysing and interviewing the children I could also found out that some children did not like the fact that playing football and going to school does not help them to get food. Most of these street children used to work at the hotel or eatery and used to eat good food but after coming to school they had very limited opportunity to have good food. Even though they did not like the lunch given at the school, they had to content with that. Also, most of these children did not like the food cooked at home because it was not always delicious.

Another concern of the children and parents were that since the coaching is not high standard, there is no possibility to become professional football players. The facilities and equipment are not up to the mark. Proper grass root level coaching is not seen in most of the schools in India. Sports teachers and the authorities are well aware of this but they are trying their best enhance these children's skill sets with the limited resources available. Government and the management fail to provide enough fund to support the sports facilities in most of the schools. Also, the parents are not very supportive about spending lots of money on extra-curricular activities. They argue that the money spent on sports and other things could be well served for some other study related purposes because they are not optimistic about their children getting a good future by playing football or participating in other sports related activities. Almost all the parents just want their children to score high marks and complete their studies with flying colours. They do not see sports as a good option for their children to build their career on. They also claim that the coaching given in the schools are not high standard and therefore it does not affect the children. Also, there were many children realised

the same about their standard of coaching facilities, probably by overhearing from their parents.

One of the respondents Amal was of the opinion that the coaching facilities are not very good. He said, “Our sports teacher is very good and he trains us really hard. We like his training methods but in our school, we lack much equipment. In the coaching videos, we are seen, we could watch high-quality training field and gym. We do not have grass field so we always play in the mud field. We also do not have any gym facility in our school. I think it will be very difficult for us to become professional players if we continue to practice using the same methods and equipment. I hope that in the future when I go to a college, there I would be able to train with much better training equipment and methods. Also, we do not have many footballs in our school. When more classes have physical education period, it is difficult for some classes to have real football. They then try to use small cricket ball to practice football”.

This study also advances the understanding of the fact that very few parents do not see sports activities help their children to build a career. Almost all the parents I interacted with had the same belief that playing football or engaging in sports related activities do not help their children to build a good career. Many parents think that sports in schools are there to give the students a break from studies. It is to give them a kind of relief when they are exhausted from long hours of lectures. Parent’s unconcern in a way or another might affect the children and it can result in dropping the interest of the children in sports activities. Most of the parents are mainly concerned about their children’s marks and curricular activities. They also do not see the importance of playing sports and staying fit.

I also could meet few children, both boys and girls who stopped playing football or other sports just because their parent did not want them to. Many of these children used to go to school only to play football, volleyball, cricket or involve in some other leisure activities. I could also realise that there were many cases in which children stopped coming to school because of their parents. These children then either go with their parents or relatives to their workplace or work alone to support their family in their struggle to survive.

The findings from the research also illustrate the uncertainty of the street children. Many children I interviewed had worries regarding whether the local people are happy about them playing football, especially on the streets. Not many people were in support of the training ground made by the organisation ECHO near their residence. I could realise that

there were so many reasons behind this. Main reasons include; excessive noise that the children make while playing football; approval of the neighbours; rich and poor playing together; low cast and the high cast playing together etc. I could hear the complications they have encountered from Fr. Joshy Kochupurakkal and Fr. Anish Karimaloor of ECHO who worked together for building a football/cricket training ground for the street children. Fr. Anish Karimaloor said, “We started the work on the training ground three years ago and finished it the next year. While the construction was going on we came across so many obstacles in the form of people. Especially the neighbouring residents. They were not very supportive of this idea because they were concerned about street children coming to their area and there is a chance that their children might join them for football or cricket games and might learn the bad things. We somehow managed to get the approval of many but there were certain people completely against the idea and later to make it smooth we had to go to the court. Even though everything went smoothly still we come across people trying to stop the children from making noise while playing”.

Uncertainty about the volunteers was another concern of the students that I could realise after the interview. The two NGOs I have done my research on are run by priests. ECHO is run by Norbertine fathers and BOSCO is by the Salesians of Don Bosco. Most of the volunteers who work in these institutions are seminarians (brothers who aspire to become a priest). They are sent to these organisations mostly for one year as part of their training to become priests. Because of this reason every year, there is a change of volunteers. This can negatively affect the development of the street children in emotional, social and physical ways. They do not have enough time to build rapport with the volunteers. Also, each one has his own way of managing the children. Some volunteers may be friendly and comfortable others may be a bit rude and the children may not like them.

They were also uncertain about becoming friends in the future even though they study and play football together now. Children have hope and desire to continue their friendship but were not sure how that was possible when they go to different places after their studies. They were also concerned about losing their good friends in the future because of work or study related migration. One of the girls I interviewed said, “We hope to continue our friendship and really want to be good friends in the future but we are not sure if that is going to happen. We will go to different places after our schooling here and may not be able to train football together or study together. We become really sad when we think of it. We will try to keep our contact and hopefully will meet in the future. Also, our sports teacher always tells us that we

have to be good friends outside the playing ground in order to be successful while playing. He says that if we become real friends then it will be easy for us to train together and play together. He also tells us to come to the school regularly and attend the sessions”.

There were many students with the same opinion about them becoming or continuing their friendship in the future because they would not be playing football together after their school. Most of the street children actually get to play together on the street or on the ground next to their slum or village but they think about not able to play with their school friends after they complete their studies. One of the boys Ali said, “When I complete my studies here I will not be able to play with my school friends. Even though I play every day on the street with my friends there, I am going to miss the friends that I have at school because at school it is always fun and I have lots of good friends there. I will miss those friends for sure after I complete my studies and I am not sure if I will be able to maintain this friendship in the future.

In conclusion, the research has given me the opportunity to realise the problems of street children and the difficulties they face in everyday life. The study period was emotional owing to the nature of the participants involved and it challenged me to bring out the best in me. It also motivated me to go back to India in the future and help the street children to attain a fruitful life for them as well as for the society. The research analysed and realised the role of football and education in the lives of street children and how it can be used to bring the children into the mainstream society. The research also found out that sports, especially football plays an important role in bringing the street children back to school or encouraging the street children to pursue their goals.

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