Children in Street Situations, Their Determinants, Survival and Strategies. Case of the City of Bujumbura

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Abstract
        The aim of this article is to establish the link between the determinants of street life and the violence experienced by children and their survival in the city of Bujumbura. To gather the experiences of our interviewees, we used a life history with semi-structured interviews, and direct and indirect observation. To identify emerging themes, we carried out a thematic analysis of the interview content. Analysis of the empirical corpus of 43 street children reveals nine determinants at the root of the street child phenomenon, grouped into two categories, namely environmental and personal and interpersonal determinants centered on parent-child relationships. There are also determinants linked to educational styles that interact with the child's behavior. The stepmother is often perceived by children and their in-laws as a "ferocious animal'', even in the absence of a negative upbringing. When family life fails, the street becomes an alternative. Exposed to all forms of violence, child victims become violent, and the cycle of violence is fueled. Stories of life on the streets show that every child has his/ her problems. Previous results show that the determinants of street life are multifactorial and have causal links that are part of a cyclical context of violence. Our results go

further, proving that in addition to environmental determinants, there are also personal and interpersonal ones. Combating this phenomenon requires preventive action at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels: preventing the development of the problem, intervening early and, finally, treating the consequences and reintegrating the children.

Keywords: Street situations, determinants, survival, strategies

Introduction

The Convention on the Rights of the Child has influenced governments around the world to change laws and policy strategies to improve the well-being of children. Some groups, such as street children, still do not have the opportunity to fully enjoy their childhood, still suffer from exclusion, and are exposed to all forms of violence. The problems are present in many of the world's major cities, and are most prevalent in the densely populated urban centers of developing countries. It is a phenomenon that creates many problems faced by thousands of children around the world (UNICEF, 2007). These children live in insecurity and often lack access to basic rights such as food, shelter, health care, and others that every child needs to develop and thrive.

Around the world, street children are marginalized, live in inhumane conditions, and are deprived of their basic rights (Shimelis, 2015). With the gradual evolution of mentalities and representations of individuals, the perception of the phenomenon of a child in a street situation in the world, has experienced changes according to periods and spaces. According to the CERA (2011, p. 10), it was during the 1970s that the issue of "street children" began to emerge based on documentary films about street children screened in Latin America.

Starting in the 1990s, a systematic and in-depth analysis by region began, and in the designated developing countries, the perceived reality was more complex; street children were not predominantly abandoned children, let alone children without families, according to the same report. Towards the end of the 1990s, the negative perception of the children's situation gradually reversed, and some countries, such as France, considered that the responsibility for the formation of this phenomenon was shared by parents and other educational structures whose equilibrium was in crisis (Jesu, 2004, cited by CERA 2011).

In developing countries, seemingly unsupervised children can be observed in the urban environment, adding to the context of misery and poverty to which they are exposed (Pluck, 2022). To survive, these children resort to begging, stealing, and low-paid informal labor (Zena & Aneth, 2010). As a result, they face several challenges in their struggle for survival. The

biggest challenge these children face is the transaction of their perceptions by those around them, and dealing with the consequences this creates (Shimelis, 2015).

The number of street children in the world, although very difficult to quantify, is estimated by UNICEF to be 150 million, or one in five children, including 30 million African children living on the street (REFELA, 2018).

In Bangladesh, the number of street children is 1.5 million and this number could reach 1.6 million according to its projections by 2024 (Atkinson-Sheppard, 2018). In this country, street children live in extreme poverty and are unaware of their rights. They struggle for education, medical services, and remain isolated from the norms of society. This makes them highly vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation, and the situation of these children associated with AGR ignores their basic rights (Reza & Bromfield, 2019). The fatigue of trying to find money to support themselves causes these children to be the object of exploitation. Street children are often pressured and abused on the streets, never receive favorable conditions for health care, and struggle for basic needs including school education (Atkinson - Sheppard, 2018a).

In South Africa, Cappa & Jijon (2021) showed the immediate and long-term negative effects of violence on children's lives, including death: an estimated 13% of injury deaths in children under 15 years of age are due to abuse and neglect (Department of Social Development, 2019, as cited by Fambasayi & Katsidzira (2022).

In the Horn of Africa, Hassen (2019 a), has shown that the factors favoring the phenomenon of street children include: poverty, death and separation of parents, a lack of regular families, peer pressure, and lack of basic amenities.

In East Africa, as in Kenya, (Ndolo & al, 2020) show that street children are in urgent need of assistance with their basic needs and want to live in the same minimum living and educational conditions as other children in their community. In the same country, some authors have tried to show the forms of child abuse (Churchill, 2011, Vohito, 2017, cited by Kakuru, 2022). Child abuse goes hand in hand with poor cultural practices. It does not end there, as it is also embedded in a legal framework that legitimizes oppression (Tamale, 2020).

