

Original Research Article

Situation analysis study of street children of Khulna city, Bangladesh

Nirmal Sarker, M. Sohedul Islam*

International Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO), Dhaka, Bangladesh

Received: 24 October 2024

Revised: 20 November 2024

Accepted: 21 November 2024

*Correspondence:

Dr. M. Sohedul Islam,

E-mail: info.researchacademy@gmail.com

Copyright: © the author(s), publisher and licensee Medip Academy. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License, which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

ABSTRACT

Background: With a considerable populace of children which can be vulnerable, this observe investigated the problems skilled by way of street youngsters in Khulna city, Bangladesh.

Methods: A mixed-methods approach was used in the observe, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques. One hundred and 80-8 defendants, a while six to eighteen, had been selected via practical sampling for interviews. To acquire similarly in-depth statistics, three recognition group discussions with twenty-four participants were held. This triangulation technique gave us an intensive information of the difficulties Khulna city's street youngsters stumble upon.

Results: Most street children in Khulna city were aged 10-12 years, with non-school-going boys 55.6% outnumbering school-going girls 45.5%. Financial difficulties 100% and the need to work 62.3% were the primary barriers to school attendance. A significant proportion 56% face school-related challenges, including inability to pay fees and starvation, especially among girls 61.1%. Abuse rates are high, particularly among non-school-going children, with parental and police violence being common. Support needs include financial aid for education and income-generating training, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions.

Conclusions: This study confirmed that street children face significant barriers to education, with lack of support, abuse, exploitation, and poverty, reliable with prior research in Bangladesh and other developing countries.

Keywords: Street children, Financial difficulties, Khulna city

INTRODUCTION

Today, the matter of street children has become a significant alarm, making substantial force in Bangladesh. It is projected that over 100 million street and employed children globally endure harsh and often abusive circumstances.¹ In a study, a comparable example was observed in Dhaka, where the need for children to add to household income, along with financial difficulties, led to their removal to formal education.² Another study examines the beliefs that children in street situations in Dhaka held with great regard, as well as the methods they utilize to protect and improve their livelihoods while staying alive on the streets.³ But specific data is hard to obtain, there is a clear indication that the issue is increasing, especially in regions undergoing economic or

political alterations. This universal crisis is anticipated to worsen, with more than 60% of the world's population predicted to live in urban areas by 2025.⁴ Presently, rapid urbanization disappears to a billion people without enough shelter or vital services, imposing many into overcrowded and harmful living environment.

The concern of street children continues to be a pressing challenge for nations covering the globe. Without a sympathetic setting, these young those face harsh realities, a scenario specifically prevalent in Bangladesh, where poverty and variation heavily manipulate the fate of the country's juvenile citizens. Although Bangladesh's commitment to global child rights treaties and the implementation of protecting laws, a substantial number of children in the country remain to be denied of their basic rights.⁵

Street children in Bangladesh face harsh actualities, often working as shoe polishers, beggars, street perpetrators, or selling small objects like wafers and plastic bags. They are amongst the most abandoned groups, regularly exposed to abandonment, abuse, and even death. Many falls victim to extreme poverty and the country's financial efforts. If this issue stays, the harm to their basic human rights will only get worse in the forthcoming.

Numerous studies have detected economic lack as the main, and occasionally the only cause leading children in emerging countries to migrate to street.⁶ It is contended that children move out of the household as a direct managing strategy, to expand the household's portfolio of income making activities, and that, at the same time, economic poverty leads to stresses and tensions inside the household, that become an unintended cause of street migration.^{7,8} United Nations has stated the collapse to reduce income inequality among and within households as a missed prospect for challenging the causes of poverty and street migration for children.⁹ Children are the heart of social development, and their wellbeing converts into the development of a nation. Worldwide, a projected 1.2 million children are on the streets of major cities and urban centers; these incorporate "runaway" children who exist or work on the street plus those who return to the family. Children constitute a large division of the global population and, thus, form a significant section of all human societies.¹⁰ This study aimed to provide an extensive analysis of the state of street youngsters in Khulna City, Bangladesh, with a focal point at the reports, boundaries, and conditions for their effective mainstreaming into the formal schooling device.

