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Local Government Initiatives on the Social Integration of Street Children in the Municipality of Catarman, Northern Samar

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Abstract

This study was conceptualized and designed to examine the government initiatives on the social integration of street children in the municipality of Catarman, Northern Samar. Specifically, this study aimed at: documenting the socio-demographic profile of the respondents, determine the reasons for respondents for being a street child, find out the government initiatives for street children, identify the perceived effects of the government initiatives to the street children, and determine needs of the street children.

This study used descriptive-survey research design to achieve the abovementioned objectives.

The salient findings are the following:

As to the profile of the respondents, majority were 15 years old and below, male, out of school youth, and father's occupation and mother's occupation as vendor.

There were thirteen (13) reasons identified why individuals have become street children and the topmost is financial problems.

There were fifteen (15) government initiatives for street children and the frequent implemented is educational assistance.

The overall perceived effects of government initiatives for street children has grand mean of 4.72.

There were thirteen (13) identified needs where the most needed is to eat 3 times a day.

Keywords: Street Children, Government Initiatives, Social Integration.

Introduction

Street children are minors who live and survive on the streets. They often grow up in public landfills, train stations, or under the bridges of the world's major cities. Because of conflicts with their family, these children don't want to or can't return home. The phenomenon of street children is multifaceted. The combination of familial, economic, social, and political factors plays an important role in their situation. It is therefore very difficult to single out one or more causes. However, children who have been questioned say that family, poverty, abuse, war, etc. are often why they left for the streets. Street children are confronted by a large number of problems. In fact, growing up in an environment generally regarded as dangerous, they incur considerable risks. As a consequence, some of their rights are very often compromised.

The problem of street children is dependent on their situation and not on their status. In fact, each child has a personal history with the street that cannot be generalized. Because of this, the care of street children must, to be effective, hinge on the different situations on the streets, in other words, on the many "child profiles". It is important to analyze the

relationship a child has with the street. In order to better understand children living and growing up on the streets, it is essential both to make them participate, and to put them in contact with key institutions or individuals looking to understand the structural causes of their situation (Humanium, 2011).

Globally speaking, street children and homeless children are living in cities, towns and villages all over the globe, regardless of the economic climate of the country. The United Nations estimates there are up to 150 million street children in the world. No one knows the exact number because they are often unknown to social care and government organizations. Street children can have complex circumstances and are very vulnerable to exploitation and violence. It's hard to reach them with vital services such as education and healthcare. They miss out on their right to education because they are trying to support themselves or their families, so less formal approaches might be needed to try to get them into learning (<https://theirworld.org/explainers/street-children>, 2024).

According to Tantoco in his article on street children in the Philippines, Almost 2 million of Manila's 2.5 million children

younger than 15 years old live on or below the poverty line. 75,000 of these children live on the streets after having run away from home or being abandoned. They beg, steal, scavenge for food, and sell newspapers, cigarettes, and leis. About 20,000 street children prostitute themselves.

Furthermore, this study aims to determine the profile, problems and needs of the street children in Catarman, Northern Samar. This is rooted in the reason that street children are still a prevalent problem in the said locality. They are found outside of the malls, fast food restaurants, churches and everywhere. The researcher strongly believes that there is something that must be addressed towards the street children. They are deprived of their rights as children to access education, to secure their foods, to shelter with homes, to cover with clothes etc. and this is something that this study wants to solve to.

Therefore, the researcher will reach out those who are street children to give them attention and focus from the government and to assess the government initiatives on the social integration of street children in the municipality of Catarman, Northern Samar.

Objectives of the Study

This study determined the government initiatives on the social integration of street children in the municipality of Catarman, Northern Samar.

Specifically, this study aimed to:

1. Documents the profile of the street children in terms of;
- i). Age
- ii). Sex
- iii). Educational Attainment
- iv). Mother's Occupation
- v). Father's Occupation
2. Determine the reasons for respondents for being a street child;
3. Find out the government initiatives for street children;
4. Identify the perceived effects of the government initiatives to the street children; and
5. Determine needs of the street children in Catarman, Northern Samar.

Materials and Methods

This study was conducted in the municipality of Catarman, Northern Samar specifically the poblacion barangays such as Yakal, Narra and Baybay.