In Burundi, this phenomenon was observed during the socio-political crisis of 1993 and began in urban centers to spread to children from poor families in rural areas who reside on the outskirts of cities MUKENE & al., in MSNDPHG (2014). In his qualitative study, SEBEREGE cited by MSNDPHG (2010), identifies at the origin of the phenomenon, the socio-economic causes depriving children of the enjoyment of basic needs, the irresponsibility of parents, and the idleness of children.When visiting the

major cities of Burundi, including the city hall of Bujumbura, a simple glance at the public spaces allows one to realize the presence of these children. These children do not go to school and live outside the family home for most of the day, which deprives them of parental care and the necessary supervision from the first years of childhood. This situation, which has a direct impact on the physical and mental development of children, does not spare society as a whole.

In the absence of an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon, governments around the world often pass laws and take measures, but the results are often insufficient. In most cases, their actions do not take into account the variables and other determinants of the phenomenon of street children, whereas it is by addressing the real causes of the problem that appropriate and effective solutions can be formulated.

In the city of Bujumbura, the extent of this phenomenon, as it presents itself, deserves a qualitative analysis in the following paragraphs. Moreover, in the scientific literature, there are not enough psychosocial studies available on the question of children in street situations. In order to contribute to the reflection on the object of study, we resort, in this article, to an approach that privileges the understanding and explanation of the phenomenon. Our main question is the following: why do some children find themselves and remain in a street situation? This main question is followed by the following secondary questions: What are the reasons that drive children to break family ties and take to the streets? How do these children survive, and what are their relationships with others? This article proposes to shed light on all these questions by highlighting and establishing the link between the determinants of the street and the violence observed here and there in the various neighborhoods of the Bujumbura municipality, often attributed to these children. In concrete terms, the objective of this study is to collect qualitative data on the factors that promote the persistence of children in street situations in Burundi and the quality of their relationships with others. In the following paragraphs, we will present the theoretical framework, research objectives, the methodological approach, the surveyed population, the main results, the discussion, and the conclusion and recommendations.

Theoretical framework

This article was guided by the social ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) described by Heise & al, 2002): The model emphasizes two key concepts: (a) individuals are nested within a multi-level environment, and (b) these levels interact to produce outcomes (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The four-level framework of factors affecting the individual includes (1) the person; (2) the microsystem, which describes the immediate setting (e. g., family, home, peer groups) and interpersonal

relationships; (3) the exosystem, which includes institutions and social structures (e.g., work, neighborhood, social networks); and (4) the macro system (i.e., the cultural, historical, and political context, p. 277). This theory was chosen because it helps us to understand that multiple levels influence a child's development, rather than being limited to individual characteristics. This has enabled us to formulate courses of action that take into account the ecological situation of each child.

In its philosophy, this approach puts the child at the center of concerns and aims at improving his or her well-being. For this work, this approach is relevant because it will help us meet our objective of collecting qualitative data on the determinants that push these street children to grow, instead of stopping. We consider this phenomenon to be the result of a set of family and institutional dysfunctions in charge of supporting parents in the education of their children

Research objectives

This article aims to: Highlight the determinants at the root of the phenomenon of street children (i) ; identify the link between the strategies developed to survive on the street and the violence suffered (ii) ; and finally, propose recommendations to improve the situation of street children (iii).

1.   Methods
1.1.   The population

The problem of children living on the streets is alarmingly widespread, and their numbers are difficult to estimate. Marginalized, they prefer to live in places where they can escape the control of the police and public institutions in charge of the census for basic social services. This phenomenon is worsening in the city of Bujumbura.

In Burundi, this subject is little explored, and the MNSDPHG report (2010) estimates 200 children in 1993, that of (2014) gives 5000 children, and 7000 children for the MNSDPHG (2022). Terre des Hommes (2021), speaks of 768 children, 700 of whom are male, and 68 female children in Ngozi province alone.

Thus, a "child in a street situation" is understood to be any human being under the age of 18 who lives temporarily or permanently on the street. "Street children in Bujumbura, as elsewhere, are mainly of two types. Those who live on the streets, as they call themselves, "ababa hanze" (in the indigenous language), as well as those who alternate between the street, the family, and/or the institution. In our research framework, we were interested in the two categories of children living in open (public spaces) and closed (institutions) environments.

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1.2.   Sampling

Based on the target population mentioned above, it was necessary to define a sample. To do this, we used the purposive sampling method (Thiétart & al, 1999) and snowball sampling. This method is based on judgment, and is therefore different from probabilistic methods, whose main objective is to eliminate all subjectivity. It appears that for small samples, the reasoned choice method performs as well as a probabilistic method. The use of judgment in the item selection procedure is a source of bias, but in a small random sample, the variability is very high and causes equally high bias (Kalton, 1983).

The non-probability sampling technique of snowball sampling in open environments and purposive sampling in closed environments was used to select participants for the Bujumbura City Hall study.

Participants in this study met the following criteria:

Leaving their families and moving to the street (i); having been working and/or living on the street for more than one month (ii); having been arrested and/or escaped police arrest (iii); living or having lived on the street and/or in a transit center (CERES and others), before their family reintegration (iv) ; demonstrating a willingness to participate in the study, and be willing to tell us about the factors that led them to leave their homes, move to the street, and return to the street, despite the massive removal of all children from the street that the government of Burundi has been implementing for some time to reintegrate them (v).