METHODS

This study employed a mixed-method approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative techniques to comprehensively explore the challenges faced by street children in Khulna city corporation. Data were collected during May to June 2016 through field surveys and focus group discussions (FGDs). Khulna city was chosen as the

study site due to its significant population of street children.

Using a purposive sampling method, 100 children aged 6-18 years were selected for interviews, and an additional 24 participants took part in FGDs. Inclusion criteria focused on children living and/or working in the streets of Khulna city, while those with stable family homes, those unwell or unable to communicate effectively, and those unwilling to consent were excluded from the study.

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the ethical board. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Quantitative data were gathered using a pre-tested structured questionnaire, capturing demographic information, educational status, health conditions, and socio-economic characteristics. Qualitative data were collected through FGDs, guided by a set of open-ended questions designed to explore participants' working environments, exploitation patterns, and social conditions. Note-taking templates with participants' consent, ensured the accuracy and completeness of the qualitative data.

Statistical analysis of the quantitative data was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), applying descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and means. Thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data, identifying recurring patterns and key socio-economic themes. This mixed-methods approach, supported by triangulation, provided a robust and nuanced understanding of the issues facing street children in Khulna city.

RESULTS

The study identified significant challenges faced by street children in Khulna city. Most children 44% are in the 10-12 years age group, with non-school-going boys 55.6% outnumbering school-going girls 45.5%. Educationally, 46.5% of children are at the class three to five level, while only 6.1% reach class nine or SSC (Table 1).

Table 1: Age distribution and educational status of school-going and non-school-going street children.

Age (years)	Gender of the children				Total
	School going street children (%)		Non-school going street children (%)		
	Boy	Girls	Boy	Girls	
3-6	0.00	3.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
7-9	17.60	24.20	11.10	0.00	15.00
10-12	17.60	45.50	55.60	42.90	44.00
13-18	64.70	27.30	33.30	57.10	40.00
Education					
Pre-school to 2 nd	0.00	0.00	72.20	28.60	30.30
Class 3 rd to 5 th	31.20	69.70	27.80	57.10	46.50
Class 6 th to 8 th	62.50	15.20	0.00	14.30	17.20
Class 9 th to SSC	6.20	15.20	0.00	0.00	6.10
Total	17	33	36	14	100

Table 2: Parental and living arrangements of school-going and non-school-going street children.

Parental alive status		Gender of the children		Total (%)
School going children	Father status	Boy (%)	Girls (%)	
	Alive	88.20	87.90	88.00
	Dead	11.80	12.10	12.00
	Mother status			
	Alive	100.00	100.00	100.00
Total number		17	33	50
Non-school going children	Father status			
	Alive	83.30	78.60	82.00
	Dead	16.70	21.40	18.00
	Mother status			
	Alive	97.20	92.90	96.00
	Dead	2.80	7.10	4.00
Total number		36	14	50
Children living with				
School going children	Mother	100.00	97.00	98.00
	Relatives	0.00	3.00	2.00
Total number		17	33	50
Non-school going children	Mother	77.80	85.70	80.00
	Relatives	0.00	7.10	2.00
	Others	22.20	7.10	18.00
Total number		36	14	50

Table 3: Reasons for not going to school (non-school going children) and reason of working by school going street children.

Reasons for not going to School (non-school going children)	Boy (%)	Girl (%)	Total (%)
Feel pain to walk far distance to go to school	22.2	14.3	36.5
Cannot pay school fees regularly	59.1	40.9	100.00
Cannot take meal daily	3.1	6.1	9.20
Often feel sick	14.3	0	14.3
Afraid of going to school lonely	21.4	0	21.4
Have to work most of the time	42.9	19.4	62.3
Other students hate me	25	0	25
Students do not receive me friendly	7.1	0	7.1
Teacher beat if I cannot make lesson	27.8	21.4	49.2
Others	28.3	42.9	71.20
Reason of working by school going street children			
Collect educational expense	40.0	50.0	45.5
Help parents	80.0	66.7	72.8
Manage own expense	40.0	16.7	27.3
Help brother/sister	20.0	0.0	9.1

Occupation data shows that 22% of school-going children engage in alternative work, with boys mainly working in markets and factories, while girls were involved in domestic work (Table 4). Despite this, most children receive financial support for education, though fewer access IGA training.

