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Cruxes of homelessness in Southern Philippines

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Abstract

Homelessness is a complex social problem inimicable to the concern individuals. This paper aims at the determination of factors causing massive homeless individuals in the four select regions in Southern Philippines. The sample comprised of randomly chosen 100 homeless respondents in each select city in considered regions. An observation guide was outlined to describe the homeless and to determine possible driving factors of their displacement while a questionnaire-interview consisting the perceived causes of homelessness was employed to gather the necessary data. The study shows that the causes associated to homelessness are individual and structural factors. Poverty, abstinence of education, leaders' poor management, unemployment, absence of public assistance, relationship with friends, domestic violence, force resettlement, and existence of drugs and crimes were among the persistent cruxes of homeless in the region. The identification of causal factors of homelessness is crucially substantial in advocating intervention solutions to end the problem so that possible pervasive risks and effects could be altered and prevented.

Keywords: Cruxes, homelessness, interventions, Southern Philippines

1. Introduction

Images on the slaughter of the innocent, defenseless, and the displacement of civilian populations in war time – people fleeing their homes for safety, fear, and despair marked on their faces – and as do images of the wretched and miserable existence of dregs of humanity devour every living soul in it. This human flotsam was known as the homeless. Homelessness, at every scale from local to global, pertains to social, economic, and personal problems and is an outcome of global social exclusion (Gervais & Rehman, 2005) in which nature differs in developed and developing countries.

Homelessness, according to United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, is the condition and social category of people who do not have a regular house or dwelling because they cannot afford, pay for, or are otherwise unable to maintain regular, safe, and adequate housing, or they lack fixed, regular, and adequate night time residence. According to the report of United Nation Commission on Human Settlement, the number of homeless people worldwide is estimated to be between 100 million and one billion in which a quarter of the population lives below the national poverty line (World Bank, 2012) ^[15].

Many recent studies had been conducted to verify numbers of homeless. The last time a 2005 global survey was made by the United Nations Commission on Settlement in which an estimated 100 million people to 1 billion were homeless worldwide. Another global statistics report from Homeless World Cup cited various recent number of sleep rough such as England where 112,070 people found displaced or homeless last 2013, 6,437 in 2013 in London where it is a 75% increase, 3.1 million in Philippines where 44% of urban population live in slums (UN Habitat, 2008), and others. Among the drivers of being homeless were blamed by abused human activities and natural calamities. In fact, the report, "Home Not Found: The Cost of Homelessness in Silicon Valley," found that a country can spend an average of \$520 million (\$83,000 annual cost for each homeless) or a total of more than \$3 billion on basic services for homeless including emergency room visits and jail stays.

In Mindanao, the archipelago's most abundantly endowed island, factors on homelessness with respect to causes are existent. It does not have one particular cause (Hewitt, 2008) ^[4], thus a complex interplay of the factors gives a real picture to the cause. In addition to being more sparsely populated than other areas, due to which it earned the status of 'frontier', the island is so comparatively fertile that it has been dubbed the "Rice Bowl".

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It is therefore paradoxical that in the midst of abundance, there is so much want and squalor.

This study took interest in the determination of cruxes of homelessness in Southern Philippines. The problems of homelessness are globally prevalent yet its intervention can be soundly plausible when causes are identified and examined. Since the cost of homelessness is high which is triggered with factors like hospitalization, medical treatment, incarceration, police intervention, and emergency shelter expenses, it makes surprisingly expensive for municipalities and taxpayers, the identification of its causes can augment wider perspectives in the pro-creation of sound policies to alter forthcoming risks.

2. Materials and Methods

The four selected cities from the four regions in Mindanao

were considered as the sampling site of this study with 400 homeless respondents selected equally in random from Pagadian City (Region IX), Iligan (Region X), Cotabato City (Region XII), and Lamitan City (ARMM). Data gathered were subject to statistical tools using a related software. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used to answer the research objective. However, it leans much on the qualitative in describing the characteristics of homeless respondents. A barangay observation guide was served in observing the homeless individuals in the four selected regions of Mindanao in order to capture the possible causes and a questionnaire-interview guide which composed the perceived causes. The selection of the respondents was carried out so that the sample includes men and women, younger and older people, and representatives of ethnic and other minority groups



Fig 1: Map of Mindanao showing the locales of the study.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Perceived causes of homelessness in Southern Philippines.

Variable	Region IX	Region X	Region XII	ARMM	P-value	Remarks
Poverty (no income-low income)	52	45	37	39	1.566E-05	Highly Significant
No education (not finished primary education)	42	10	42	53	2.970E-05	Highly Significant
Substance or drug abuse (drugs caused people to go astray)	41	88	8	0	3.193E-05	Highly Significant
Legal or criminal problem (escaped from danger of crimes/ escaped from crime committed)	42	25	21	48	2.971E-05	Highly Significant
Sexual abuse or harassment (raped)	1	45	8	4	0.391	Not Significant
Unemployment(unskilled due to poor education)	30	9	35	40	8.135E-05	Highly Significant
Mental or health problem (insanity/TB)	3	10	8	3	0.058	Not Significant
Leaders attitude (harsh treatment, stereotyping as dirt people, trash people)	29	5	45	15	9.004E-05	Highly Significant
No public assistance (unsympathetic attitudes, no help from the public)	32	14	10	28	6.70E-05	Highly Significant
Domestic violence (battered child & wives)	14	30	6	16	0.001	Significant
Go with friends(influenced by friends to stay in the place)	8	9	10	11	0.004	Significant
Evacuation/eviction (evacuation from war/eviction from former dwellings which are owned by others)	6	10	70	43	0.009	Significant

Significant ($P < 0.05$)

The perceived causes of homelessness are contributory to health, public safety, and environmental related problems especially on the affected individuals. They are more likely to experience human hazards and natural disasters since they temporarily dwell on danger zone areas such as sidewalks, railways or near rivers. This says that homeless people should be involved in the planning phase of intervention and services for accurate promulgation of policies and improvements.

