

Example of research paper on runaway and homeless youth

[Life](#), [Home](#)



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According to the National Conference of State Legislature's website, one in every seven children between ages 10 to 18 years will run away from home (Finzel, 2013). This was supported by the data provided by the National Runaway Switchboard through the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness in 2008. According to the report, there were approximately 1.3 million youth were living-off the streets of the US territory (Molino, 2010). This statistics is alarming considering the potential risks that await the youth while they remain unsupervised in the streets. Not to mention the implication that a high incidence of youth homelessness in the economic, political and social image of the country. In lieu with this, the Runaway & Homeless Youth Act was created. This serves as a provision to the Juvenile

Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act enacted in 1974 (Family and Youth Service Bureau, 2012). The aim of the legislature was to safeguard the best interest of the youth who are on the streets unsupervised by an adult. However, the question is whether the said act is enough to suffice the growing problems associated with the prevalence of runaway and homelessness in the US.

Homelessness: The Evidence of Abuses and Risks

There had been news relating to the problems confronted by the government, social institutions as well as the homeless themselves. In an article published by the National Broadcasting Channel (NBC) in 2009, a large number of students from different public schools across the different states in the US are homeless (Huus, 2009). However, these student strive earnestly to receive education. While another law protects the rights of these children to have access to education, many scholars are concerned whether they are learning adequately. This is considering the situation that they have to face on a day-to-day basis having no home to go to and no place to provide the nurturing of what they have learned from school.

Another evidence to prove the need for a policy that would govern the welfare of the children who run away from home and the homeless is the result of the social research conducted by the Ohio State University.

According to the study, majority of the homeless youths are suffering from drug abuse and mental illness (Slesnick, Guo, & Feng, 2013). The study however enumerate that aside from treatment from substance abuse and mental illness these children need to be supervised because of the

degradation and corruption of their morality while they are left to wander off the streets.

In 2008, another problem was documented by the authors of the study on the health risk associated with HIV among homeless youths. The study revealed that the youth had to resort to survival sex in order to survive being in the streets (Serovich, Toviessi, Slesnick, & Gangamma, 2008). The incident of HIV is higher among bi-sexual females who claims to have more courage to engage in survival sex among the others.

Proposed Alternative

The data are nothing more than an indication that from 1974 when the Runaway & Homeless Youth Act was enacted, it did very little to the problem addressing the situation that confronts 1. 3 million youths. The studies revealing that one of seven youths between the ages of 10 to 18 would potentially run away from home. The demographics accompany this that 75% of these are female who will be included in the growing statistic of pregnant homeless girls between the tender ages of 6 to 12 (Finzel, 2013). This is on top of the problems previously identified that 46% of the homeless and runaways had been reported to have experienced physical abuse. 38% were emotionally abused, and 17% had been forced to unwanted sex (Finzel, 2013). These statistics prevail regardless of the amendment initially initiated in 2008 to improve the law.

As an alternative, it is proposed that certain provisions stated under the Runaway & Homeless Youth Act be amended. The revised law states a duration of 21 days under safety and structure provision states under

Section 311 (a) (1) (A) (i) stating that, safe and appropriate shelter provided for not to exceed 21 days . 21 days in inadequate especially if the youth is not a runaway and has no place to go to. Instead of this particular provision, it should retract and changed to something more realistic and helpful.

Specifically, it is suggested that the transition period be given to youths who have run away from home. Upon taking them out of the streets and being provided with shelter, these runaways' parents and guardians should immediately be contacted. This is in an effort to incorporate them into the counselling so that both parents and the youth can communicate their differences under supervision of a professional. However, before such act is initiated the authorities should first know the reason the youth runaway. It could be that the child was a victim of domestic abuse. In this case, the parents or guardian should be called into held liable for the claims made by the child should it be proven true.

On the other hand, in response to the case of youths who are homeless and without a home to go to, they should be sent in an institution or a foster house only upon proper verification. The government can find a permanent home for these kids as with the case of adoption. In addition, the youths who can seek employment should be assisted to be self-sufficient. This only after they are cleared of any signs of substance abuse and behavioral problems.

Criteria

The law should not be used by the youth to run away or to be delinquent. Instead, the youth should know that the government will not tolerate such immature and delinquent behavior. Some youths have access to the internet

and have a great amount of knowledge. Often they use the information they search over the internet to get them by or as an excuse to get away with what they have done. In this case, the law should not be used to condone a delinquent behavior. This considering because the resources that the government has to provide for those who are greatly in need of this particular service are being deprived. Instead of giving them their needs the government also need to address the youths who have chosen to run away from home.