School-related problems are common, with 56% of children struggling with fees and 53.6% facing starvation,

especially girls 61.1%. Harassment and fear of attending school were more prevalent among girls (Table 5).

Abuse rates were high, with 35.3% of boys and 9.1% of girls experiencing abuse, and non-school-going children report even higher abuse rates, primarily from parents and police (Table 6).

Table 4: Occupational status and educational and social support of school going street children.

Alternative activities	Gender of the children		Total (%)
	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	
Yes	29.4	18.2	22.0
No	70.6	81.8	78.0
Total	17	33	50
Types of work			
Works in others house	0.0	50.0	27.3
Works in hotel	0.0	16.7	9.1
Prepare packet of paper	0.0	16.7	9.1
Works in fish market	20.0	0.0	9.1
Works in factory	20.0	0.0	9.1
Others	60.0	33.3	45.5
Total	5	6	11
Has given me educational expense (stipend)	94.1	84.8	
Has provided me IGA training by which I am earning now	5.9	12.1	
Received treatment facilities	0	12.1	
Provided center for residing, got opportunity to study	47.01	36.4	
Others	5.9	12.1	

Table 5: Types of problems faced by school-going street children by gender.

Type of problem faced in school	Gender of the children		Total (%)
	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	
Yes	58.8	54.5	56.0
No	41.2	45.5	44.0
Total number	17	33	50
Type of problem faced in school			
Feel pain to walk far distance to go to school	20.0	33.3	28.6
Cannot pay salary regularly	80.0	38.9	53.6
Often go to school starving	40.0	61.1	53.6
Wicked boys disturb in the way	0.0	11.1	7.1
Often feel sick	40.0	33.3	35.7
Afraid of going to school lonely	0.0	16.7	10.7
Must work most of the time	0.0	16.7	10.7
Total number	10	18	28

Table 6: Incidence and types of abuse among school-going and non-school-going street children in Khulna city.

Victim to abuse in house/school/road	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	Total (%)
Yes	35.3	9.1	20.0
No	64.7	90.9	80.0
Total respondents	17	33	50
Types of abuse			
Parents beat me often in house	33.3	33.3	33.3
Others	66.7	66.7	66.7
Types of violation (non-school-going children)			
Police have beaten me different times			60.0
Parents beat me often in house			73.3
“Boro vai” (local cadre) beaten me			26.7

Support needs include financial aid for school fees and IGA training, with more boys 52.9% seeking IGA opportunities than girls 24.2%, and boys 47.2% were more likely to seek self-employment (Table 7).

Table 7: Support needs of street children (school going) and addressing the multifaceted needs of street children (non-school going): a breakdown of support priorities.

Support needs (school going)	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
Pay school fees in every month	76.5	54.5
Treatment assistance	11.8	6.1
Provide IGA training	52.9	24.2
Provide opportunity to work for self	29.4	15.2
Provide opportunity to work for	58.8	60.6
Multifaceted needs of street children (non-school going)		
Pay school fees in every month	52.8	50
Treatment assistance	36.1	14.3
Provide IGA training	61.1	50
Provide opportunity to work for self	47.2	7.1
Provide opportunity to work for	25	42.9

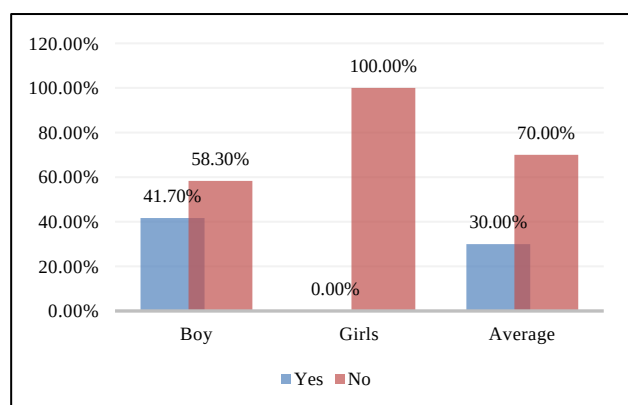


Figure 1: Abuse exposure among non-school-going street children: home, school, and road.

These findings highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions to address the educational and social challenges faced by street children in Khulna city.