This study will use quantitative approach and employed purely descriptive-survey as the research design.

The researcher included all the fifty-five (54) street children based on the preliminary survey of the researchers. Hence, the researcher used complete enumeration sampling technique. Different kinds of statistical methods was used such as tally, frequency, percentage computation, and ranking.

Results and Discussions

Socio-demographic Profile

Age

Table 1 shows the distribution of the respondents according to their age.

The table presents the age distribution of fifty-five (55) individuals, categorized into four age groups. The largest group consists of fifteen (15) years old and below, with a total of seventeen (17) individuals, accounting for thirty-one percent (31%) of the population. This indicates that a significant portion of the group falls within this younger age

range. The second largest category includes those who are sixteen (16) years old, comprising fifteen (15) individuals or twenty-seven percent (27%) of the total. This suggests that a considerable number of individuals belong to this specific age bracket.

Meanwhile, the group of seventeen (17) years old consists of twelve (12) individuals, representing twenty-two percent (22%) of the total population. This shows a moderate representation in the dataset. The smallest group consists of eighteen (18) years old individuals, totaling eleven (11), which makes up twenty percent (20%) of the overall population.

Overall, the data reveals that the majority, or fifty-eight percent (58%), of individuals are sixteen (16) years old and below. Additionally, there is a noticeable decline in frequency as age increases, highlighting a predominantly younger population. The highest representation is among individuals aged fifteen (15) years old and below, while the lowest belongs to those who are eighteen (18) years old.

This is to confirm that the study of (Aptekar & Stoecklin, 2014). The influence of age extends to how street children interact with authority figures, education systems, and peer networks. Adolescents who have spent a significant portion of their lives on the streets often struggle with institutional rules and structured programs, necessitating gradual reintegration approaches.

Table 1: Data of the Respondents According to their Age.

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18 years old	11	20%
17 years old	12	22%
16 years old	15	27%
15 years old and below	17	31%
Total	55	100%

Sex

Table 2 shows the distribution of the respondents according to their sex.

The table presents the sex distribution of fifty-five (55) individuals. The majority of the population consists of males, with a total of thirty-eight (38) individuals, accounting for sixty-nine percent (69%) of the total. This indicates that males make up a significantly larger portion of the group.

On the other hand, females represent a smaller percentage, with seventeen (17) individuals, comprising thirty-one percent (31%) of the population. This shows that females are notably fewer in number compared to males.

Overall, the data highlights a significant difference in sex distribution, with males outnumbering females by a large margin. This suggests that the population being studied is predominantly male.

This is to confirm that the study of (Conticini & Hulme, 2007). The reintegration process for street children is influenced by gender-based societal perceptions. Programs designed to assist street children must consider these differences to be effective.

Table 2: Data of the Respondents According to their Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	38	69%
Female	17	31%
Total	55	100%

Educational Attainment

The table presents the educational attainment of fifty-five (55) individuals. The largest group consists of out-of-school youth, with a total of seventeen (17) individuals, accounting for thirty-one percent (31%) of the population. This indicates that a significant portion of the group has not completed formal education.

The second largest categories are those at the elementary level and high school level, each comprising eleven (11) individuals or twenty percent (20%) of the total population. This suggests that a considerable number of individuals have some level of formal education but have not yet graduated.

Meanwhile, eight (8) individuals, or fifteen percent (15%), have completed elementary education, while six (6) individuals, making up eleven percent (11%), have graduated from high school. The smallest group consists of those who have pursued vocational education, with only two (2) individuals, accounting for four percent (4%).

Overall, the data reveals that a majority of individuals have not completed high school, with a large portion classified as out-of-school youth. This suggests that access to or continuation of formal education may be a challenge for many in this population.

This is to confirm in the study of (Dybian, 2005). The level of educational attainment among street children affects their self-esteem, aspirations, and social interactions. Children who have some schooling experience tend to adapt more easily to structured environments and demonstrate a higher willingness to engage in rehabilitation programs.

