



Emotional Episodes among Street Children (The “Rugby Boys”): Basis for Strengthening the Rehabilitation Program

Maricel Duran Adriatico¹

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Abstract

This study looked into the emotional experiences of street children (the “rugby boys”) of the twin cities of Dapitan and Dipolog Year 2009. The descriptive method of research was used with the aid of a researcher-made questionnaire in gathering the needed data. There were 130 rugby boy-respondents. The statistical tools employed were frequency counting, percentage ranking, mean computation, Analysis of Variance and Pearson – Product Moment Coefficient of Correlation. The study found out that most of the rugby boys in Dipolog and Dapitan Cities were at their adolescence stage. They frequently stayed in the market. Majority of the rugby boy’s family consisted of seven to nine children whose parents were mostly vendors and laborers. More than one-third of the rugby boys sniffed rugby once a day. It was also revealed in the study that there was no significant difference on the emotional experience among the rugby boys along four episodes, namely: happy, sad, angry and fear. However, there was significant relationship between age, socio-economic status and places they go to. Local government units through its social welfare division should provide rehabilitation to children dependent on solvent drugs. The Department of Social Welfare and Development should strengthen its rehabilitation program so that better benefits could be availed by those juveniles who are recommended for rehabilitation. Non- governmental organizations need to cooperate in the national thrust of government on uplifting poverty-related incidents with focus on the phenomenon of rugby-sniffing children found loose on streets in the city.

Keywords and Phrases: *emotional episodes, rugby boys, street children, rehabilitation*

Introduction

Records show that there are about 1.5 million street children in the Philippines. In fact, it is a common sight that there is at least 6 street children seen along streets everyday. Today, the phenomenon of street children is in itself alarming and it has become a significant problem where the approximately 70% are boys. A variety of different factors are found to contribute to their growing number. And as elsewhere in the world it is rooted to poverty where the burden and the harm of which fall most heavily on children (Maciones, 2001). It cannot be overemphasized that dealing with its effects as like the risk and exposure to the drug use is a complex task. The estimates of street

¹ Jose Rizal Memorial State University – Dipolog Campus, Dipolog City

children at particular risk due to solvent abuse can be made by simply watching packs of them, hurdling together, sniffing solvent from plastic bags. In fact the office of the National Drug Control Policy asserted that the abuse of these solvents have long started among children as early as seven years old to alleviate them from hunger (White, 2004).

While sociologists point to no single factor to predict ones addiction to the solvent, basically, there are three kinds which may influence it, namely: biology, environment and development. The more risks factors one has, the greater the chance that the drug leads to addiction. What exactly accounts the street children to use and smell the solvent, is a vital issue closely link to food. It prevents hunger. Because money is scarce, and it is all that they can afford to buy. The impoverished population becomes the victim to dangerous and illegal solvent where the most common are inhalants, like solvent / rugby, the shabu, the marijuana. Solvents, particularly rugby are an inhalant of choice among teenagers. Inhalants cause nausea, blurred vision, memory lapses and motor loss. These effects are found of minor discomforts to the user right after inhalation but the permanent damage inhalants brings irreversible. It damages the vital organ of the body like liver, kidneys and brain, thus creating social problems leading to rape, theft, stealing pick-pocketing, robbery and other forms of petty crimes.

In the twin cities of Dipolog and Dapitan, there are Rugby Boys who dominate among poor families. Keeping the future of these street children and provide them safe from hazardous chemically contained solvent known as rugby is actually a serious responsibility of the government. Brick (2002) as cited by Beazley (2003) posited that street children are children below 18 years who spend most of their time on the streets. There are between 10 to 100 million street children worldwide, depending on the exact definitions used. The target group is homeless and vulnerable street children and adolescents, including their families, who are at high risk of exploitation and physical and emotional abuse, especially through forced commercial sex and violence in the streets.

