

The impact of family on the risk of homelessness

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Abstract

The contribution is focused on the range of people, who in their lives find themselves in a situation they lost their home roof, i.e. the homeless. Draws your point of view to finding the relationship between the current social situation of homeless people and their social realities of the times of their childhood as one of the possible attributes affecting their current state and causing their homelessness. This direct correlation is the main idea of the contribution, which moves in two basic areas: homelessness and family.

Keywords: Socialisation. Homelessness. Family. Social exclusion.

Objectives and tasks of the survey

Our research we focused on family environment of homeless people in their childhood and adolescence. During setting the goals of the survey it was necessary to take account the education of examined respondents as well as the education of the people who formed them during their first socialisation. Also the size of the site and equipment of the environment, where they

grew up, their family composition and the number of the members of family (or other). Also was necessary to have the information how and with whom respondents spent moments of their childhood. An essential task was to find out the quality of the relationship of the respondents to their parents.

Hypotheses

- H1 Homeless people grew and were formed in a very little stimulating family environment during their first socialisation.
- H2 The current state of homeless is related to their family environment where they grew during their childhood and adolescence.

Site selection and characterization of the survey sample

When choosing the place of implementation of the survey, we decided to focus on the facilities aimed at homeless people at different places in Slovakia. We chose the following institutions:

- Low-threshold shelter DePaul in Bratislava
- Dormitory Mea Culpa in Bratislava

- House Bethlehem Congregation of Sisters of Missionaries of Charity of Mother Therese in Bratislava and Žilina
- Hostel RESOTY in Bratislava
- Hostel Bethany in Malacky
- Community Calcutta in the village Višňové
- Institute of Christ the High Priest in Žakovce

These facilities are situated on several parts of the whole Slovakia. The respondents indicated they are residents from different parts of Slovakia (West, Central, and East). We made the national survey. The chosen sample reflects the aim and the hypothesis of our survey. It was necessary to better understand the psyche of the respondents, their emotional injured area, but also memories of the respondents. That would be a difficult task even for the survey in the terms of psycho-analytical expertise. In this case it was important to take enough of time for to receive the information from homeless, sensitively choose requirements and the approximation of received information and the reasonable estimate of the facts in their evaluation. Mentally deprived clients from the selected facilities, homeless deprived of alcohol and drugs, as well as the clients after head injury were excluded from the survey sample selection due to the risk that

the requirements of the survey could not understand and therefore the survey would be ultimately devalued.

The sample of respondents consisted from the ranges of clients using the services already mentioned facilities for the homeless. Most of them (65 respondents – 59 %) is on the street more than a year (usually 3-5 years). These were adult men and women in the total number of 111, of which was 95 men and 16 women. The proportional dividing of genders of our sample of respondents (86 % males and 14 % females) is nearly the same as the statistics of the proportion of the gender in the phenomenon of homelessness in Slovakia, Europe, even the U.S. and Japan. These identically indicate the percentage of men and women 85-15 %, with a tolerance of ± 10 %. In our survey participated respondents from 18 to 60 years, the largest part (80 respondents – 72 %) of respondents were aged 30-50 years.

Used methods of survey

The gradual course of our research we have divided into four stages. In this part we would like to describe the methods that we have used in the individual stages.

A) Preparatory stage

In the first stage of work we relied on the knowledge gathered from personal experience with caring for homeless in

Dormitory Mea Culpa in a period of four years. Furthermore we relied on the close cooperation with organizations working with the homeless in Bratislava, as well as the experience gained during the creation and organization of the network of services for the homeless within the City of Bratislava, which took place in close cooperation with the self-government, parts of the city and Municipality. Part of our work was visits, consultations and exchange of experience with colleagues from facilities in Slovakia, as well as participation in expert conferences. In inconsiderable extent we draw information from professional literature and material on the internet.

B) The Stage of Collecting of empirical facts

This phase of the survey took place depending on the method of survey we used. Selection of a specific method we have adjusted to addressed target group of the survey. It was used the following three methods of survey:

1. Exploratory method of written questionnaire was implemented in the first quarter of 2008, January – April
2. The method of interview with executives of selected facilities was conducted in the second quarter of 2008, May – July

3. Method for observing clients of dormitory Mea Culpa was conducted over two years, during the period June 2006 - June 2008.

In obtaining information from the homeless, we used an exploratory method of written questionnaire with the 40 questions, open and closed, through which we wanted to achieve our two goals of contribution:

1. Analyze the family environment where homeless grew up in their first socialisation (questions No. 4-6, 8-9, 13-21).
2. Analyze individual identifying aspects signaling the pathology of families of homeless (questions No. 10-12, 22-40).

In order to maintain the code of ethics of social workers, respect privacy personality and the law on protection of personal data, the questionnaire was anonymous.