Table 1 shows the perceived causes of homelessness in Southern Philippines are brought about by personal or individual and structural factors. Individual factors significantly considered like inadequate education, joblessness or unemployment, substance or drug abuse, criminal problems, leaders' absurd attitude, domestic violence in the form of battering wives and children, evacuation or eviction because of war or forced resettlement, and close friendship ties and the structural such as poverty and negligence of support from the public caused them to be homeless. Respondents did not consider sexual abuse or exploitation and mental or health problems to cause them displaced and that economic instability, poor education and leadership, joblessness, battering wives and children, health problems, close friendship ties, evacuation or force resettlement, negligence of proper public assistance, existence of drugs and crimes augmented them to be homeless.

Sixty-four percent (64%) of the homeless individuals in Southern Philippines were homeless. Thus, necessary alternative income opportunities should be observed to support family needs especially on housing and education matters. Aside from that, the recognition of its causes could be a parcel to auspicious intervention and comprehensive development plans. Lack of sufficient income obtained the

highest responses (17.33%) in Region IX, substance or drug abuse (29.33%) in Region X, evacuation or eviction (23.33%) in Region XII, and lack of education (18%) in ARMM. However, considering the totality of respondents in the four regions, the significant lingering causalities were poverty (43.3%), abstinence of adequate education (36.7%), evacuation or eviction (32.3%), substance or drug abuse (34.2%), criminal problems (34%), unemployment (28.5%), leaders' unfavorable attitude (23.5%), no public assistance (21%), domestic violence (16.5%), and relationship with friends (9.5%). Respondents observed under poor economic stability were deprived to buy necessary materials to build their home and resist in sending themselves as well as their children to education. This signifies that a complex interplay of these significant factors substantiates homelessness. If this condition persists, there is a more potential vulnerability of the respondents to suffer more risks and effects and the current multitude of homeless can be more populous which can be a future social crisis in the southern part of the Philippines.

The findings of the study stress that poverty impedes human potential and housing settlement. Similar studies narrated that homelessness leads to higher percentage of illiteracy (Robinson, 2011) ^[9] resulting to an increase of unemployment rate (Steen *et al.*, 2012) ^[11], substance or drug abuse (Teesson *et al.*, 2008), and in fact homeless (Wood *et al.*, 2014) ^[14]. No doubt that insufficient income is the principal denominator why there are pervasive homeless (IFAD, 2014) ^[5] and so with joblessness or unemployment (Leach, 2015) because these can hinder them to buy their necessary materials to construct a home and pursue education. Men should be offered with job opportunities since they comprised the majority (55%) of the respondents. Other reasons were male homelessness is evident in the study

area and also they were more capable to do heavier work than females. Further, a recent research proved the vast number of homeless surveyed below the national poverty line (World Bank, 2012) ^[15] cannot raise their own good shelter and resist education. Socio-economic problems which include poverty, unemployment, inadequate education, friends' influence, evacuation, presence of drugs, crimes, domestic violence and so with political affairs like negligence of public assistance and harsh treatments from local officials made homeless individuals escaped from their dwelling. These personal and structural factors associated homelessness in an alarming state. It posed unsound governance of local officials. There are no quite collaboration and pro-active support services of the stakeholders for the common good of the poor. This means that homeless persists on a vast scale because of economic and political disregard for the human rights of the poor (Share International, 2015) ^[10]. No intervention of such causes could lead to double increase of homeless individuals and so with the risks and effects. The study suggests that adequate local budget planning, supportive housing services, education policies, and other measures in the locality should be upheld so that homeless individuals could develop their potential and have a greater chance to be employed, thus alleviating themselves from poverty and being displaced. These and more additional plausible services can address their needs to help them transform their lives (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2015) ^[1] especially with emphasis on giving them permanent homes which can save taxpayers' millions of funds (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2015) ^[7]. The result asserts that each significant factor being considered by the respondents cannot be determined as a sole cause of homelessness. Rather, it is the complex interplay between personal circumstances and adverse structural factors outside humans' direct control. Thus, the only thing to prevent them from being homeless is to provide them shelter (The Housing Monitor, 2015). With right funding and right local leadership, ending homelessness is possible (National Alliance to End Homeless, 2015) ^[7].

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Homelessness in Southern Philippines is brought by individual and structural causes. Sixty-four percent (64%) of the homeless respondents have established a family where economic problem in terms of no or low level of income is perceived to be the most common denominator in losing their homes and delved for temporarily dwelling. Majority (55%) of the respondents comprised jobless male which suggests more job opportunities to be given for them to support the family's housing and education needs. Significant structural social problems also arise such as emergence of drugs, crimes, and domestic violence while individual affairs like poor education background, relationship with peers and friends, harsh treatments from local officials, and negligence of public assistance made them to be discouraged in proper settling. Sexual harassment and mental or health problems did not caused them to be displaced. However, respondents (43.3%) identified poverty as the common reason for being homeless in the region but cannot be the sole cause of homelessness and as other factors such as lack of education, substance abuse, and the like. A complex interplay of these perceived causes makes homelessness reasonable and existent. A simple solution to decipher homelessness is to provide homes for the homeless. Thus, the government

especially the local sector could devise and convene plausible intervention solutions in terms of advocating permanent housing support, alternative income opportunities, adequate educational services, budget planning, and others which could raise homeless individuals' living and intervene or prevent additional homeless, risks, and effects.

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