Table 1 shows that the majority of street children fall within the 10-12 years' age group 44%, with a significant portion being non-school-going boys 55.6% and school-going girls 45.5%. In terms of education, the highest percentage of children is at the class three to five level 46.5%, with school-going girls 69.7% making up the largest group. Only 6.1% of children have reached class nine to SSC, indicating a low level of educational attainment overall.

Table 2 presents the parental and living arrangements of school-going and non-school-going street children. For

school-going children, 88% had living fathers and 100% had living mothers. Among non-school-going children, 82% had living fathers, and 96% had living mothers. The living arrangements show that 98% of school-going children live with their mothers, while 2% live with relatives. In contrast, 80% of non-school-going children live with their mothers, 18% live with others, with 2% living with relatives. Due to multiple responses, the percentages appear inconsistent.

Table 3 presents the reasons for non-school attendance among children and the reasons school-going children work. Among non-school-going children, 100% cited an inability to pay school fees regularly, with 62.3% needing to work most of the time. Other reasons include long distances to school (36.5%) and fear of going alone (21.4%). For school-going children, 45.5% work to cover educational expenses, with more girls (50%) involved. A large portion works to help parents (72.8%), and 27.3% manage their own expenses. The percentages sum to 100% due to multiple reasons reported by respondents.

Table 4 shows the occupational status and support received by school-going street children. A total of 22% of children engaged in alternative activities, with more boys 29.4% than girls 18.2% involved. Boys worked mostly in fish markets 20% and factories 20%, while girls worked in others' houses 50% and hotels 16.7%. Additionally, 45.5% of children engaged in other unspecified types of work. Most children received financial support for education, with 94.1% of boys and 84.8% of girls receiving stipends. Fewer children received IGA training, with boys at 5.9% and girls at 12.1%. Only girls 12.1% received treatment facilities. Moreover, 47.1% of boys and 36.4% of girls had access to study opportunities and residence centers. The respondents reporting work (11) and the "yes" responses found 22% was due to multiple forms of employment reported by children.

Table 5 presents the types of problems faced by school-going street children in Khulna city, showing that 56% of children face difficulties in school, with a slightly higher percentage of boys 58.8% than girls 54.5% reporting such issues. The most significant challenge for both genders was the inability to pay school fees regularly 53.6%, with boys 80% facing this issue far more than girls 38.9%. Starvation was another major concern, affecting 53.6% of children, particularly girls 61.1%. Health-related issues, such as frequent sickness, were reported by 35.7%, with a higher percentage among boys 40% than girls 33.3%. Specific gender differences emerge, with girls more likely to face harassment 11.1% and fear going to school alone 16.7%, while boys reported no such problems. Additionally, 16.7% of girls reported needing to work most of the time, which was not reported by boys. It leads to multiple responses.

Table 6 highlights the incidence and types of abuse faced by school-going and non-school-going street children in

Khulna city. Among school-going children, 35.3% of boys and 9.1% of girls reported experiencing abuse, resulting in an overall abuse rate of 20%. The most common forms of abuse are parental beating 33.3% and other forms 66.7%. For non-school-going children, abuse is more prevalent, with 73.3% experiencing parental violence, 60% reporting police violence, and 26.7% subjected to abuse by local cadres (“Boro vai”) experiencing multiple types of abuse.

Figure 1 indicates that 30% of the non-school going children boys 41.70% were victim of abuse either in house, school or road. Whereas girls were not abused either in the road, school or house.

Table 7 outlines the support needs of street children in Khulna city, emphasizing gender-based differences. For school-going children, the primary need was financial support to pay school fees, reported by 76.5% of boys and 54.5% of girls. Additionally, 52.9% of boys and 24.2% of girls seek IGA training, while opportunities to work for parents are prioritized by both boys 58.8% and girls 60.6%. Non-school-going children display similar needs, with 52.8% of boys and 50% of girls needing school fee support and 61.1% of boys and 50% of girls requiring IGA training. Treatment assistance and self-employment opportunities are less frequently reported, with notable gender differences (e.g., 47.2% of boys versus 7.1% of girls seeking self-employment opportunities). These percentages reflect overlapping support priorities, emphasizing the necessity of tailored interventions for school-going and non-school-going street children.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the challenges faced by street children in Khulna city and their requirements for effective mainstreaming into formal education. The outcomes align with existing research on street children in Bangladesh and other developing countries.^{1,2}