The “Rugby Boys” label of which is applied to the street children who sniff rugby. Rugby, like any solvent is a highly biologically active compound. Long term effects of rugby occur at much lower concentration. Stein, Trabasso and Liwag (2000) as cited by Liwag (2004) along side with Dietrich revealed that the solvent linked the children dependency on rugby to their basic emotions, exhibited while on the state of drugs, namely: happy, fear, anger and sad episodes. Stein et. al. produced the cognitive appraisal framework of emotion distinguishing the four emotions involve by appraisal of changes in goal states; beliefs regarding outcome certainties; and on antecedents or consequences during the emotion episodes; and future-oriented thoughts and behaviors. *Happy episode* shall be considered as the happy narratives. They are expected to differ from narratives that describe negative episodes. In talking about their happy experiences, children point to an event that has led to the attainment of a desired outcome or the avoidance of an aversive state. Children also state that goal attainment is virtually guaranteed or that there are no further obstacles to their goals. Lastly, children mention that enjoyment of the goal state or goal maintenance followed that successful outcome. *Fear episode* is focused on children’s fear narratives that contain their expressions of doubts regarding the maintenance of a positive state, or their desire to avoid an unpleasant, or threatening



state. Fear narratives reflect the perception that the undesired state has not yet occurred, and the belief in the high probability that the undesired state is impending. When children talk about being afraid, they emphasize the negative outcomes that they anticipate and make use of future-oriented language. Their plans and wishes usually center on the avoidance of the anticipated negative state. *Anger and sad episodes* are considered together because they are usually elicited by similar types of events. Children's anger and sadness narratives revolve around situations where their goals have failed due to a loss or the presence of aversive conditions. These events are seen as a violation of the normal or the expected, and the loss or aversive state must be perceived as certain.

Methodology

The descriptive method of research was used in the study. Interview and documentation of researcher's observation were utilized as regard to the emotional experience among the rugby boys along four episodes namely; happy, sad, angry and fear.

A self-made questionnaire was distributed to the 130 streets children of Dipolog and Dapitan Cities who were actively engaging on the solvent called rugby. They are the so called "rugby boys".

The data gathered was interpreted using appropriate statistical tools such as frequency counting, percentage ranking, mean computation, analysis of variance and Pearson-Product Moment Coefficient of Correlation.

Results

Thirty six or 27.69% of the respondents belonged to the 14-16 years old bracket. They are at their adolescent stage. Bigger portion of the respondents parents were vendors and laborers. Parents could hardly sustain the needs of their children.

One hundred percent of the annual income of parents ranged from P100, 000.00 to P149, 000.00 per year. Considering the number of children that these families may have is not enough to sustain the daily living.

Forty three or 33.08% of respondents' family consisted of seven to nine children. Respondents belong to a large family.

The market ranked number one as to places frequently visited, the respondents go to those crowded places looking for other children to be with. Sniffing rugby has been made a daily routine.

There is a similarity on the four episodes in the use or sniffing of rugby. There was no significant difference on the emotional experience among respondents along four episodes.

The age, socio-economic status the places they go, influenced and affected the emotional experience among the respondents. There was a significant relationship between socio-economic status and the emotional experience of the rugby boys in different episodes in their life.

Discussions

The rugby boys started experiencing the rugby sensation as early as seven years old. This implies that these boys are not under the guidance of their parents. A big number of respondents belong to a large families. The income of their parents is not enough to sustain their needs. Economic realities demand that parents have to pursue additional jobs where it means less attention given to their children.

Market is one of the places they frequently visited, overcrowded places like the market would most likely afford them with unpleasant experiences thus, paving the way toward unpleasant life.

Sniffing rugby has been made as a daily routine. They have different reasons of sniffing rugby but the most common one is poverty. They used rugby in order to skip hunger.

The respondents sniff rugby in all episodes, be the happy, sad, angry or in the state of fear. There was no significant difference on the emotional experiences of the respondents along the four episodes.

The age, socio-economic status and places they go influence and affect the emotional experiences.

Conclusions

Most of the respondents are at their adolescence stage. Their parents' occupations are generally low income earning which cannot sustain big family needs. They belong to a larger family. Sniffing rugby has become part of their daily routine.

They find happiness in sniffing the solvent called "rugby". Along the four episodes, respondents have similar emotional experiences. Their age, socio-economic status and places they frequently go affect and influence their emotional experience.

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