A total of 43 respondents from three sites, including 38 males and 5 females between the ages of 7 and 17, were selected as our study sample, and in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted. The duration of their stay on the street ranged from 1 month to 7 years. These children had different backgrounds, and 22 children, or 51% of the children interviewed, came mainly from different urban areas of the city of Bujumbura, while 21 children, or 49% of the children interviewed, came from rural areas in the interior provinces.

At each site, we began with our presentation and the objectives of our research, and asked them if we could talk to them, which they readily accepted. As these children are not accompanied by their parents or guardians, the interviewers first spoke to their supervisors and/or a child chosen by his or her peers to represent them in the interview prior to their survey. After explaining the objectives of the survey, these children gave their verbal consent.

Since these children are very mobile, and do not have telephones to communicate, they showed us the most frequented places that are considered their meeting places.

1.3.   Data collection

The data for this article were collected from street children who were interviewed at three sites located in open (public space) and closed (institutional) environments. These sites are, respectively, the Buyenzi neighborhood, the Rohero neighborhood, and the Rehabilitation Center for Sunshine Children (RCFSC). In order to conduct interviews with the first group of street children we met in the Buyenzi area, we contacted a young volunteer facilitator from the NGO Play International who supervises the children during some of the recreational activities conducted on the basketball court, and he helped us identify and invite them.

Our goal was to establish contact with these street children and ask them to participate in our survey later. During this session, we had the opportunity to interview nine children, all male, with the help of the Play International volunteer facilitator, and this interview took place on the ground at 25 Avenue Buyenzi. This is a place where street children often gather before and after their daily activities. The second group of children was met in downtown Bujumbura, near the MUTEC microfinance. There were six children in total, including five girls and one boy.

The third group of 27 children, all males, was located at the Rehabilitation Center for Sunshine Children (RCFSC). To collect data at this center, we mobilized two students who had received their Bachelor's degree in Psychology from the University of Burundi. These students were also interns at the center, and this activity took place under the supervision of the contact author. Before the actual interview, a mini-training of these interviewers was carried out, in order to familiarize themselves with the object of study, and to go back to the main principles of research in favor of children, which are: Trust, participation, and rephrasing of questions to enlighten the respondents.

Two days after our contact, we went back to Buyenzi, to the place agreed for the first interview, and we found only four children there. One of them left to call the others, and he was able to gather 5 street children, for a total of 9 children for the first group, and the interview took place at 25th Avenue in the CLAC premises. The second interview took place downtown with 6 respondents, including 5 girls and 1 boy aged 7, who met in front of the MUTEC microfinance.

Our third interview was conducted at the Rehabilitation Center for Sunshine Children (RCFSC) and was conducted in pairs. It targeted 28 children in street situations who had already gone through several stages between family, street and institutions. Our survey took place between September and December 2021, and the children who agreed to participate in these interviews numbered 43, including 5 girls and 38 boys. Our interviews lasted between 45 minutes and one hour.

1.4.   Instruments

In order to better understand the determinants of children's departure from their families to the street and their permanent residence on the street, we used the life story as a data collection technique.

1.4.1. Life story

The life narrative is a research tool that dates back to the nineteenth century. According to Delory-Momberger, (2005), it stems from the Bildung current born in Germany, which aims at, the global development of the person by taking into account the interaction with his environment. For Bertaux (1997), "there is a life story when a subject tells another person, researcher or not, any episode of his life experience". This was not a simple interview, but rather "a particular form of interview, the narrative interview, in which a researcher (...), asks a person, hereafter called "subject," to tell him or her all or part of his or her lived experience" (Bertaux b, 1997).

A life story includes three orders of reality: historical and empirical reality (which describes the succession of objective situations and the way in which the subject experienced them), psychic reality (which shows the meaning given to the situation experienced and the impact on behavior), and semantic or discursive reality, which corresponds to what the subject wants to say, knows and thinks about his or her experience (Bertaux b, 1997).

1.4.2. Conduct of the life story

The instruction consists of inviting the narrator to tell the story of the entire chronological history of his or her life or of a part of it, depending on the objective pursued by the interviewer. Based on this instruction, we asked the street children to tell their life story using the following sentence: "Can you tell us about your life as a street child? Lévesque (2003, p. 84), the life story consists of "describing how we became what we are".

### 1.4.3. Implications of the life story

According to Bouquet (2015), the life story approach thus generates three characterized effects: "cathartic, transformative and healing". The cathartic effect is the product of the emotional discharge with which the person frees himself from the persistence of affective states linked to particular memories. The transformative effect is given by the change that the life story provokes, that is, a greater self-awareness and a redefinition of one's image. The curative effect has a "creative" and liberating aspect, because it leads the person to look at himself in a new way and to reconstitute himself. In short, the life story, beyond its role as a singular testimony, can also become an act of social therapy.