The results of this study emphasize the severe situation of street children in Khulna city and the significant challenges they face in accessing formal education. The gender inequality, with a higher ratio of non-school-going boys, highlights the complex factors affecting access to education for boys associated to girls. This may be related to traditional gender roles and societal beliefs about boys contributing to household income.³ Economic limits occurred as a significant obstacle to education, with over half of non-school-going children incapable of affording school fees. This outcome associates with prior research in Bangladesh, where poverty is associated as a key driver of street association.^{11,15}

The study identified a high attentiveness of street children within the 10-12-year age group, illustrating tendencies viewed in Dhaka.² Largely, street children were between 10-12 years old, with 55.6% being non-school-going boys and 45.5% school-going girls. This is uniform with

studies conducted in another urban areas in Bangladesh, where the common age of street children be likely to range from 10-14 years. Moreover, the educational completion levels of these children stay low, with only 6.1% reaching class nine to SSC, and the widely held trying to retain their education due to several socio-economic reasons. In a study noted a related example in Dhaka, where economic problems, coupled with the need for children to cause household income, pushed them out of the formal education approach.² One significant obstruction detected in this study is financial uncertainty. A larger proportionality of non-school-going children, especially boys 61%, work to support their families, while school-going children try to pay school fees, with 80% of boys being influenced by this concern. This illustrates the results highlighted that financial pressures often drive children to work, thereby disrupting their educational interests.¹⁵ Insufficient admittances to basic supplies, such as food, was an additional crucial issue, with more girls 61% than boys 40% suffering from hunger, marking their capability to application on their education. This is associated with results from other research, such as the UNICEF universal study on child poverty and differences, which points out that food uncertainty is a main warning to children’s school entrance.¹²

Abuse and exploitation are a harsh truth for many street children in Khulna, with 6% of girls stating abuse, mainly from their parents at home. Comparable cases of household abuse were conveyed by street children in other regions, representing a persistent issue that hinders these children’s physical and emotional change. Furthermore, 30% of non-school-going boys reported street abuse by police and criminals, emphasizing the need for robust safeguard measures. The abuse of street children by law enforcement and other social actors has been recognized widely, involving, who illustrated similar situations for Brazilian street children experiencing from systemic abuse.¹³ The need for institutional and policy involvements is clear. The majority of children stated the need for assistance in the form of financial aid for school fees 62%, IGA training 34%, and medical care 8%. Former studies emphasize the value of vocational training and economic empowerment programs to contribute to street children and help them reintegrate into society. Hunger was also prevalent, specifically among non-school-going children. Children undergoing hunger are less probable to concentrate and contribute effectively to school, hindering their educational proceed.¹⁴ The study showed that an extensive section of street children, intensely boys, are joined in child labor. This observation is regular with research by ILO, UNICEF, and UNESCO (2008) emphasizing the prevalence of child labor in Bangladesh.¹⁶ Child labor frequently plays a vital role in proving household income, originating a contradiction between education and economic necessities.³ Besides, stable service for parents is observed as crucial by 60% of the children, demonstrating that poverty alleviation

programs aimed at parents could play an important character in dropping the number of street children and refining their educational prospects.

Every single research follows a certain scientific method and process, but this study combated some restrictions due to its scope and feeling. The issue of street children is composite, and those surviving on the streets are often unwilling to share personal details, due to low levels of education and trust. The limitations faced through the study include: a restricted timeline for managing the survey and analyzing data. Inadequate follow-up evidence about street children. Failure to completely conduct a qualitative analysis due to a small sample size.

CONCLUSION

Street children in Bangladesh face severe lack of their essential rights with access to basic services, protection, education, and a safe environment. They are specifically vulnerable to exploitation, violence, and abuse, which completely delay their physical, mental, and emotional development. Girls are notably at risk of sexual abuse and stigmatization, in contrast all street children face hazardous operational conditions, poor health, malnutrition, and mistreatment by authorities. Focusing these issues needs complete policies and protective programs that target the root social and economic reasons of street life. Special protection actions should be applied to improve the development prospects for street children and confirm their incorporation into society. Helpful relationship between service givers, policymakers, and stakeholders is needed to create child-friendly urban environments that secure the well-being of coming generations. With no timely and committed attempts from all segments, the rights and futures of these vulnerable children will remain to be negotiated.

