

Ewa Sowa-Behtane

Ignatianum Academy in Kraków

**Barbara Adamczyk, *Street children in Poland and in the world. Definition, typology, etiology*, Akademia Ignatianum/Wydawnictwo WAM, Kraków 2015, pp. 479**

Among the books on issues of social rehabilitation and social prevention, the monograph *Street children Poland and in the world. Definition, typology, etiology* by Barbara Adamczyk, a researcher of Ignatianum Academy in Kraków, has a special place and is therefore worthy of note. In the publication we find scientific considerations based on specific research. Every Reader can draw conclusions for social prevention addressed to children of the streets from the presented theory. For this reason, the book is valuable, and its purpose can be extremely broad, as the problem of street children is a global problem.

The phenomenon of street children is very complex, associated with morality, subcultures, destruction. Street children can be classified as those who have their own homes but spend most of their time in urban backyards, neighborhoods and even in shopping malls, clubs and discos where they fulfill their needs.

Street children are a group of young people looking for their own, often unsuccessful, ways of dealing with the world, with the problems of everyday life. The phenomenon of street children is associated not only with a pathological family environment (most common opinion), but also the expanding area of social marginalization resulting from job loss and unemployment of adults, life helplessness of the parents in the new economic conditions, poverty and misery. Moreover, this phenomenon should be combined with parents' lack of time, the pursuit of success and career, while leaving children to themselves, with the phenomenon of Euro-orphans. At the same time it is hard not to mention the role played by media in recent years, which promote a fashion for a ruthless, aggressive, strong hero type who copes with problems. Such personality patterns are often represented by street children.

The problem of street children is discussed in the book in the context of other countries, and it is visible that the differences here are small, that the risk of young people is everywhere, although its scale differs.

In the first chapter of the book the Author introduces us to the topic of street children by providing definitions and categories of street children. The definitions of specialists are cited here, such as: A. Kurzeja, W. Seelisch, W. Kolak or L. Pytko as well as definitions developed by different organizations, e.g. UNESCO or Ci-toyen des Rues. The Author also presents the most important typologies of street children according to W. Kołak, I. Pospiszyl, G. Olszewska-Baka and L. Pytko or T. Kołodziejczyk. The author notes that “it is not possible to adopt a universal typology, for instance due to the differing contexts of individual countries” (p. 42). An interesting touch is the presentation of filmed stories of street children.

Chapter two: *The structure and scale of the phenomenon of street children in the world and in Poland* introduces us to the statistics trying to determine the number of street children in the world. The Author presents the different methods used for counting street children, which highlights the difficulty in determining the exact extent of this phenomenon.

In chapter three, in analyzing the determinants of the phenomenon of street children, the Author divides them into direct factors (family), hidden factors (cultural expectations, lack of access to education and the charm of living in a big city), and structural factors (co-occurrence of migration, economic and political crisis, inequality in regions, climate change, HIV/AIDS pandemic, armed conflicts and trafficking in children). These factors are described in global terms; many examples from different countries in the world are cited, which makes this chapter extensive and extremely interesting.

In the fourth (methodological) chapter, the Author defines the purpose of her research: “the acquisition of knowledge on children and young people staying or living on the streets of Poland and the world in the area of definitions, typologies and etiologies. This multi-faceted exploration of this phenomenon is a necessity dictated primarily by fragmented research in Poland. As far as the global reach of this phenomenon goes, we want to learn the data available in many countries representing various continents. Assuming that the phenomenon of street children is a global problem, we are deliberately not narrowing our objective to obtain knowledge about street children of only one continent” (p. 135–136). The global approach to research is undoubtedly one of the main goals that make this book extremely valuable scientifically. The study included the inhabitants of all continents.

From the methodological chapter, we learn also that for the realization of the objective of scientific goals the method of diagnostic survey was used, a questionnaire technique and an original survey questionnaire was created, which was the primary source of information obtained directly from the examined street workers. The value of the scientific work is also affected by the general population of

respondents, which amounted to 250 people, of whom 96 were from Poland and 154 from abroad.

The fifth chapter presents ways of defining street children and their classification made by street workers. Here the division of children due to age is included. The Author also describes the function of the family overtaken by the street: care giving, material and economic, educational and socializing. The empirical chapter is rich in examples of answers of respondents, which the Author additionally analyzes by comparing with the theories of experts (e.g. T. Pilch, B. Ubran). Such a comparative analysis additionally increases the scientific value of the work.

In analyzing the research results, by giving examples of definitions, the Author divides them into those coming of respondents from different regions of the world, which makes the analyses even more interesting.

Barbara Adamczyk takes the following typology of street children: children in street situations (street children); children living on the street, children demoralized, working children, and the second typology, which originated from the responses of street workers from around the world: sick children, children-migrants, children-victims of armed conflicts and children accused of witchcraft.

Chapter six presents the etiological factors in the process of becoming a street child in the opinion of street workers. And here, analogous to the third chapter, the Author distinguishes: direct factors (family), hidden factors (exclusion from education, boredom of children and adolescents, the influence of different people, cultural expectations), and structural factors (socio-economic problems, labor migration, contemporary threats, such as HIV/AIDS pandemic, armed conflicts, natural disasters – cataclysms). The Author adds, “that with a deeper analysis carried out in different countries, even more structural factors can be obtained contributing to the formation and perpetuation of the phenomenon of street children” (p. 413).

At the end of the study cognitive conclusions were presented of the analysis of the definition of street children in the opinions of the examined street workers from Poland and from around the world, cognitive conclusions from the analysis of the typology of street children distinguished in the opinion of street workers from Poland and from around the world, cognitive conclusions from the analysis of causes of the formation of the phenomenon of street children in the opinion of street educators from Poland and from around the world, as well as indications for further research.

As a social rehabilitation educator and social prevention expert, I try to answer the basic question: if today, not only in Poland but throughout the world, social rehabilitation is practiced, then what needs to be done for it to attain its goals in respect of street children?

When reading the book by Barbara Adamczyk, we see all sorts of opinions, examples and comments, which can be successfully used in educational practice. The essence of the book lies in the fact that it can be useful both for students,

as it is a scientific reading on the phenomenon of street children, as well as for educators, sociologists, guardians, teachers, probation officers, catechists, street workers, social workers and parents, which is why they should read it and it should have a special place in their libraries.

The book raises a very important issue. A street child is a young person who spends a large part of its life on the streets. The lack of emotional ties at home, support and spending time together causes that they prefer to be in a group of peers on the street, where they feel at least partly needed. Children living on the street form subculture groups as well as criminal groups, they conduct begging, theft and prostitution. They often have contact with psychoactive substances. The book shows why such a situation takes place and how to help these children.

The presented research is valuable; the respondents were street workers or teachers familiar with the forms of assistance to street children. It is a very well structured reading, which brings us closer to the problem affecting an increasing number of children. It is an attempt at a comprehensive assessment of this phenomenon and organization of the existing knowledge about street children. The rich bibliography, interestingly presented information will certainly enable better awareness of how important this problem is in the modern world. I recommend this book.