



AMERICAN JOURNAL OF SOCIETY AND LAW (AJSL)

ISSN: 2835-3277 (ONLINE)

VOLUME 2 ISSUE 1 (2023)



PUBLISHED BY
E-PALLI PUBLISHERS, DELAWARE, USA

Prevalence of Beggars and Street Children in the City of Sorsogon

Emma S. Perena^{1*}, Edna L. Hapin¹

Article Information

Received: January 22, 2023**Accepted:** February 13, 2023**Published:** February 21, 2023

Keywords

Prevalence, Beggars, Street Children

ABSTRACT

This study determined the prevalence of beggars and street children in the City of Sorsogon. It focused on the profile of beggars and street children, the determinants for street begging and presence of street children and the problems encountered as perceived by the respondents. The study is both a quantitative and qualitative descriptive method of research. A survey questionnaire is the main instrument in gathering the data. An unstructured interview was also utilized to supplement the interpretation of the results. The respondents of the study were 153 street children and beggars in the city of Sorsogon. They were purposively and conveniently chosen. The street working children have the age range from 5-15 years old, most of them were male, did not finish their elementary grade, have stayed for 1-5 years, physically fit and Bicolanos. Poverty is the common cause of begging and becoming working street children in Sorsogon City. The respondents perceived being prone to hazards and risk in the streets as the most distressing problems. It is recommended therefore that the different institutions, the local government, church and other institutions may collaborate and extend their knowledge and assistance to these street children and beggars. Further, it is recommended that a sustainable rehabilitation scheme should be endeavored by the local government, that it would encompass the diverse needs of the beggars and street children and promote the upliftment of their social well-being thus, children should be sent back to school and the government may provide educational provisions to support their educational needs. Create and deliver a responsive and sustainable livelihood program that would promote social progress to help these people alleviate poverty. The church may also conduct education to these children and beggars that would inculcate moral values and uplift their social beings. Intensify the implementation of related policies and strengthen the conduct of activities that would discourage street children and beggars from coming back on the streets.

INTRODUCTION

One of the advocacies for national development is to achieve social progress and advancement of people in an urban and rural area. The conditions of social stability and the principle of equal rights are paramount to economic and social development. Government requires a medium-term development plan that translates the programs and projects that promote social development and poverty reduction. However, despite the efforts of addressing the problems that hinder development, urban problems are still considered as global challenge.

Begging and increasing number of street children are the universal urban problems. This scenario is not peculiar to any country of the world. The World Science Report in 2010, revealed that there are up to 150 million existing street children in the world. According to West (2003), street children are those who live in the street and are separated from family. They are classified as groups that are vulnerable to risks and coming to a conflict of law. The characteristics of street children are those who engage in begging, shoe shine, as flower seller, barker, etc. There are also events that these children are used for petty crimes.

An estimated 1.5 million street children are scattered in the Philippines based on the 2008 report of PSA. (Philippine Statistics Authority). Majority of them or 70% occupies the Manila area. In the absence of updated data

in the Philippines on begging, it is evident that beggars in the streets are visible everywhere. Begging and the increased number of street children often equated with poverty, hence it could be feasible that the increasing number of poverty incidence by 25.8 percent in the early 2014 report of PSA could be linked to the increasing number of beggars and street children in the country.

The right to protection against violence, abuse, and neglect is expressly stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Additionally, it emphasized the need for protection against financial exploitation. The key elements of these articles apply to the situation of street children. According to the PSA, data on children, including other non-income indicators on children in poverty, are crucial since they represent the future of our country. The recent data on education in the Philippines indicates that the nation's human capital has declined in quality.

Street begging and the presence of street children are global issues. Even developed nations are not immune to this social hazard, which may not always be adequately supervised or controlled by responsible adults and includes the two coexisting categories that UNICEF refers to as those "on the street" and those "of the street," despite the fact that it is significantly higher in developing nations. In the Philippines has been struggling and battling poverty for over decades. Children suffer the most from its pervading societal problem since they

