

STREET CHILDREN OF TARLAC CITY: TOWARDS A PROPOSED ACTION PLAN

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Abstract

This study aimed to evaluate the status of street children in Tarlac City. The result of the study would serve as basis for the proposal of an action plan. Descriptive method of research was utilized in the conduct of the study. Interview and questionnaire were the main sources of data. Purposive sampling was used to identify the respondents of the study. The subjects of the study were the street children working and living in the City of Tarlac. Forty (40) street children were interviewed in the study. The finding of the study revealed that most of the street children often engaged in begging for money or food in the market, the church, and fast food chains. Unlike the identified beggars, street children involved in selling goods were not engaged in any other activity on the streets. Scavenging, being a barker, a vulcanizer helper, and a jeepney terminal street sweeper were the other engagements of the street children. The most frequent reasons why children engaged themselves into street life were to earn money to buy food, to help their parents earn money, and to earn money to finance their education. Other reasons why children engaged themselves in the street were to buy things that they needed, to buy medicine and to buy things of their own choice.

Keywords: *Street Children, Street Life, Poverty*

The United Nations defined the term ‘street children’ to include “any boy or girl... for whom the street in the widest sense of the word... has become his or her habitual abode and/or source of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, supervised, or directed by responsible adults.”^[1]

The abundance of street children in major cities in the country does not sit well with commitment to the millennium development goals. Street children are abundant, especially in urban areas. Sadly, they include children as young as four years old or even younger.^[2]

In societies where poverty is a day to day struggle, children suffer the most as they comprise the most vulnerable group in any population. Poverty impacts directly on children’s physical and intellectual growth. In the Philippines, despite the country’s recent economic progress, poverty continues to affect millions of families of which most have young children. This is visible in the number of young ones who wander the streets in urban areas, who scavenge in Smokey Mountain, or who, at an early age, are forced to drop out of school to work to supplement their family income. The problem goes beyond mere lack of income or assets for these children’s families. Their situation speaks of a roster of factors that range from lack of appropriate skills to inability to control fertility intertwined with lack of job opportunities and other economic problems.^[3]

In Tarlac City, the proliferation of street children is evident in areas such as in the market, church, fast food chains, and malls. The researcher conducted the study to evaluate the status of the street children within the city area and be able to gain insight on how to deal with such issue.

This study aimed to evaluate the status of street children in Tarlac City. The result of the study would serve as basis for the proposal of an action plan. Specifically, the study sought to address the following problems.

1. How are the street children in Tarlac City described in terms of: nature of street life?; place of origin?;
2. What are the reasons why street children engage themselves into street life?;
3. What problems are encountered by the street children on the streets?;
4. What action plan is proposed to address the situation?;

Methods and Materials

Descriptive method of research was utilized in the conduct of the study. Interview and questionnaire were the main sources of data. Purposive sampling was used to identify the respondents of the study. The subjects of the study were the street children working and living in the City of Tarlac. Forty (40) street children were interviewed in the study.

Results and Discussions

Description of the Street Children: The description of the street children as to their nature of street life and place of origin is presented in the following discussions.

Nature of Street Life-The nature of street life among the street children is presented in Table 1.

Some of the street children engaged in one or more nature of street life, based on the gathered data. Most of the street children often engaged in begging for money or food in the market, church, and fast food chains. Unlike the identified beggars, street children involved in selling goods were not engaged in any other activity on the streets.

Table 1 - Nature of Street Life among the Street Children

Nature of Street Life	Frequency	Percentage
Beggar	22	42.31
Vendor	17	32.69
Scavenger	9	17.31
Barker	2	3.85
Vulcanizer(helper)	1	1.92
Street sweeper (Jeepney terminal)	1	1.92

Scavenging, being a barker, a vulcanizer helper, and a jeepney terminal street sweeper were the other engagements of the street children.

Place of Origin-Table 2 presents the place of origin or the residence of the interviewed street children.