Table 3: Data of the Respondents According to their Educational Attainment

Educational attainment	Frequency	Percentage
Out of school Youth	17	31%
Elementary Level	11	20%
Elementary Graduate	8	15%
High School Level	11	20%
High School Graduate	6	11%
Others (Vocational)	2	4%
Total	55	100

Father's Occupation

The table presents the occupational distribution of fathers of fifty-five (55) individuals. The most common occupations are vendors and construction workers, each with twelve (12) individuals, representing twenty-two percent (22%) of the total. This indicates that a significant portion of fathers are engaged in informal or labor-intensive jobs.

The second largest group consists of farmers, with eleven (11) individuals, making up twenty percent (20%) of the population. This suggests that agriculture remains a primary source of livelihood for many.

Drivers account for eight (8) individuals, or fifteen percent (15%), while both fishermen and janitors each make up six (6) individuals, representing eleven percent (11%) of the total. These numbers indicate that a portion of fathers are engaged in transportation, fishing, and maintenance-related jobs.

Notably, there are no fathers employed as barangay officials, government employees, or teachers. This suggests that the population has limited representation in formal government or educational sectors.

Overall, the data reveals that most fathers work in informal, labor-based, or self-employed occupations, with a strong presence in vending, construction, and farming.

This is to inform in the study of (Gulzar *et al.*, 2009) that the Fathers who work long hours or migrate for employment often have limited interaction with their children, which can weaken familial bonds and make reintegration efforts more challenging. Studies suggest that children from households where fathers are unemployed or involved in irregular work tend to experience a lack of supervision and emotional support, increasing their vulnerability to street life.

Table 4: Data of the Respondents According to their Father's Occupation

Father's Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Driver	8	15%
Farmer	11	20%
Fisherman	6	11%
Vendor	12	22%
Janitor	6	11%
Others (Construction Workers)	12	22%
Total	55	22%

Mother's Occupation

Table 5 shows the distribution of the respondents according to their mother's occupation.

The table presents the occupational distribution of mothers of fifty-five (55) individuals. The most common occupation among mothers is vending, with twenty-one (21) individuals engaged in this work, making up thirty-eight percent (38%) of the total. This suggests that a significant number of mothers rely on small-scale businesses or informal selling as their primary source of income.

The second largest group consists of farmers, with nineteen (19) individuals, representing thirty-five percent (35%) of the total. This indicates that a substantial portion of mothers are involved in agricultural work, which may be a key livelihood in the community. Janitors account for eight (8) individuals, making up fifteen percent (15%) of the population. Meanwhile, three (3) individuals, or five percent (5%), are employed as domestic workers. Barangay health workers and businesswomen each account for two (2) individuals, representing four percent (4%) of the total.

Notably, no mothers are employed as barangay officials, government employees, teachers, or nurses. This suggests limited participation in formal government or professional sectors.

Overall, the data highlights that most mothers are engaged in informal or labor-intensive work, particularly vending and farming, which are the dominant occupations in this population.

This is to confirm the study of (Evans, 2004). Mothers working long hours or in migratory labor often face difficulties in participating in family-based reintegration programs, which require consistent parental involvement. Studies suggest that interventions targeting street children should consider the employment conditions of their mothers, offering livelihood support or flexible work arrangements that enable them to balance income generation with childcare responsibilities.

Table 5: Data of the Respondents According to their Mother's Occupation

Mother's Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Barangay Health Worker	2	4%
Farmer	19	35%
Businesswoman	2	4%
Vendor	21	38%
Janitor	8	15%
Others (Domestic Worker)	3	5%
Total	55	100%

Reasons for Being Street Children

Table 2 shows the distribution of the respondents according to their reasons for being street children.

The table presents the various reasons why fifty-five (55) individuals have become street children.

There were thirteen (13) reasons identified which include the following: financial problems, broken family, abusive parents, lack of support from parents, lack of job of parents, abandoned by family, influence by friends, lost contact with family, no money to build house, chased by police, to be free from strict parents, high cost of living, and lack of government support/initiatives.

From the data, it can be observed that the topmost reason is financial problems which means that financial hardship, including poverty and unemployment, is a major driver for children ending up on the streets, alongside other factors like family breakdown, neglect, and abuse. This is to confirm in the study of (Aptekar & Stoecklin, 2014). Beyond economic and family-related reasons, structural factors such as lack of access to education and social services also play a role in pushing children onto the streets. Many street children have dropped out of school due to financial constraints, lack of parental support, or the need to work at a young age.