¹ Sorsogon State University, Philippines

* Corresponding author's e-mail: emmaperena@yahoo.com

are the most vulnerable group in the population. (PIDS 2014). The UNICEF reported there are about 150 million street children in the world. 30% of the population in the Pacific Region belongs to a poverty line, 40% of this population are children and young people. (West 2003). Osa and Ayano (2012) point out that street begging is associated with homelessness, poverty and family rejection. They also mention that children or young people are the most who engage in begging. They also suggest that counselling is needed in the particular problem and it should start on the family. Street children are also vulnerable to sexual abuses. Mehta, *et al* (2011) found that street children manifested to have sexually exploited. These children are being trafficked to the commercial flesh trade. Incidents of sexual assaults on the streets happened at night due to exposed and unsafe sleeping place and is taken advantage by strangers, older street people and other street kids. Baltazar *et al*, (2012) purported that demographics of beggars showed the causes of street begging. Their study revealed that poverty, laziness, disintegration, traditional life and death of parents are the causes of incidence of begging. The findings encouraged socio economic security among families and provide awareness on the negative consequences of begging. The city of Sorsogon is not exempted from urban problems. It also evident , the presence of street children and beggars in the streets in the vicinity. They are visible and they can be seen everywhere. Begging and the street children in the city of Sorsogon is an outcome of homelessness and displacement. This is also due to the result of some factors such as physical disability and mental illness. The street children in Sorsogon same with other street children also work as peddler, barker, shoe shine cleaner, beggar etc. There are also reported incidents where these children are involved in petty theft and drug use. Vandalism and other petty crimes are sometimes associated with street begging The

rising number of beggars displays the social condition and poverty threshold of particular community. This scenario is alarming for the fact that these children are prone to risks and misfortunes. The general welfare of these children and beggars are at stake. These conditions have motivated the researchers to undertake a survey in Sorsogon City along the increasing number of beggars and street children.

Objectives Of The Study

This study determined the prevalence of beggars and street children in the City of Sorsogon. Specifically, it answered the following questions: (1) determine the reported beggars and street children from year 2012-2016 (2) determine the profile of beggars and street children along age, gender, educational attainment, length of stay in the street, classification, health condition, ethnicity; (3) identify the determinants of the presence of beggars children in the streets; (4) identify the problems met by the beggars and street children and (5) provide recommendations based from the results of the study.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a descriptive method of research. The study is both a quantitative and qualitative research. The survey questionnaire was the main instrument used in gathering the data. It was supplemented with documentary analysis and structured interview to get an in depth interpretation of the data gathered . The instrument contains the profile of the respondents, determinants of the presence of beggars and children in the streets and the problems met by the respondents. A total of 153 beggars and street children served as the study’s respondents. They were purposively and conveniently chosen as sample of the present research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It can be gleaned from the table that there is an increase

Table 1: Reported Street Children and Beggars in the City of Sorsogon

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Street Children	189	189	189	201	205
Beggars	15	18	21	25	30

Source. Sorsogon Provincial Social Welfare and Development

of street children and beggars from year 2012 to 2016 based on record of the PSWDO. Some of these street children and beggars are coming from nearby municipalities who regularly go for begging in the city of Sorsogon. According to the PSWDO, during October, there are about 10-15% increase of street children and beggars in Sorsogon City who were identified as badjaos who are coming from Samar, Leyte and Cebu. These people temporarily live on street corners and sidewalks, beg for alms, and leave the place in January. Despite the intervention activities of the local government for the children and parents, beggars and street children are still prevalent in the city. The PSWDO explained

that many activities have been conducted by the agency such as food assistance, educational assistance, balik eskwela program, counselling services, life skills activity, education campaign, street education, feeding program and rescue operations for street children. While for the parents livelihood assistance and education campaign for Child Rights are offered to them. However, some would go back on the streets and It has become a trend and usual course.

Profile of the Respondents

Age

Table 2 presents the age of the respondents. It can be

viewed from the table that majority of the respondents were children or minors, ranked second are the beggars and street children who their age ranging from 16-25. While the 3rd rank are beggars ranging from 46-78 years old, there are minors and adult beggars on the streets. This also connotes that at a very young age these children were exposed to risks and hazards in the streets. The

constitution stresses that children should be in the care of parents and guardians and protect them from any exploitation and negligent treatment. It suggests that their age shows these children should be at school and learning rather than working for a living. On the other hand, there were some adults who also on the streets who engage in begging as the means of living.

Table 2: Profile of the Street Children and Beggars in Sorsogon City

Age	F	R
5-15 years old	106	1
16-25 years old	18	2
26-35 years old	6	5
36- 45 years old	7	4
46-78 years old	16	3
Gender		
Male	112	1
female	41	2
Educational attainment		
Elementary level	130	1
Elementary graduate	23	2
Length of stay in the street as beggar and street children		
1-5 years	73	1
6-10 years	50	2
11-and above	10	3
Classification		
Street living children	13	3
Street working children	61	1
Children from street families	9	4
Beggars on the streets	38	2
Beggars of the street families	32	3
Health condition		
Physically fit	127	1
With disability	26	2
Ethnicity		
Bicolano	131	1
Badjao beggars	22	2