1.5.   The analyses

In order to highlight the themes that emerge from the activities of the street children, thematic analyses of the interview transcripts were carried out. The objective was to answer the question posed by (Paillé & Muchielli 2012, cited in Goblet & Glowacz, 2021): What is fundamental to their talk? What does the discourse of children in street situations tell us about their reality, their lives, and their experiences? The identification of themes broken down into sub-themes, and the highlighting of points of agreement, contradiction, agreement and disagreement allowed us to access a delicate reflection on the phenomenon studied.

2.   Results

The analysis of the different life stories reveals nine determinants at the origin of the street children phenomenon, grouped in two categories: environmental determinants (poverty, single parenthood, divorce or separation of parents, parentification, orphans of both parents, incarceration) and personal and interpersonal determinants centered on parent-child relationships (stepmother abuse, parenthood, running away), as presented in figures 1, 2 and 3.

Figure 1: Percentage frequency of visible environmental determinants
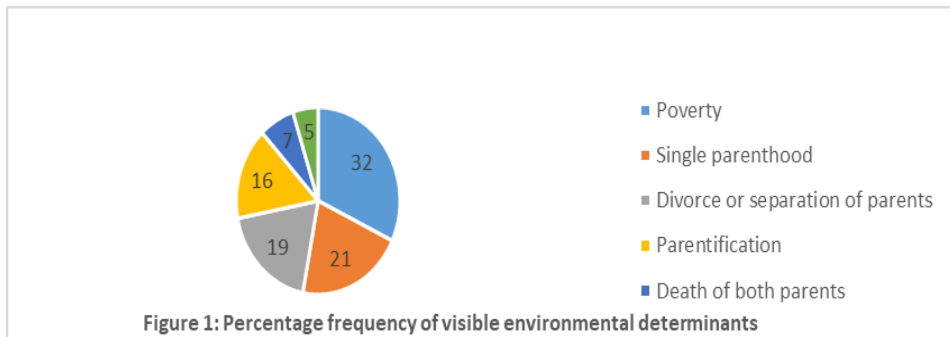
According to the results contained in Figure 1, the determinants that push street children to leave their families, and survive on the street appear in order of importance according to our interviewees as : follows: poverty, single parenthood, divorce or separation of parents, parentification, orphan status and finally incarceration of a parent.

Figure 2:Percentage frequency of personal and interpersonal determinants
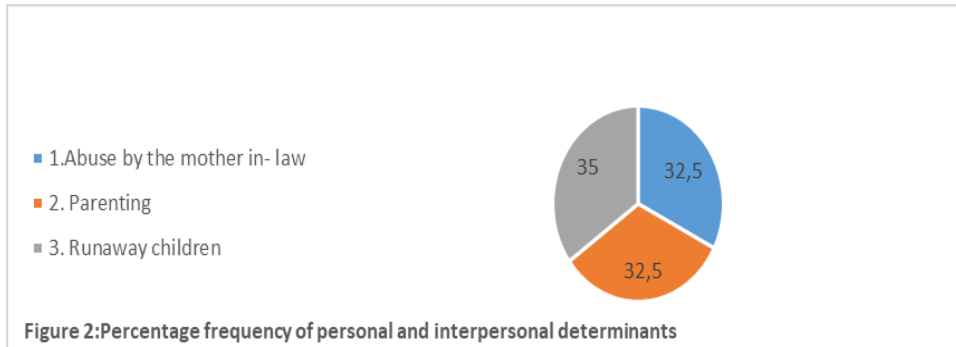
In addition to the environmental determinants mentioned in the previous paragraphs, there are also determinants linked to personal and interpersonal relationships, which interact with the child's behavior, as shown in Figure 2. These are: runaway children, parenting and mother-in-law's abuse, as shown in figures 1 and 2. Many of these characteristics are indicative of a particularly problematic social and family environment for the safety and development of children.

In the following paragraph and according to the data summarized in figure 3, we will discover that the number of children in street situations varies according to their gender.

Figure 3: Distribution of our respondents by sex
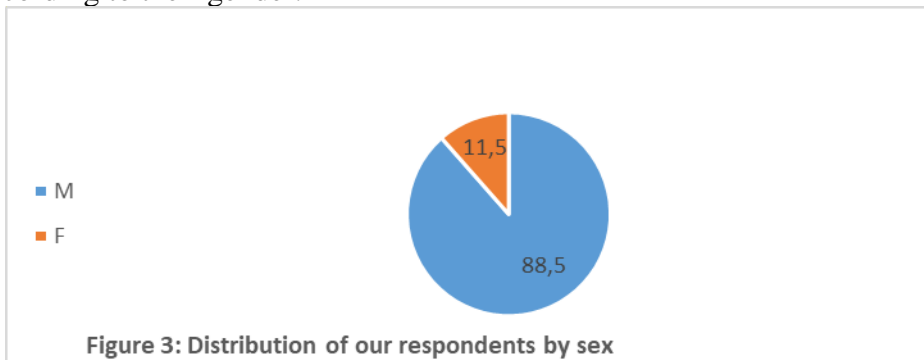
According to the results of our research, male children are more visible on the street than girls, and the children interviewed were 88.5% male and 11.5% female. Survival strategies also differed according to the sex of the child. Once on the street, children develop survival strategies to cope with the poor living conditions. Depending on the circumstances, the use of violence is not excluded to intimidate passers-by before the robbery, to defend themselves against external aggression such as control by the police, or in interaction with other street children older than them.