Table 2: Data of the Respondents According to their Reasons of Being Street Children

Reasons for Being Street Children	Frequency	Percentage
Financial Problems	11	20%
Broken Family	9	16%
Abusive Parents	8	15%
Lack of Support from Parents	5	9%
Lack of Job of Parents	5	9%
Abandoned by Family	3	5%
Influence by Friends	3	5%
Lost contact with Family	3	5%
No Money to Build House	2	4%
Others (Chased by Police)	2	4%
To Be Free from Strict Parents	2	4%
High Cost of Living	1	2%
Lack of government support/initiatives	1	2%
Total	55	100%

Government Initiatives for Street Children

Table 3 shows the distribution of the respondents according to government initiatives for street children.

The data highlights the various government initiatives aimed at supporting street children. There were fifteen (15) government initiatives for street children which include the following: educational assistance, livelihood assistance, community reintegration, activity center for children, conduct monitoring of the DSWD for the children, counselor to address the growing concerns of the street children, socialization program, cash for work for park attendants, seminars or symposiums for parents' responsible parenthood, pasko ng batang pinoy, conduct program implementation for livelihood of the street children's parents, promotion of healthy attitude, values and behavior for the children, camping for children at risk on the streets, sampaguita planning, and fair and equal treatment of the children.

The data further revealed that the topmost government initiative is educational assistance which include scholarship grants and ALS program. This program supports the educational expenses of street children working on the streets whose families are not financially able to support school-related expense and provide financial assistance to street children during enrolment periods for school supplies and other needs. This is to confirm in the study of (Thomas de Benítez, 2011). Aside from direct assistance, governments have also focused on policies that address the root causes of street child prevalence, such as poverty, child labor, and family instability. Legislative measures, such as child protection laws and juvenile justice reforms, aim to safeguard the rights of street children and prevent their criminalization.

Table 3: Data of the Respondents According to the Government Initiatives

Government Initiatives	Frequency	Rank
Educational Assistance	21	1
Livelihood Assistance	17	2
Community Reintegration	9	3
Activity Center for Children	8	4
Conduct monitoring of the DSWD for the children	6	5.5
Counselor to address the growing concerns of the street children	6	5.5
Socialization program	5	7
Cash for Work for Park Attendants	4	8.5
Seminars or symposiums for parents responsible parenthood	4	8.5
Pasko ng Batang Pinoy	3	10.5
Conduct program implementation for livelihood of the street children's parents	3	10.5
Promotion of healthy attitude, values and behavior for the children	2	12.5
Camping for Children at Risk on the Streets.	2	12.5
Sampaguita Planning	1	14.5
Fair and equal treatment of the children	1	14.5

*Multiple responses

Perceived Effects of Government Initiatives

Table 4 exhibits the perceived effects of government initiatives.

There were nine (9) parameters effects used to measure its effects. Among the parameters, all of them have considered as "very high effect" which include the following: decrease of

number of street children, street children were able to eat three (3) times a day, street children become secure and safe in the street, there is a harmonious relationship among street children, there is no crime committed by street children, they are able to participate in government activities such as clean-up drive and Cibak, street children were able to join into Katipunan ng Kabataan, street children become aware on their rights, and street children are encourage to go to school.

The overall perceived effects of government initiatives for street children has grand mean of 4.72 and considered as very high effect. This further mean that government initiatives will only realize if there is appropriate funding given to the concerned agency. This result is related to the study of Thomas de Benítez, (2011) where studies highlight that the effectiveness of these initiatives depends on proper implementation, sufficient funding, and coordination among various agencies.

Table 4: Perceived Effects of Government Initiatives for Street Children

Statement	Mean	Interpretation
Decrease of number of street children	4.68	Very High Effect
Street children were able to eat three (3) times a day	4.84	Very High Effect
Street children become secure and safe in the street	4.86	Very High Effect
There is a harmonious relationship among street children	4.77	Very High Effect
There is no crime committed by street children	4.60	Very High Effect
They are able to participate in government activities such as clean-up drive and Cibak.	4.73	Very High Effect
Street children were able to join into Katipunan ng Kabataan	4.77	Very High Effect
Street children become aware on their rights	4.55	Very High Effect
Street children are encourage to go to school	4.68	Very High Effect
Grand Mean	4.72	Very High Effect

Needs of Street Children

Table 5 exhibits the needs of street children. There were thirteen (13) identified needs which include the following: eat 3 times a day, have money, shelter, buy medicine, enough sleep, buy what I want, community support, legal assistance, go to school, see my family, celebrate my birthday, take a bath daily, and government support.