The same table revealed that majority of the respondents were male. This means that most of the street children and beggars in Sorsogon City were represented by men. This indicates that the street children believe as the culture dictates that man is the one responsible for providing the needs of the family. they explained that men were stronger and more resistant to the harsh conditions in the streets. They believe that they could better survive than females. The findings also conveys that parents are aware or permit their children to work in the streets. It can be seen from the table that the respondents have reached only the elementary level and only few graduated. This shows that these respondents had to stop attending to school because they were obliged to work for a living. The table also shows the length of stay in the street as beggars and street children. It shows that most of the

respondents have in the street for 1-5 years. This was followed by 6-10 years and above. This indicates that since the majority of the respondents are street children. Their length of stay varies to their age. While on the other hand, the beggars are represented by adults and begging is their primary source of living thus, this it is presumed that they already stayed in the streets for longer time. Meanwhile, it also shows that as to classification, it is viewed that most of the respondents were street working children, who spend most of their time in the streets, and return to their home regularly. This indicates that these children were deprived of the right to have the basic education. Although the government has provided free access to education to all children as their prime right, these children would prefer to work because providing the basic need like food is still a challenge to them.

The table also revealed that 127 respondents are physically fit while 26 were respondents have physical, mental disabilities and illness. The result shows that most of the respondents who are physically fit are the street working children. While most of the beggars are those with disabilities. However, ethnicity, custom are added variables to begging. The badjao beggars disclosed that it has become their practice that has been passed from generation to generation that begging is an economic activity, thus a source of income.

It can be deduced from the table above that almost street children and beggars are indigenous of the locale. This means that the street children and beggars are conducting their activities in their home areas. While a number of beggars are migrants who stay in a place for a shorter period of time and then transfers to another. They come from a different home origin such as Leyte, Samar and Cebu. Namwata *et al* (2011) stressed the ethnicity as the demographic dimension is one factor that influences beggars to migrate from one place to another.

Determinants for begging and staying in the street

The children respondents disclosed the following reasons why they are on the streets were:

As a source of living

The respondents both the street children and beggars, poverty and lack of financial resources were the main reasons why the beggars and the children are on the streets. They take the chance of asking help from the benevolence of other people. The street children at very young age were forced to work to help their parents to survive their daily needs. About 40% of the street children work as barker, vendor in the wet market and an errand/baggage boy. The parents disclosed that they allow their children to work and help them as they themselves as parents could hardly ease the financial burden for their subsistence. This is attributed to the large number of members in the family, and some households, only the father works as the primary source of income, while the mother has to stay at home to rear their children. Parents earn below minimum, the family belongs to poverty line. However despite the impoverished life, the children are full of hopes and dreams. Some of them would wish that they could go to school regularly as they believe education will alleviate them from economic disadvantage. Though entangled with the realities of poverty, it never stops them from hoping that their families could have a better living. The adults expressed that their age and their limited educational qualification could not permit them to engage in a decent job. Aside from this is the lack of financial capabilities of their families to support them were some of the reasons why they prefer to beg.

Old Age

While for the beggars, they explained that these are the only means they could support their daily needs primarily their food. Since most of the beggars are at old age,

which constitute 11% of the total sample population, they claimed that there are no chance for employment opportunities that may be offered to them due to their limited physical abilities. Another factor, most of the beggars have their family and children, however, it is explained by the beggars that they have to work for living on their own since, their children were also struggle to sustain their daily needs thus, it forces these beggars to live independently.

Family challenges

Children revealed that they stay in the streets for they ran away from their families because of domestic violence they experienced from their parents. A child explained his father is a drunkard who many times hit him when drunk. Thus he preferred to stay on the streets on work on his own as he feels safer than in his home. Another, is the rivalry with sibling and cruelty of their relatives, when their parents died, they live under custody of their relatives however, the child revealed that he experienced maltreatment and this caused him to ran away and stay on the streets.

Abandonment

A child beggar said, he began begging when his parents left him when he was nine years old to work in Manila. At present the child, go for different places and ask for food. In the afternoon he would stay at downtown for begging. There are occasions the child sleeps at the street corners. When interviewed, he said that he has no place to go home, he does not even know his relatives. He said he once rescued by DSWD and brought to shelter, however he escaped for he was not comfortable living with his fellow young boys. He also unveils, he likes to stay on the streets for he could easily get money from begging.