Recommendations

Combine street children's programs into CRC (convention on the rights of the child) ideas to confirm significant developments in their lives. Increase poverty alleviation programs in rural areas through collaborative efforts between the government and NGOs to decrease rural-to-urban migration. Focus on street children in government policies and programs, line up with the sustainable development goals (SDGs). Offer mandatory, free vocational training and non-formal education for dropouts and children not registered in schools. Impose current laws to safeguard street children from exploitation and abuse. Assistance NGOs in creating shelters, training centers, and healthcare facilities for street children in urban and suburban areas.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors indicate their appreciation to the Bangladesh Buro of Statistics Bangladesh for generously providing the data for this study.

Funding: No funding sources

Conflict of interest: None declared

Ethical approval: The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee

REFERENCES

1. Mia MT, Islam M. Legal protection of street children in bangladesh: with references to international and national laws. *J Asian Afr Soc Sci Hum*. 2021;7(2):34-49.
2. Ahmed, Syed Masud. Lives and Livelihoods on the Streets of Dhaka City: Findings from a Population-based Exploratory Survey. *Res Rep: Econ Stud*. 2010;XXVII:134-89.
3. Conticini A. Children on the Streets of Dhaka and their Coping Strategies. In: Staples J, ed. *Livelihood at the Margins: Surviving the City*. San Francisco, United States of America: Left Coast Press, Inc; 2001:75-100.
4. Akula SL. Situational analysis report on prostitution of boys in India. Hyderabad: ECPAT International. 2006. Available from: http://www.ecpat.net/eng/publications/Boy_Prostitution/PDF/India_Hyderabad.pdf. Accessed on 17 September 2012.
5. Barkat A, Osman A, Ahsan M, Shawaly HH. Situational Analysis of the Street Children involved in Begging in Dhaka City. UNICEF; 2012.
6. Alexandrescu G. Programme note: street children in Bucharest. *Glob J Child Res*. 1996;3(2):267-70.
7. Brick CP. Street children, human rights, and public health: a critique and future directions. *J Ann Rev Anthropol*. 2002;31:147-71.
8. Pare M. Why have street children disappeared? The Role of International Human Rights Law in Protecting Vulnerable Groups. *Int J Children's Rights* 2003;11:1-32.
9. Annan K. We the Children: Meeting the Promises of the World Summit for Children. United Nations: New York; 2002.
10. Pagare D, Meena GS, Singh MM, Saba R. Risk factors of substance use amongst street children from Delhi. *J Indian Acad Pediatr*. 2004;41(3):221-5.
11. Ahmed S. Bangladesh: Moving towards universal birth registration. *The IRI (e newspaper)*. 2008. Available from: <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/report/79258/bangladesh-moving-towards-universal-birth-registration>. Accessed on 17 September 2012.
12. UNICEF. National Report of Bangladesh on 'Global Study on Child Poverty and Disparities'. 2009. Available from: https://www.hdrc-bd.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/07.-National-Report-Bangladesh_-Child-Poverty.pdf. Accessed on 17 September 2012.
13. Hughes S, Hoffman D. *Brazilian apartheid: street kids and the struggle for urban space*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press; 1998.

14. Barkat A, Osman A, Ahsan M, Shawaly HH. Situational Analysis of the Street Children involved in Begging in Dhaka City. UNICEF; 2012.
15. BSAF. Cases studies of 10 Tokai children. Bangladeshi Shishu Adikar Forum, Dhaka; 1998.
16. ILO, UNICEF and UNESCO. Child Labor and Education in Bangladesh: Evidence and Policy Recommendations. Dhaka, Bangladesh. 2008. Available from: <https://www.ilo.org/publications/>

child-labour-and-education-bangladesh-evidence-and-policy-recommendations. Accessed on 17 September 2012.

Cite this article as: Sarker N, Islam MS. Situation analysis study of street children of Khulna city, Bangladesh. *Int J Community Med Public Health* 2025;12:90-7.