

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH INCREASING NUMBER OF STREET CHILDREN IN KAMPALA.

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ABSTRACT

With the increasing urbanization rate of Uganda standing at 12.7%, street children have been on an increase in all major towns of Uganda including Kampala city. A research was carried out to find out the factors associated with increasing number of street children in Kampala with specific objectives; to find out if demographic and social factors are related to the causes of the increasing number of street children. The researcher used purposive sampling technique and interviewed 90 street children on major spots in Kampala city. Data was entered and analyzed in SPSS software. Univariate and bivariate analysis were done where cross tabulations and Pearson Chi-square (χ^2) test was performed. Interesting results were got which included majority of the street children were in the age group of 9-12. Karamajongs (32%) were the majority on Kampala streets and some were found to be Somalis and Rwandese. There was no significant relationship found to exist demographic factors ($p=0.269$) and number of street children. The researcher finally recommends enrolment of street children in government aided schools including technical schools, creation of more remanding and resettlement of street children back to their homes.

Key words: Pearson, street children, resettlement and technical

1.0 Introduction

According to UNICEF (2002), it was reported that the number of street children was 100 million in the world. But then in 2005 UNICEF quantified that the debated numbers of street children has no uniform pattern in their growth but have a stochastic growth that can be determined by many factors.

Today, worldwide, the number of street children is estimated at 150 million (Community children worldwide resource library, 2010) with a percentage of 30 of these being part of the sub Saharan Africa. And in Uganda, an estimated number of 8000 street children, 4000 of whom in Kampala, 800 in Mbale, 500 in Jinja and the rest in other urban centers. (New Vision, 2010)

The problem of street children is universally increasing problem, in many setting children wondering the streets are identified by what they do to survive, such as; "Rag pickers, vendors, shoe shiners and porters" are used to describe them. Today with the increasing awareness among government and international agencies, "street children" are seen as a vulnerable group worth attention and intervention. (Connally, 2004).

Across the country of Uganda, young children living on the streets are on the alarming increase. They can be found living or sleeping on streets of Kampala. They are ignored, rejected or abused by the surrounding community. The government of Uganda frequently offers very little attention and there are few NGOs that care for street children, leaving a larger number of them deserted. Their means of survival is to form groups, search for food in garbage dumps, ask strangers for help and roam from shops to markets. These children in Uganda are like sheep without a shepherd (Mwebaze 2007). However, little is still known of the causes of alarming increase of street children on the streets of Kampala.

In Kampala city, efforts were and are still being made to help reduce the number of street children. Efforts like taking the children to orphanages, remand homes or back to their homes where they could

be looked after totally and even given free education. But some always find their way back to the streets (KCC development project 2005).

The pull factors for leaving home and going to live on the streets include the excitement and glamour of living in a city; hope of raising living standard; financial wellbeing. It is particularly difficult to convince children to get off the street because the amount of money that street children make from begging is usually a lot higher than what they can make from entry level vocations. (Gvnet.com/street children Uganda.htm, 2010)

The street children are common on Kampala Road, the Constitution Square, and the traffic lights in Wandegaya, Shoprite Supermarket and near Sheraton Hotel. These children often beg to survive but sometimes opt for different means which dangerous like theft and pick pocketing. Such acts are usually an inconvenience to the society in which they leave. (World street news, 2010)

It is still not exactly known as to why the number of street children is increasing and why some still prefer streets to staying in school or going to their homes. The factors associated with increasing number of children on the streets are not exactly known, and hence the researcher is prompted to identify factors associated with increasing number of children on the streets.

The main objective was to find out the factors associated with increasing number of street children in Kampala. The specific objectives include;

- To find out whether the demographic factors (age, sex, place of birth) are related to the causes of the increasing number of street children
- To find out whether the social factors (education level, tribe, health status) are related to the causes of the increasing number of street children

RESULTS

Majority of the street children were males(51%) given the nature of life style on the street, boys find life affordable since they can engage themselves in odd jobs like selling scraps (steel and aluminum) to earn a living for survival. The highest number of street children were in the age group 9-12 years and they were represented by (36.67%) followed by those aged 5-8 who were 34.44%. Out of 90 street children interviewed (32%) reported to be coming from Karamoja and this was followed by Lango whose percentage representation was (24%) while Busoga and Acholi had the least number of street children at 18% and 13% respectively.

According to the findings, street children were characterized by low literacy levels and they majorly spoke Luganda, one of the native languages. Some areas have high numbers of street children than other areas and differences also evident across gender for instance Kisenyi 2 had the highest number of female street children.

Results indicate that there was no significant relationship found out between sex and the existence of street children on Kampala streets since it had a p-value (p-value=0.269) greater than the critical value of 0.05 at 95% confidence interval. Majority of the males (39.1%) were on the streets due to poverty from their homes followed by mistreatment at home. Among females, majority of them (45.5%) went to the streets due to avoidance of mistreatment at their homes. The least number of them had other reasons like employment and death of parents.

Similarly, majority of the social factors that include education level, tribe, health status and domestic violence on their influence on the existence of street children in Kampala city were found to be statistically insignificant save the financial status of the street children that was found to be significant since its p-value ($p=0.025$) was less than the critical value of $p\text{-value}=0.05$ at 95% confidence interval.

CONCLUSION

Although, street children problem is a problem to all countries including developed nations like United States of America, it should be noted that governments including Uganda should labour to come up with programmes and strategies to reduce on this challenge since it escalates insecurity in the city as well as paint a bad image to countries that never bother to resettle street children. To this end therefore, ministries like that of Karamoja affairs and urban planning ought to be supported and praised for their campaigns to take back street children to their homelands.

The study therefore, recommends the following; Enrolling street children in Government aided schools available in the country since they cannot afford high school fees levied on private pupils. Besides, some of the street children should be sponsored by government as well as development partners into technical skills where they can acquire hands-on-skills like carpentry, electrical installation and well as building construction. This will make them self sustaining and therefore live settled lives.

Street children should be resettled back to their homes by transporting them to their destinations and thereafter teach them soft skills like weaving and agriculture so that they can earn some money to improve on their livelihoods as they live a settled lives.

Arresting and remanding some indisciplined street children into child remand homes like Kampiringisa prison so that they can reform and turn out to be successful citizens. Some of the street children that have resorted to pick-pocketing should be identified and remanded so that they are reformed into responsible citizens.

Setting up collection or rehabilitation centres that will help some reform especially those using drugs like marijuana. Many rehabilitation centres should be set up even to pick children that are neglected by their mothers so that they do not turn into future street children.

Teaching entrepreneurship skills to old street children to do small business for a living other than the prostitution. Indeed some of them have started small businesses like selling of roasted ground nuts and other street items like stationery and clothes. Some have participated in sanitation campaigns under Kampala city authority and indeed their services have been remunerated.

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