3.0.   Discussion

Throughout this section, the elements developed fall into two categories: visible environmental determinants and personal and interpersonal determinants.

3.1.   Visible Environmental Determinants

According to the results expressed in figure 1, it can be seen that almost a third of the children in street situations, or 32%, are reduced to them by the lack of access to basic needs due to poverty. This situation would be related not only to the low income of the families of these children, but also to the prolonged unemployment of the heads of families, the majority of whom worked in the informal sector, disrupted since 2015 by the suspension of bilateral cooperation by some technical and financial partners. In addition to hindering the proper development of the child, this lack of resources has the effect of altering parental authority, pushing some immature children to seek their autonomy in the street, and to permanently break the link with their family of origin. Previous studies have reached sometimes convergent and sometimes divergent conclusions. Authors such as Hassen (2019 b), Tshikala (2000), and Dimbu (2012), have identified almost the same determinants. Parazelli (1987), before them, speaks of the "poverty regime" imposed on young people as an element of departure to the street. However, on this determinant, the results are controversial, and the consensus level on this topic is difficult to reach. For Pirot (2004), the economic factor alone is by no means sufficient to explain the phenomenon of street children. Margaret (1999) amplifies: "If poverty alone were enough to sever the ties between a child and his or her family, there would be hundreds of thousands of them on the street, which is not the case anywhere. This factual situation shows us that poverty alone cannot explain the phenomenon studied. It is therefore necessary to combine other determinants to publish a model closer to reality.

The next factor is single parenthood, which is present in 21% of our respondents. Generally, this situation arises in the event of the death or marital separation of one of the spouses. Very often, when couples separate, the precariousness of parental relations and the situation of the parent who keeps the child may improve, but in Bujumbura City Hall, we observe an increasing proportion of single mothers with no income, and most of the children interviewed are victims of this. Among intellectuals, it has been shown that the more educated and gainfully employed women are, the less separation affects them economically (Martin, 1994, cited by Deshayes 2018). Nonetheless, this finding must be qualified, as not all educated parents parent properly, and the notion of poverty does not automatically lead to negative parenting. In working-class environments, the dissolution of the marital bond exposes mothers and their children to precariousness, and the situation is more

complicated for women who are unemployed or working part-time at the time of the breakup (Neyrand & Rossi, 2007).

As we found in our study, almost all the children interviewed come from working-class families, categories for which access to work and economic resources is particularly problematic. In the 1970s, most studies on fathers focused on the negative consequences of their absence, rather than the direct benefits of their presence. Biller (1970) had already demonstrated that children neglected by their fathers were more likely to become delinquent later in life, and to experience psychological problems. Very interesting links have been found between the quality of play with the father and the child's development. In particular, Mac Donald & Parke (1984) found that children who engaged in more physical and stimulating play with their fathers expressed their affect more positively in interaction with others and were more popular with their peers.

This study also found that fathers help their children explore their environment while respecting the boundaries set by their parents, although in practice, boundary violations are common. Unfortunately, when single parenting results from separation, men are often responsible, because some men want to support multiple wives, while socio-economic conditions do not allow them to provide for them, as they did in the past (Locoh, 1991).

In addition, divorce or separation of the parents occurs, with a percentage expressed in 19% of our interviewees. Previous studies have shown that the psychological and social consequences of family instability on children have generally been evaluated in negative terms, with particular emphasis on divorce (Martin, 1997). Long before, this idea was supported by criminologists and psychiatrists in an attempt to establish a cause, between family instability and delinquency (Heuyer, 1952, as cited by Lefaucheur, 2016). Although it is difficult to establish a cause-and-effect relationship in the short and long term, divorce or separation is an unfortunate event for children.

The other determinant mentioned by our respondents is parentification with a percentage of 16% of all our respondents. Defined as the attitude of a child who acts like an adult in response to his or her parents' requests, this role-reversal situation often takes two forms. Emotional parentification, which is concerned with the emotional well-being of parents or siblings in the interest of family peace, and instrumental parentification, which is concerned with household chores or managing the financial aspects of the family (Hooper, 2007). The majority of our respondents in Bujumbura city and peri-urban areas fall into this second category, as they report coming to the streets to beg for money to take to their parents and/or guardians for food and other basic needs. Other researchers have looked at child identification and have shown that its

effects are both positive (Minuchin, 1980; Boszormenyi & Spark, 1973) and negative (Valleau & al, 1995).

Although some authors approach parentification from a negative angle, it is not necessarily pathological, except in the case of excessive demands on the child, thus exceeding his or her physical and mental energy capital to meet them. The results of these authors above converge completely with our own. In addition to these socio-economic determinants, there are inter-relational determinants and those related to the child, which we develop in the following paragraph.