The first three questions of the questionnaire were the questions about basic data: age, gender, status.

C) The stage of processing of empirical facts

On processing of received information, we used the method of

mathematic-statistical processing, i.e. calculation with numerical and the percentage expressing, tabulation and graphical representation. To this end we as working means chose an application of computer program from the file Microsoft Office 2010: Microsoft Office Excel, version: 11.0.8211.0, Microsoft Corporation.

D) The stage of assessment of results of survey

In the last stage we used qualitative methods of empirical research in the form of analysis, synthesis, comparison, approximation, case reports, deduction and generalization of the findings of the survey.

Interpretation and summary of results obtained

Through questions of the questionnaire we wanted to get information from respondents to filling two aims contribution:

1. Analyze the family environment in which homeless in their first socialisation grew up.
2. Analyze individual identifying aspects, which signal the pathology of families homeless

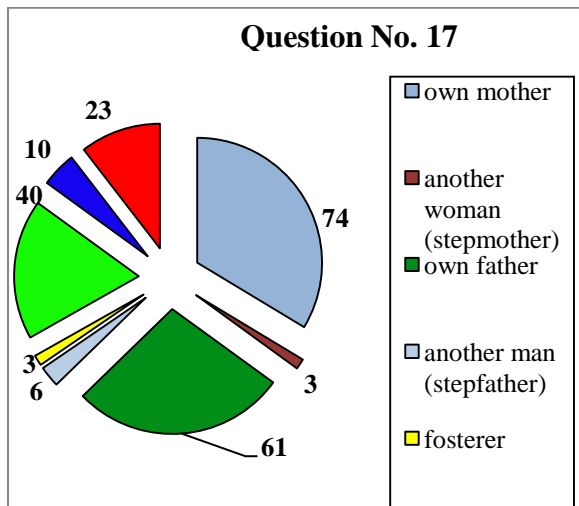
At the same time we wanted to verify the presented hypothesis:

H1 Homeless people grew and were formed in a very little stimulating

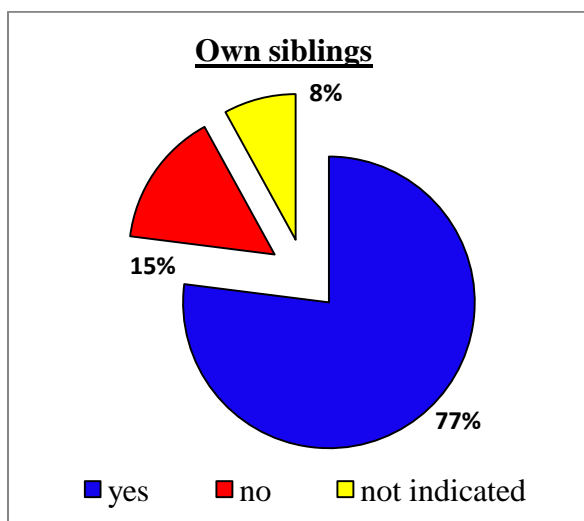
family environment during their first socialisation.

H2 The current state of homeless is related to their family environment where they grew during their childhood and adolescence.

Each question of the questionnaire had a role to bring at least certain part of information to verifying the validity of hypotheses. At their interpretation it is necessary to take into account the quality of the sample, consisting of social class homeless, who are to a greater or less extent influenced by social marginalization and extreme social exclusion, persistent over a year (mostly 3-5 years). It would be mistake to take into account only one answer, because several times in the questionnaire it showed a need of approximation and verification the information from one answer with another question. To confirm this we mention the data of 40 respondents (36 %) of their own siblings from question No. 17 questionnaire (Graph No. 1), which was vastly different from 77 % in response to question No. 13 (Graph No. 2 on p. 6), the only documented how difficult it is to obtain relevant information from the homeless about their family.



Graph No. 1: People who were your friends in your childhood and the adolescent?



Graph No. 2: Do you have siblings?

Hypothesis H1

H1 Homeless people grew and were formed in a very little stimulating family environment during their first socialisation.

Marital status of respondents offers a picture of their spiritual trousseau, which they have taken from the environment of

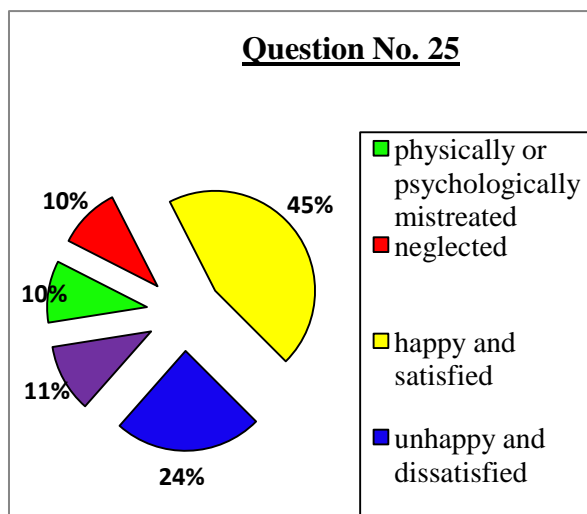
their parents. 47 % of unmarried and 29 % of divorced respondents aged 35 to 50 years they was not enough emotionally and socially ready for family life. Pitfalls of their life caught them too lone to cope with problems.

