An Analysis of the Street-Children Phenomenon in the City of Isfahan

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Introduction
In nearly all big cities around the world, the phenomenon of street children is one of the contemporary social issues. During past several decades, there is an increase in the volume of street children phenomenon around the world. The rising number of street children has many pathological and consequential negative impacts for children, youth, families, and the society at the whole. According to 2000 UN report, the number of street children is estimated between 100 to 140 million people. According to this report, it is estimated that around 40 million people living in Latin America, 35 million in Asia, 10 million in Africa and remaining live in other countries including advanced industrial societies. There are not reliable data about the number of street children in Iran. According to the available reports there are around 20 thousand street children in Iran. Some preliminary studies show a trend towards the growth of street children phenomenon in several big cities of Iran. The pathological impact of street children phenomenon need appropriate policy-making based on scientific approach. Thus various scientific researchers should work for deeper understanding of factors associated with the formation and characteristics of street children to better social policy.

Materials and Methods
The present paper aims to examine the overall situation of street children concerning their lifestyle, activities, experiences, family background, educational achievement and other behavioral characteristics. For this purpose, data collected through a survey administered in the face-to-face interview among 122 street children aged 6-14 working in the street of Isfahan city in the spring of 2010. The measurement validity of the study obtained through face validity and the questionnaire has been revised based on the experts’ comments and suggestions. Also a pretest study conducted to examine questionnaire
and based on the results of the pretest, questionnaire has been finalized. Data analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

**Discussion of Results and Conclusions**

Other characteristics of sample indicated that around 12 percents of street children was illiterate and about 58 percent of them leave their school before the completion of guidance school. Monthly income for 8.2 percent of respondents was below 150 thousand Tomans, 76.2 percent between 150 to 300 thousand Tomans and 14.7 was between 301 to 500 thousand Tomans. The highest income had for those children who were selling drugs. Around two third of respondents give their income to their adult family member. Also around two third of children worked as peddler and around one-fifth had a deviant job. Findings also indicate that five-seventh of respondents were physically abused by their parents. 22% of respondents arrested by police and 5 percent went to prison and 7 percent have one to two years in a juvenile institution. Examining parental characteristics of street children show that over 90 percent of mothers and fathers of the respondents have had below elementary schooling. About 70 percent of fathers’ respondent and 24 percent of mothers’ respondent has been employed. About 72 percent of children have at least one or both parents who addicted. 15 percent have had parents who divorced and 25 percent has experienced orphanhood.

In sum our research findings confirm that majority of street children under the study are boy, migrant, with low family income, having addicted parents, and usually have been physically abused by their parents and they are working as peddler. The findings also indicate that street children had deviant behavior in some case, was arrested by police, some of them even have gone to prison. Finally, research has shown that there are a significant relationship between parental drug addiction and the abuse of children by parents with the type of works that children are doing. Data shows that the kind of jobs that children do has a significant relationship with such variables as parental addiction, children abuse by parents, and parental imprisonment. Results also indicate that deviant job observed in the most cases among those children who have an addicted parent, employed in deviant job and abused by their parents.

In sum, it can be concluded that various factor played an important role in the formation and the emergence of street children phenomenon. Among others, these factors include family poverty, family disruption (as a result of such factors as parental drug addiction, divorce or death of parents and parental imprisonment), migration and suburbanization, and children abuse by their parents.

**Keywords:** Social pathology, street and working children, families, poverty, Isfahan

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