The next most important determinant is the death of both parents. The results of our research show that children living on the streets of Bujumbura who have lost both parents represent 4% of our sample. However, in traditional Burundi, orphaned children did not exist. In the past, when a husband died, society required that the widow be taken in by the younger or older brother of the deceased, who was still single, in exchange for protection. These cultural practices are still observed in some parts of the country.

The last determinant mentioned by our respondents in this first category is parental incarceration, which accounts for 5%. Authors such as Lafortune & al. (2004), who have carried out studies on children separated from their parents due to incarceration, have shown that this impact varies according to the family's socio-economic status, the extent of pre-existing conflicts, and the child's gender and age. According to some authors, the child of a prisoner is five to six times more likely to be incarcerated than a child whose parents are not in prison (King, 2005, cited by WoodWard, 2003, in Granzotti, 2007).

When incarceration occurs before the age of 2, the emotional bond is severed; at age 10, the child suffers from anxiety disorders and acute traumatic stress; and at age 14, the child begins to break social rules and boundaries, eventually sliding into juvenile delinquency and criminality (King, 2005). We know that children who have difficult experiences are more likely to experience problems, including developmental problems (Horan & Widom, 2015). If these children are identified when their parents are involved in the criminal justice system, it will be easier to help them (Turney, 2017), as cited by Sullivan (2019). In order to help them, three elements must be connected, namely the developmental process, life events, and their short- and long-term impact on the child's life.

3.2.0. Personal and interpersonal determinants

The content of this section develops the mother-in-law-child relationship and the interaction between parenting style and children with externalized behavior.

3.2.1. Stepmother abuse and reciprocal educational actions.

The abuse of the mother-in-law is cited by our respondents as a determining factor and represents 35% of the cases. In Burundian tradition, family reunification was observed in the event of the death of one of the spouses, in order to educate the children, and involved the remarriage of a widow or widower. Nowadays, the children of blended families come from separated parents. As several of the children interviewed told us, it is on the basis of minor disputes between children from the first union that the stepmother is cited as the main reason why some children end up on the street. Faced with all these situations, the child gradually loses his positive resources, and the situation becomes even more complicated when his father has one or more concubines.

3.2.2. Parenthood of children with externalized behavioral disorders

The results of our study show us that the children interviewed show signs of opposition, aggression and running away, which are manifestations of problematic behaviors of an externalized type. Thus, empirical work has shown that a child's temperament and behavior influence the parenting style that caregivers should adopt. Some authors (Meunier &al, 2011a., Rueter & Conger, 1998., Shaw & al., 2000) demonstrate that when parents fail to manage these behaviors well, the influence of the children takes over parenting. However, other authors, such as Larsson & al. (2008), have shown that the influence of children's behavior depends on their age and degree of maturity, since the more active their family role, the more they influence their parents' educational style.

Nevertheless, the degree of maturity is not always observed, as some children may show oppositional and runaway behaviors at a very early age, and this is due to less disagreement with their parents, as evidenced by this child.

> "When I was 7 years old, when my parents punished me, I would get very angry because I perceived it as an injustice towards me. I would immediately run away to the city of Gitega, and I would return a few days later. When I met a family member or a neighbor, I would ask him to tell my parents that I would not be coming back. Little by little, I got used to sleeping with the other street children''

We understand that this child suffers from behavioral disorders with signs of opposition and aggression towards his punitive parents, which led him to leave the family roof and move to the street, as evidenced by the following testimony:

"I was arrested when I had just spent two months in Bujumbura in search of survival. I was living with others in an unused "container" in Kamenge. If I manage to be released, I will immediately return to the streets of Gitega, because at least there is security. No one is hunting us! Except that we are kept off the main road when the President of the Republic passes through the city of Gitega. We managed to collect very little, but we slept in safety".

Through the testimony of this child, we understand that his behavior led him to gradually move away from the family home until the definitive rupture of the social link. Tired, his parents resigned from their educational mission, and this child became a financial partner of his parents to participate in the economic life of his family, as this testimony shows us:

"Back home, I had to bring a sum of money to give to my father".

When asked if his father supported him, he answered:

"At first, my father often punished me, but when I started to bring him money, he changed his attitude and did not punish me anymore".

This parent-child relationship turned into a partnership based on the exchange of money, and the father gradually lost his parental authority. This is confirmed by our respondent:

"When I wanted to go back to the street and I didn't have pocket money to eat, my father would advance me a bill of 500 or 1000 Fbu to pay back''.

Other authors have shown that the origins of externalized behavioral problems lie in constitutional, epigenetic, and environmental factors and influence each other (Roskam & al, 2007). Finally, for Moffit (1993) and Odgers & al. (2008), the combination of externalized behavioral difficulties and parental difficulties leads to school failure and keeps the child on multiple trajectories of deviance, and may evolve into antisocial behavior in adulthood.

Studies of child abuse have shown that the most prevalent negative parenting practices are lack of concern for children's futures (neglect), lack of protection, lack of care, health neglect, and poor nutrition. Positive parenting practices included providing care (including adequate nutrition), investing in their children's future, participating in productive enterprise, and protecting children (Boothby & al, 2017) as cited in Amollo & al. (2022).