The information relating to the education of the respondents and their parents have informative value in the analysis of family environment of homeless. 101 of 111 (91 %) of respondents achieved a basic or secondary education. Their parents have the same level of education in the 69 % value (mother), respectively 72 % (fathers). Low education is one of the main reason of homelessness phenomenon in modern society. Based on information obtained from responses to the question No. 6 (reasons for failure in the study) and after analyzing them, we came to the conclusion that the most common barrier to higher education was inadequate family background of the respondents at the time of their first socialisation, at 65 %.

In responses to the eighth question, 86 % indicated that they come from a larger town or village with a population of 1000 above. In humans, who growing up in the countryside, are more likely to acquiring work habits just taking care of the common house. Even if he did not developed the relationship to academic

study, spend his time with useful work that enriches him mentally also, which also significantly reduces the risk of homelessness. Into analysis of initiatives by the respondents parents must therefore also include this data.

One of the key questions of the questionnaire (question No. 25) provided us significant information regarding the presented hypothesis. Happy and contented childhood was 45 % of respondents, but it cannot be spoken about mentally balanced society the homeless. Respondents with their answers testified personally and openly about their childhood, about their family. 55 % of respondents were unhappy, abused, neglected and they often cried in the childhood. It's an alarming picture of the family, in which they grew up (Graph No. 3).



Graph No. 3: What feeling you had during your childhood?

In the series of questions No. 26-29 there was our criterion to judge, to what

extent was the domestic environment for respondents at the time of first socialisation uninspiring. 18 % of respondents, coming from a family of alcoholic and 41 % of heavy smoker express non-insignificant sample of uninspiring home environment. 12 % of battered children corroborates the information from question No. 25 about physically abused children. The information about sexual abuse of children - especially girls doesn't surprise in homeless case. Psychotherapists argue that only a few of the victims is confessing to this. Two of respondents (2 %) in our survey found the courage to do so.

With question No. 37 we tried to infiltrate deeper into the inner life of respondents from time of first socialisation with their own eyes. 44 respondents had fit themselves into the category of very chummy children. Over half majority of respondents (number 61) had presented themselves in a position not very social nature. They were reclusive, shy, did not need anyone, respectively they tussled.

With penultimate two questions (questions No. 38 and 39) we focused on dependences of respondents – alcohol drinking and smoking. Over indulging these vices at a young age signal the lack of family incentives. Until age of 20 began with excessive drinking of alcohol 52 % of

respondents and with smoking in the same dimension 66 % of respondents.

The results of summary of that information to the hypothesis H1 obtained on the basis of responses to the questionnaire, we intercepted in the Table No. 1.

Table No. 1: Summarization of information to the hypothesis H1

Summarization of results	
Category	Score in %
Divorced, single (35-50 years)	76
Low education of parents	70
Low education of respondents	91
Inadequate family background in study	65
Influence of village size	86
Unhappy, mistreatment, neglected, in period of first socialisation often cried.	55
Alcoholic parent	18
Parent were intensive smoker	41
In the period of first socialisation more separate	60
Alcohol in age until 20 years	52
Smoking in age until 20 years	66
The overall average	62%

We suppose that obtained results presented in Table No. 1 allow us to state the hypothesis **H1 to be confirmed.**

Hypothesis H2

H2 The current state of homeless is related to their family environment where they grew during their childhood and adolescence.

55% of respondents in question No. 40 questionnaire openly confirmed that their childhood, it also means the family, housing conditions, impact of educators and any other factors involved in the formation of children and young people, had affected their current life with the fate of the homeless. **The hypothesis H2 we confirm.** Therefore we formally have confirmed the validity of the main idea of this contribution - **The impact of family on the risk of homelessness.**

Discussion

From the perspective of the needs of our survey we did not consider determinative important to consider the differentiation of the length of status of the homeless. From our experience, we know the fact that a person who spending all his time on the street, day and night, without workload very quickly wither, losing health and work habits, drastically

reducing the level of cultural and social relations, gradually fading already feeling of self-esteem and the will to reintegrate in society. It's a matter of weeks. Temporally milestone for himself resides period of one year. Then, as if time has stopped.