Disability/illness

Some of the beggars of old age and children who served as informants of the study are suffering from physical disabilities and mental illness. 6% of the recorded street children and beggars are with disabilities. Few respondents divulge that their disability is their reason why they are on streets and begging is their make for a living. While one minor who has mental illness begs for alms and there are incidences this young boy was bullied and resulted to physical abuses. Another case, is a young boy who suffers from filariasis, this illness he revealed caused him humiliation from among his classmates and the reason why he stopped from going to school and led him to begging. The child revealed since he acquired the disease he has never yet undergone any medical treatment, this is due to financial constraints. In an interview conducted with the parent, the young boy was inflicted since 2013. Her husband abandoned them with other two boys and she works as a laundry woman on a part time basis since she also suffers from tuberculosis. In as much as she would want that her young boy be treated however she has to prioritize their daily need.

Migration

Some of respondents identified and claimed themselves as badjaos beggars. This is an ethnic tribe that is also known as sea gypsies. The ethnic group has a very distinct culture. However, due to conflict and forces between the government and rebels in the Mindanao, they were displaced and live in an extreme poverty. It has become their practice to migrate from one place to another, and not to stay permanently in one place they said that begging is the easiest way for a living. They also explained that one of the reasons of moving out from their place is because of the scarcity of the source of living from their place. The PSWDO disclosed that during Christmas season, there is a 10-15 percent of badjao beggars scattered in Sorsogon City and tend to leave the city after the season. These aggregated reasons provide a clear view that in this situation children are the most vulnerable and the ones who suffer most. It also portrays that these children manifest the ability to help their family for daily living. Moreso, it also appears that these children would rather risk and gamble their lives to the hazards in the street just to help their family or provide their own daily needs. This result is consistent with the findings of Osa and Ayano, where they revealed the four causes of begging indicated by the respondent, poverty and homelessness in particular are covariates frequently associated with begging.

Problems encountered

The respondents confided that since most of their time were spent in the streets as this serves as the venue of the source of their living, they experienced varied problems. The street children and beggars revealed that they got sick because of the harsh weather, others experienced physical abuses particularly the children who were bullied sometimes by their fellow children who are older than them. Some children were exposed to different vices and peer influence. While the adults explained that sometimes they met an accident particularly those with disabilities. They also disclosed that sometimes they received harsh words from the people. These unfavorable conditions indirectly and directly affect their activity according to them. This means that they perceived these problems as the most distressing circumstances. PSWDO revealed flocking of the badjao beggars on the street of Sorsogon City sanitation becomes a problem. Many complaints received by the authorities about the unruly behaviour of these badjao beggars. Likewise, the Womens and Children Protection Desk (WCPD has recorded a number of incidences where the street children are involved in theft, bullying, and other petty crimes. Record showed for the year 2016 fifteen minors, whose age 9 as the youngest have committed petty crimes.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based from the findings, conclusions were drawn. Most of the street children, their age are ranging from 5-15 years old, majority are male, have an educational

attainment of elementary level, have stayed in the streets for 1-5 years, they are street working children and beggars of the streets, physically fit and bicolanos. The primary reason for becoming street working children and beggar was due to multidimensional poverty. It found out the respondents experienced varied problems in the streets while working and begging.

- It is recommended, therefore that the different institutions, the local government, church and other institutions may collaborate and extend their knowledge and assistance to these street children and beggars.

- Further, it is recommended that a holistic and sustainable rehabilitation scheme should be endeavoured by the local government, that it would encompass the diverse needs of the beggars and street children and promote upliftment of their social well being thus, children should be sent back to school and the government may provide educational provisions to support their educational needs.

- Create and deliver responsive and sustainable livelihood program that would promote social progress in order to help these people alleviate from poverty.

- The church may also conduct education to these children and beggars that would inculcate moral values and uplift their social beings.

- Intensify the implementation of related policies and strengthen the conduct of activities that would discourage the street children and beggars from coming back on the streets.

REFERENCE

- Andrew West (2003). Street Children In Asia and the Pacific. <https://think-asia.org/bitstream/handle/11540/2287/margins.pdf?sequence=1>
- Bermillo, Zyra. (2012). Extent of Implementation of Comprehensive Program of Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act (RA 7610). Convention of the Rights of the Child Primer
- Bhaskaran, R., & Mehta, B. (2011). Surviving the streets: A census of street children in Delhi by the Institute for Human Development and Save the Children. Delhi: Save the Children. https://www.academia.edu/22166370/Street_Children
- Namwata, B. M., Baltazar, M. L., MGABO, M. R., & t DIMOSO, P. (2012). Categories of street beggars and factors influencing street begging in central Tanzania. <https://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/res/article/view/19479>
- Philippine Institute for Development Studies (2014). Child Poverty in the Philippines. Provincial Social Welfare and Development Report 2012-2016.
- Philippine Statistics Authority Report. (2008).
- Philippine Statistics Authority Report. (2014).
- Women and Children Protection Desk report.(2010).
- World Science Report. (2010).