3.3. Invisible environmental determinants

This section shows how culture and gender influence the development of survival strategies in the children studied.

3.3.1. Gender

From the results in Figure 3, we see that boys are predominantly represented in our sample, with a percentage of (88.5%) versus (11.5%) of girls. This numerical superiority of male street children is not specific to the city of Bujumbura. This is the same finding observed in studies conducted around the world, including in Douala and throughout the Central African sub-region (Pirot, 2004, Gentille, 2005, and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, cited by Dimbu, 2012 b, Yunjiao & Sally, 2018). The low number of female children on the street may be explained by cultural elements that take into account the gender of the child. According to Ndimurukundo (1977), already at the age of 4, the sexual differentiation of tasks truly begins, limiting girls to the pen and, its surroundings only, and educating the young boy to train for heavy work and other activities that usually take place outside.

This same reality is present in other African countries. Indeed, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the girl is protected and kept within the family for procreation, and domestic work (Baubet, 2003, cited by Bukaka, 2013). While the number of girls encountered in street situations is small compared to boys, this does not mean that Burundian girls are not affected by this phenomenon; rather, it is the survival strategies that vary depending on the basic education imparted according to the gender of the child.

3.4. Perception of street children

In this section, we'll see that from the moment they arrive on the street, the children in our study are perceived as both victims and perpetrators of violence, which often manifests itself during their survival strategies.

3.4.1. Street children: a victim to be assisted

As Lucchini (1998, p. 358) points out, the street child ''is presented as the victim of an exclusively violent environment." However, we share the same point of view as Kahora (2008), because this perception seems to us to be reductive in the sense that the social exclusion experienced by the street child seems to us to be explained above all by violent, asocial and even deviant behavior.

Let us listen to the testimony of this child:

" In Bwiza, there's a mother who owns a restaurant and understands that we live in difficult conditions. In addition to leftover food, she collects food that hasn't found a customer, and we come by every evening to eat it''.

3.4.2. Violence and survival

From the moment they arrive on the street, children who leave their families as victims of domestic and institutional violence are immersed in another form of violence. Because of their poor living conditions, these children train and undergo initiations to protect themselves from the suffering of the street, alternating between violence suffered and violence committed. Thus, in the street, their lives oscillate between aggressors and aggressed, raped and rapists, victims and executioners, and society helplessly witnesses the conditions in which these children are immersed.

The relationship between street children and the community is one of symmetrical violence. While society loses interest in street children, they try to protect their interests in the public space, which is supposed to be their private property. When society stigmatizes them as witches, demons, and thieves, (Kahola, 2008), these street children react to this negative perception with violence, and untimely aggression against members of society who have become enemies of their freedoms for them.

In addition, relations between street children and passersby are often tense, as both parties feel insecure at all times. In all circumstances, street children remain vigilant and are ready to receive blows and wounds to try to survive, while the passer-by who crosses the path of these children must cling to his or her belongings to avoid being robbed. This shows us that street children, on the one hand, and family members and passersby, on the other, have developed contempt for each other. The right to life of the human person is no longer respected, as this testimony shows us.

> "One day, a 12-year-old street child passed by a woman who was grilling corn to sell on 3rd Avenue in the Bwiza neighborhood. This child forcibly picked up an ear of grilled corn, and just as he was about to start eating it, the woman jumped on him and slapped him. Threatened, the child immediately pulled out a knife hidden in his clothes and stabbed her. The people who witnessed this scene quickly intervened and almost lynched the child. Fortunately, a few minutes later, the police arrived and immediately took him to the dungeon to protect him''.

This case, among many others, illustrates the reciprocal violence between street children and the rest of society in their daily interactions. On the side of the street children, this violence is interpreted as a reaction to social indifference to the daily suffering they endure.

3.5. Gender-based violence

While all children in street situations may be victims of violence, some forms of violence are selective and target girls in street situations much more

than boys. Indeed, girls are victims of rape and are more exposed to sexual exploitation by adults. When this sexual exploitation is ongoing, these children enter prostitution at an early age and, unfortunately, work for adults. These children receive only a small amount of money to survive. In addition to rape, these children can also be victims of violence, as this child shows.

> " ... At about 3 o'clock in the morning, a man came to the place where I was sleeping, near a bistro. He wanted to rape me, and my friends who were on the other side of me screamed for help to wake me up. As I was getting ready to run, he held me down, but I resisted. When he realized that he could not rape me in the presence of the customers of this bistro, he hit me with a drainpipe that he had in his hands, and my left arm is broken".

In addition, girls living on the streets are often victims of various sexually transmitted diseases and urinary infections. And for good reason, the hygiene conditions in the street are very precarious, as this child testifies:

> "… We wash ourselves in the waters of Lake Tanganyika, and this is done only very rarely. When you are sick, you accept suffering, and in the meantime, the disease gets worse. There are children in the street who die because they don't have the money to be treated. As an alternative, they accept to prostitute themselves to find food.