The survey showed the difficulty of obtaining relevant information from the homeless. Questions of questionnaire and their responses bring alternatives of education of children, stricken by painful absence of one or both parents. Significant phenomenon in the survey is contradictory of responses of respondents in the questionnaire. Despite the clarity of objective confirmation of our two hypotheses, homeless on average almost 70 % presented opinion, that their parents was cared well about family, with children spent their free time, and therefore respondents had with them a good relationship (questions No. 32-35). 69 respondents (77 %) lived as a child in the above-average furnished household. It is noteworthy also data of 40 respondents (36 %) of the presence of siblings as part of their own family circle in question No. 17, which is vastly different from 77 % in the negative response to a direct question No. 13 on their own siblings. These issues could be subject to further observation.

In question No. 9 we failed sufficiently to unite with respondents in

understanding of the sense of the question. Respondents had often reported both parents, even if the context of other responses was evident that did not to grow up with them. This was confirmed in the following three questions No. 10-12, which covered the part of the respondents, who in already mentioned question No. 9 reported that in childhood had not both parents. According to the results it was the case of 28 respondents, representing 26 % of the total respondents. But number of responses to individual of them is vastly different from the expected quantity: to question No. 10 answered 29 respondents, to question No. 11 - nineteen and 38 respondents answered to question No. 12.

We reckon that it was not just a difference in perception of sense of the questions. The absence of parents from first socialisation had painfully manifested on respondents to such an extent that when attempting to have an objective analysis, at differently worded questions relating to the same sphere, they had problem of distinguishing reality from illusion.

Proportion of homeless persons with low education together consists 91 %. The results in question No. 5 are confirming the information from professional literature that low education is one of the main causes of failure in the labor market and homelessness.

The attempt to find out information about male and female element in the character of respondents, especially in terms of degree of resistance to emergent situations, led us to subdivision of the sphere of a siblings to brothers and sisters in question No. 15. 57% of respondents had brothers and sisters and 19% of the responses accorded only to sisters. A woman has the ability to better manage the crisis by being more accessible to the solution rather find help from other people. Woman - sister is carefully about his siblings more than a brother. Man is mostly solitary. If the problems come which exceed his skills - it results until the status of homelessness, along with the loss of all habits. The presence of the boy in the process of bringing up enhances a child by the male element exactly as the presence of girls in there again enhances the feminine element. All statistics in sex ratios at the phenomenon of homelessness in Slovakia, Europe, and statistics in the U.S. and Japan, consistently indicate the percentage of men and women 85 % to 15 %, with a tolerance of ± 10 %.

In questions No. 18, 19, 20 we tried to obtain information on the size and amenities of dwellings in which respondents in their period of first socialisation growing up. Obtained information lead us to conclude that the

homeless had not grown up in conditions of extreme deprivation and under their heritage is signed other attributes.

The results also confirm the fact that the causes of homelessness are a whole spectrum of issues and family circumstances in the period of first socialisation are just part of some kind of causal spread. Life in homelessness is much more complex, and the only effort to explain the essence of all its variations would not avoid the element of simplification. A person is never just evil entity. Status of the individual in society is in fact largely influenced by economic and political situation. Even, in the minds of society considered, subjective factors can hardly unequivocally attribute to the individual. For example, two the most pertracted reasons for homelessness - divorce and unemployment - are only small-scale individual links in the global phenomena of family crisis and rising unemployment.

Thus, it is possible to see the roots of homelessness, especially the impact of family, education, level of education, health and mental illnesses. We are deeply concerned about the proportion of families as an expression of lack of adaptability to the increasing standard of living, which confronts the individual, and thus the family, with greater demands, such as high

hard work, demands higher qualifications. Especially in the current process of globalization is global urgency of continuing education lays on the shoulders of every person.

In people with low education who worked for several years at one job will appear inability to reflect the new requirements of the employer. In our survey, 90 % of respondents (number 81) in the answers presented low levels of education. Low level of education, as we also saw in our research, is very closely related to the lack of family circumstances or disadvantaged environment of children's educational institutions. Children coming from such an environment have very low or no ambition, because were not led to them in consequence to a lack of pattern in adults in surrounding them. Heritage of unprospective status can also be genetically predetermined low mental level, the influence of pathological family education and lack of positive life experiences.

Defects of this type rise up gaining more new forms. The dormitory *Mea Culpa* we repeatedly encounter with mentally handicapped clients or neurotic and antisocial who are impulsive, aggressive and maladjusted. Low level of

education, long-term unemployment and the resulting poverty - these are the characteristic features of most of the homeless. Category itself are the people who bear from the past the burden of execution. This makes it impossible them practically everything: accept employment, have a bank account, have a car and owning a home even less. Once the execution of it came from, and their fundamentally disincentive, and this essentially demotivate them. Several clients expressed a desire to receive from society a "general pardon" as a second chance after life errors that were not sufficiently prepared. Slovak legislation, however, does not recognize such an institution.

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