Table 2 - Place of Origin of the Street Children

Barangay	Frequency	Percentage
San Vicente	17	42.50
Carangian	8	20.00
San Pablo	4	10.00
Matatalaib	4	10.00
San Nicolas	4	10.00
Maligaya	1	2.50
San Isidro	1	2.50
San Roque	1	2.50



Based on the gathered information, most of the street children reside in barangay San Vicente and Carangian. These barangays are adjacent to each other and they have a reclaimed area from the river wherein informal settlers reside. Unlike barangay San Nicolas, the reclaimed area is utilized by the city government as the location of the: market, jeepney and bus terminal, as well as retail stores.

The proximity of barangays San Vicente and Carangian to the market, church, mall, university, and fast food chains may have encouraged poor children to be engaged on the street.

The proliferation of illegal settlers may have contributed to the huge number of street children coming from the said barangays.

Reasons why street children engage themselves into street life-Table 3 presents the reasons why street children engaged themselves into street life.

The most frequent reason why children engage themselves into street life were: to earn money to buy food, to help their parents to earn money, and to earn money to finance their education. Other reasons why children engaged themselves in the street were to buy things that they needed, to buy medicine and to buy things of their own choice.

Table 3 - Reasons Why Street Children Engaged Themselves into Street Life

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
To earn money to buy food	36	36.73
To help my parents earn money	29	29.59
To earn money so that I can go to school	22	22.45
To buy things that I need	9	9.18
To buy medicine	1	1.02
To buy things of their own choice	1	1.02

The living condition of the children was the main contributor forcing them to engage themselves in the street. Pointed out by the street children was the fact that their families did not have the capacity to provide enough nutritious food for their every meal.

Based on the conducted interview with the street children, all of respondents had five (5) or more siblings in the family. The most number of siblings the street children had was 11. Most of their fathers were tricycle drivers and while the mothers accepted laundry to earn money. Furthermore, majority of their parents of the street children had an elementary level of education and some were elementary graduates.

Problems encountered by the street children on the street-The problems encountered by the street children on the street are presented in Table 4.

Majority of the street children encountered street fighting. The common causes of the street fights were bullying, conflict with the authorities, and money issues.

Table 4 - Problems Encountered by the Street Children on the Street

Encountered Problem	Frequency	Percentage
Street fighting	21	28.38
Bullying	16	21.62
Unsafe environment/accident prone	14	18.92
Prone to vices	11	14.86
They are usually chased by authorities (Police or Barangay Officials)	8	10.81
Other street children get my money	4	5.41

Bullying, unsafe environment/accident prone, prone to vices, conflict with the authorities, and other street children got their money were the other problems encountered by the street children. Based on the conducted interview, most of the boys already had smoked a cigarette while some had already learned how to drink liquor.

Proposed Action Plan-The proposed action plan to address the issues of street children is presented in Table 5.

Table 5 - Proposed Action Plan

Proposed Plan	Brief Description
1. Study the urban migration	The Center for Local Governance of the College of Public Administration of Tarlac State University may establish a partnership with the LGUs to study the patterns of urban migration to Tarlac City.
2. Conduct reproductive health/family planning seminar	The Center for Local Governance of the College of Public Administration as well as the Gender and Development Office of Tarlac State University in cooperation with the Department of Health may conduct seminars to high school and college students regarding the importance of reproductive health and family planning.
3. Conduct livelihood training for the parents of street children	The Tarlac State University, through the University Extension Office, may conduct livelihood training to the parents of the street children in partnership with public and private entities.
4. Conduct information dissemination	Through the Center for Local Governance of the College of Public Administration together with the Gender and Development Office, the Tarlac State University may help in information dissemination on the causes and effects of becoming street children to elementary and high school students. Information dissemination can also be done during barangay assembly meetings.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study the following conclusions are made. The street children are often engaged in begging for money or food in the market, the church, and fast food chains.; Most of the street children reside in barangay San Vicente and Carangian.; Most frequent reasons why children engage themselves into street life are to earn money to buy food, to help their parents to earn money, and earn money to finance their education.; Majority of the street children encounter street fighting. The common causes of the street fights are bullying, conflict with the authorities, and money issues.

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