

A social work study on family patterns and street children

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a social work study on relationship between various family characteristics and street children in rural area as well as city of Esfahan, Iran. The proposed study selects a sample of 150 street children, 75 from city and 75 from rural area, and using some statistical tests verifies the effects of three factors including family income, place of residency and family size on street children. The results indicate that the city residence had more street children than rural residence did. In addition, there was a meaningful difference between the number of street children in low-income families and high-income families. Finally, the survey results indicate that big size families more likely suffered from street children than low size families did.

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1. Introduction

Street children are groups of children experiencing homelessness and live on the streets of a city. These people are young and they are vulnerable since they get involved with crimes such as robbery (Harris et al., 2011), drugs (Forster et al., 1996), disease (Fallah et al., 2008), etc. Therefore, there is a need to investigate more about the reasons for having street children and take some actions against them (Glauser, 1990; Kaime-Atterhög & Ahlberg, 2008). Lam and Cheng (2008) investigated the effectiveness of the government-managed Protection and Education Centre for Street Children program in China based on a 7-month ethnographic investigation of street children in public streets and at the center in Shanghai, China. The program's intermediate objectives were to provide education and protection for street children, and its ultimate aim was to restore them back to their own families. The study indicated that most of the street children disliked the high security of the center and many had refused going home. Therefore, they tended to keep away from the center even though it provided them with lodging and food. They recommended that the policy for street children

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needed to be reviewed with consideration given to street children's family circumstances and the children's own thoughts and preferences.

Woan et al. (2013) performed a systematic review of the existing quantitative literature regarding the health status of street children and youth in low- and middle-income countries. The survey demonstrates that youth's survival behaviors and the exposures associated with poor shelter could result in disproportionate morbidity in the regions of infectious illness and psychiatric disease. Majority areas of health that could disproportionately influence street children in childhood or later on as adults were investigated, including chronic diseases and cognitive deficits. Sales et al. (2010) evaluated voice characteristics of children engaged in street selling, which involves an essentially professional implication of voice in this population. They reported that street children had more normal voice but had more nasal disorders and bigger glottal closure than the school control group.

Mathur et al. (2009) examined the prevalence, kind and intensity of abuse in street children in Jaipur city, India. In their survey, street children stated experiences of abuse in different areas under study. Larger numbers of children (61.8%) scored in the "moderate" category of abuse while 36.6% children stated abuse in "severe" and "very severe" categories on the intensity of abuse. The reported indicated the highest mean scores on the "verbal" and "psychological" area of abuse. Gender differences were also significant in health and overall abuse, stating boys to be substantially more abused than girls. There were positive correlations of abuse by increasing "age" and "income" of street children; and the likelihood of "multi-type" maltreatment and neglect in street children was clearly present.

Kombarakaran (2004) identified the stresses and coping strategies of street children in Bombay, more specifically of the 'children of the street'. The results stated that children faced various challenges in their search for food, safety, employment, shelter and medical care. They commonly depended on their peers, non-governmental agencies, and their own resourcefulness to survive on the streets. While the majority tried positive mechanisms to cope with their daily stresses, some children also implemented maladaptive strategies such as using alcohol, drugs, and visiting prostitutes. They also reported that these 'children of the street' were not entirely on their own but depended on different connections with substitute family members and/or their peers to cope with life.

Veale and Donà (2003) studied the profile of African street children and evaluated the link between street children in Africa and political violence. In addition, they performed a systematic examination of causal factors of street children in postgenocide Rwanda. The analysis highlighted the necessity for community based support for children in alternative guardianship care and for applying different policies to support the reintegration of male youths in postconflict welfare strategies as prevention strategies for street migration.

2. The proposed study

This paper presents a social work study on relationship between various family characteristics and street children in rural area as well as city of Esfahan, Iran. The proposed study selects a sample of 150 street children and using some statistical tests verifies the effects of three factors including family income, place of residency and family size on street children. The study considers the following three hypotheses,

1. There is a relationship between place of residency, city versus rural area, and street children.
2. There is a relationship between family income and street children.
3. There is a relationship between family size and street children.

The study used some basic statistics such as mean, standard deviation and Levin and t-student tests to verify different hypotheses of the survey.

3. The results

In this section, we present details of our findings on testing different hypotheses of the survey.

3.1. The effect of residency, city versus rural area

The first hypothesis of this survey is associated with the effect of place of residency on street children. Table 1 demonstrates the summary of some basic statistics as well as pairwise t-student.

Table 1

The summary of testing the first hypothesis

Variable	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	t-value	df	Sig.	Result
Street children of rural areas	75	14.8400	2.72645	23.9	148	0.000	Confirmed
Street children of city	75	27.2133	4.75137				

The results of Table 1 indicate that the mean of street children from city of Esfahan is higher than the mean of street children who live in rural areas. In addition, t-student value indicates that there was a meaningful difference between two groups. Therefore, we can confirm the first hypothesis and conclude that city of Esfahan increases the likelihood of generating street children.

3.2. The effect of family income

The second hypothesis of this survey is associated with the impact of family income on street children. Table 2 demonstrates the summary of some basic statistics as well as pairwise t-student.

Table 2

The summary of testing the second hypothesis

Variable	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	t-value	df	Sig.	Result
Street children of low income	75	26.6933	5.46728	-15.05	148	0.000	Confirmed
Street children of high income	75	15.3600	3.55132				

The results of Table 2 indicate that the mean of street children from low-income families is higher than the mean of street children from high-income families. In addition, t-student value indicates that there was a meaningful difference between two groups. Therefore, we can confirm the second hypothesis and conclude that people with low income tend to have more street children than people with relatively high income.

3.3. The effect of family size

The last hypothesis of this survey is associated with the effect of family size on street children. Table 3 shows the summary of some basic statistics as well as pairwise t-student for the third hypothesis.

Table 3

The summary of testing the third hypothesis

Variable	Number	Mean	Standard deviation	t-value	df	Sig.	Result
Street children of small size family	75	15.5600	4.01430	-13.81	148	0.000	Confirmed
Street children of big size family	75	26.4933	5.55896				

The results of Table 3 indicate that the mean of street children from big size families is higher than the mean of street children from small size families. Moreover, t-student value indicates that there was a meaningful difference between two groups. Therefore, we can confirm the last hypothesis and conclude that people with more children tend to have more street children than families with relatively fewer children.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, we have presented an empirical investigation to study the effects of family size, family income as well as place of residency on street children. The study was accomplished in city of Esfahan and its rural areas and the results have indicated that people with low income, more children will more likely to have street children than rich and small size families. In addition, children who lived in rural areas would less likely to stay on street than children who lived in cities. The results of this survey are consistent with findings reported earlier by Mathur et al. (2009) and Aderinto (2000).

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