In addition to this, the program of the government that houses children who are victims of domestic abuse should be intensified. This is to distribute the youths properly according to their needs so that the appropriate service can be provided to them. Victims of domestic abuse needs counselling and treatment. This is a more extensive problem that are, usually, the reason children ran away from home and refuses to go back. If these issues are not sufficiently and appropriately addressed and these children are forced to go back their houses, the community is only creating bigger problems or allowing the cycle to continue.

Finally, the alternative proposes that the youths who are already qualified to work be given assistance as far as becoming self-sufficient is concerned. The youth needs to be responsible and with that, the government can extend their aid to this group of homeless youth to become self-reliant and become a productive citizen. By doing this the government does not lessen the number of youths dependent on the aid provided by the revised Runaway & Homeless Youth Act but they have also aided the youth to become

productive. In addition, they have also taken them off the street and removed them from what could potentially ruin their life..

Outcome Projection

The proposed alternative would facilitate for four significant outcomes if done and implemented properly. First, it will significantly lessen the incidence of runaway and homeless within the US. Reducing the numbers of runaways and homeless could indicate the growth for the community. Second, by providing counselling and treatment to the homeless youths along with their parents their personal relationships will improve. Third, by providing for counselling after the youths had been taken off the streets and hearing their stories the incidents of domestic abuse involving the youths will be documented. Thus, people who should be held liable can be called in and subject to legal accountability and counselling. Finally, this can help contribute to the growth of the economy because the youths who are already allowed to work can become productive citizens.

Addressing the Trade-off

While there are numerous benefits to the proposed alternative, it does not discount the fact that the proposal would require enormous resources to be implemented and executed properly. The fund for this proposal would have to require enough resource to help the youths. This would cover aids to get them on their feet, land a job, find a place to stay, get the necessary technical trainings and have sufficient resource to survive for at least the first few weeks. In addition, the treatment for the victims of substance abuse and sex service does not come cheap too. There is still the counselling that

needs to include even the parents of the runaways. However, amidst all these the long-term reward of the proposal if implemented properly would be great.

Decision

The steps have to be done now while the problem can still be reversed. The government needs to prioritize and among the youth should be among their priority. In the future, this youth will be responsible at running the nation. Their best interest should always be protected and safeguarded in order to protect and safeguard the future and the sovereignty of the nation. The trade-off is not exactly as complex that the government cannot do anything about it. It, in fact, has enough capacity to enforce the necessary changes should it welcome the alternative. Rather than allowing for the cycle to continue the government, should stop it.

Personal insights

I have numerous encounters with runaways and homeless youths from my encounter with them in our Church community outreach program. I have seen a lot of these young runaways who were from decent families as reflected in their demeanor. However, they would prefer to be on the streets and wait for feeding projects similar to what my Church regularly conducts than to go home and enjoy the comfort. There were young girls who are homeless and eventually grew to engage in survival sex to help them get through. I have overheard some of them have abortion and some complaining about physical symptoms of common sexually transmitted diseases.

Personally, I believe that while the government fails to realize that this is a serious problem that requires their attention nothing can come out of it. Instead, the government will only be wasting money trying to implement a solution that recycles the problem. By continuing to implement a law that has been proven insufficient and incapable of addressing the issue, nothing will come out of the problem. Instead of addressing the superficial, the government should target the cause and start the treatment from them. No illness is ever cured by simply managing the symptoms. Doctors have to identify the problem and provide cure to the illness so the symptoms will disappear permanently.

Conclusion

After extensive review of the statistics and the plight of the runaways and homeless youths, it has been established that there is a failure in the political and social system that exist in the society. On the political aspect, this can be pointed out to the failure of the Runaway & Homeless Youth Act to provide solution to the growing incidence of runaway and homelessness especially among the youth. It is believed that the reason why the existing policy in reference to the Runaway & Homeless Youth Act fails to address the growing and alarming statistics relating to the incidence of runaway and homelessness is due to its failure to target the cause of the problem. Problems could not be address by simply offering solutions. In the case of the Runaway & Homeless Youth Act, the law simply proposed temporary solutions to the problem. It failed to look at the problem in the long run. The Act simply tries to offer temporary shelter, remedy as to helping a fully-

competent youth to find employment but it failed to address the reason why some of the youths runaway. By not address the reason and not calling the attention of everyone concern will only lead to a cycle. Eventually, the child will run away again and end up in the streets. However, if the policy makers try to exert more effort as to establishing the reason why such incident happen then the problem is resolved. Finally, the Act also failed to realize that give the length of time and the exposure of the youth to the crude ways of the streets, majority of these children needs treatment. The treatment varies to what effect the situation has brought to the child.

In addition, the social structure fails because the community refuses to acknowledge that the growing number of runaway and homeless youths is a major problem. The society should take active measures and consider this as part of their social responsibility. However, the measures expected from them is not condoning the situation by giving alms and providing temporary shelter. Instead, the help that can be expected is taking reporting to the authorities any incidence that requires attention.

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