From the data, it can be observed that the topmost need of the children is able to eat three times a day it is because street children often face food insecurity and may not have access to regular, balanced meals, leading to malnutrition and health problems. Providing three meals a day can help ensure they receive adequate nutrients for growth and development. Regular meals provide a steady supply of energy, which is essential for children to be able to learn, play, and engage in daily activities. This result can be traced to the Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a theory of motivation that proposes that human needs are arranged in a hierarchy, with basic physiological needs at the bottom and self-actualization at the top, and individuals strive to fulfill higher-level needs after lower-level needs are met.

Table 5: Needs of Street Children

Needs of Street Children	Frequency	Rank
Eat 3 times a day	42	1
Have money	38	2
Shelter	34	3
Buy medicine	30	4
Enough sleep	28	5.5
Buy what I want	28	5.5
Community support	27	7
Legal Assistance	26	8
Go to school	18	9
See my family	12	10
Celebrate my birthday	11	11
Take a bath daily	8	12
government support	5	13

*Multiple response

Conclusion

The findings from the data analysis highlight that financial instability, family issues, and limited access to education are the primary factors contributing to the vulnerability of children, particularly those living on the streets. The majority of respondents are in early to mid-adolescence, with a significant number being out of school, indicating challenges in educational retention and access. The dominance of informal and low-income occupations among parents suggests that economic hardship is a major driver of children's displacement and engagement in street life.

The results on reason why they become street children conclude that interventions must prioritize poverty alleviation, family support, and educational access to break the cycle of vulnerability among at-risk children. Strengthening financial assistance programs, job opportunities, and skill development for parents can reduce the economic pressures that push children onto the streets.

As to the government initiatives, it is concluded that expanding educational programs, scholarships, and school-based support services will help increase retention rates and improve long-term prospects for these children. Additionally, enhancing mental health services, social reintegration programs, and child protection policies are crucial in providing holistic care.

As to the perceive impact, the government must also implement stronger monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure the effectiveness of existing initiatives while promoting collaboration between local agencies, non-governmental organizations, and community stakeholders. By adopting a multi-sectoral and proactive approach, sustainable solutions can be developed to improve the well-being and future opportunities of vulnerable children.

As to the needs of the respondents, the needs of the respondents must be given action by the government specifically the local government unit of Catarman.

Recommendations

- Strengthen Financial and Livelihood Support for Families:** To address the economic instability that pushes children onto the streets, the government should expand livelihood assistance programs, job training, and small business support for parents. Providing stable employment opportunities and financial aid can help

families sustain their basic needs and prevent children from resorting to street life.

ii. Enhance Educational Access and Retention Programs: Since a significant number of children are out of school, efforts should be made to improve access to education through scholarships, free learning materials, and flexible education programs such as alternative learning systems. Schools should also implement retention strategies, such as mentorship and counseling, to ensure students remain engaged in their studies.

iii. Improve Mental Health and Social Support Services: Given the psychological distress and emotional challenges faced by children, local governments should invest in mental health support, including counseling services, therapy programs, and child protection initiatives. Establishing community centers where children can seek guidance, emotional support, and rehabilitation will contribute to their overall well-being.

iv. Expand and Strengthen Child Protection Policies: Policies focused on child welfare should be reinforced to ensure that cases of abuse, neglect, and exploitation are effectively addressed. Government agencies must improve the monitoring of vulnerable children, strengthen child protection laws, and work closely with social workers and law enforcement to prevent further cases of abandonment and abuse.

v. Increase Awareness and Community Engagement Programs: Awareness campaigns, seminars, and workshops on responsible parenting, children's rights, and social inclusion should be conducted to promote a supportive environment for at-risk children. Community participation, including partnerships with non-governmental organizations and private sectors, can further enhance the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at reducing the prevalence of street children and improving their quality of life.

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