Similar studies have shown that violence also remains strongly gendered, with girls experiencing the effects of violence more than boys (Yarnell & al., 2014). Additionally, these same authors have suggested that girls are more likely to drop out of school than boys and marry early, at the age they enter high school, as reported by Amollo et al. (2022). When these children have no one to help them, they rely on God's will, as this street girl testifies:

> "It is really God who keeps children in street situations," she concludes.

In the face of daily violence, a child's behavior cannot be reduced to a state or a series of states, to define the trajectory of a ready-made behavior. Rather, it is a complex and variable concept that depends on many interacting factors.

Despite the precarious conditions in which these children live, Burundi has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international instruments. In addition, it has a comprehensive child protection framework, as we will see in the following section.

3.6.   Child Protection Framework in Burundi.

In order to implement the CRC, the government that emerged from the 2005 elections initiated a series of successive measures in favor of children. A 2005 government measure on free elementary school education; the 2006 presidential decree on free birth registration for all children aged 0 to 5 years; free health care for children aged 0 to 5 years, which has also been administered since 2005; a national policy in favor of orphans and other vulnerable children adopted by the government in September 2008; and finally, the 2009 revision of the penal code, which raises the age of criminal responsibility from 13 to 15 years. In addition, as part of the implementation of child rights treaties, the government has established an inter-ministerial committee to draft and respond to the committee's recommendations in periodic reports.

Despite these achievements, challenges related to the lack of accompanying texts for effective implementation of these laws and policies still persist.

3.7.   Limitations of the research

Our study has limitations related to geographic coverage because it was conducted in a few areas of Bujumbura City Hall. In addition, the size of our sample was not representative of the generalization of our study. Finally, there was a risk of misinterpreting the age of these children, as they did not have identity cards to verify their age.

Conclusion

The results show that the determinants of the street are multifactorial, causally related, and part of a cyclical context of violence. Our results go beyond previous findings and show that environmental determinants are complemented by personal and interpersonal determinants. Children with externalized behavioral problems encounter rigid parenting and a society that marginalizes them. The stories prior to street life show that each child has his or her own problems.

Once on the street, their survival strategies oscillate between violence suffered as a victim and violence inflicted as a perpetrator. The stories that precede street life show that each child has his or her own problems, and this singularity should guide future interventions on their behalf. Despite the identification of these determinants useful to future researchers, the issue of reintegration remains in our country.

Recommendations

To combat the phenomenon of street children, our recommendations focus on preventive action at three levels: primary, secondary and tertiary.

- **Primary prevention**

Before these children find themselves in the vulnerable situation that leads them to the streets, we recommend : guarantee universal access to quality education (i), develop pre-school education programs (ii), ensure support for vulnerable families and strengthen their parenting skills (iii), make health services accessible to children and their families (iv), strengthen the system for protecting children's rights through awareness-raising actions at all levels (v), set up community support networks for families in difficulty (vi), establish partnerships between governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and businesses, to coordinate prevention efforts (vii), evaluate prevention actions and adapt strategies according to needs expressed over time (viii).

- **Secondary prevention**

When children begin to find themselves in precarious situations, we recommend : Promptly identify and support children at risk of turning to the street (i), set up emergency shelters to house children temporarily (ii), provide interventions for families in difficulty and offer support tailored to their specific needs (iii), raise awareness among families and communities of the risks and alternatives of the street (iv), set up psychosocial and mental health support services for children and families in difficulty (vi), offer formal school reintegration programs (for young children) and vocational training for young people (vii), create job opportunities for trained young people (viii), reinforce parents' skills (ix), initiate a framework for coordination and follow-up of complex cases by the team of multidisciplinary professionals, ensure ongoing monitoring of children and families to assess the effectiveness of the measures put in place (x).

- **Tertiary prevention**

To minimize the negative repercussions and thus rehabilitate children already on the street. We recommend : Reintegrate street children educationally, socially and professionally (i), involve children and their families throughout the rehabilitation process (ii), provide formal and non-formal education to fill educational gaps (iii), strengthen children's vocational skills (iv), create employment opportunities or entrepreneurship programs (v), provide care for children scattered in various locations through mobile clinics (vi), provide psychosocial support for children by professionals and by peers for the exchange of experience (vii), offer temporary housing and prepare for reintegration into stable families (viii), strengthen children's life skills (ix), stimulate children to participate in sports and cultural clubs (x), encourage community initiatives to reduce the stigmatization of children (xi), provide ongoing monitoring of reintegrated children to prevent their relapse (xii), regular training for staff who work with these children on a daily basis (xiii).
Conflict of Interest: There is no conflict of interest reported by the authors of this article.

Data Availability: All the data are included in the content of the paper.

Funding Statement: None to be declared.

Declaration for Human Participants:

This research complied with ethical principles concerning studies involving human subjects. Before starting, we requested authorization from the University of Burundi Research and Innovation Department. This institution issued us with a research certificate and closely monitored the entire process, right up to the validation of its conclusions.

This study has been approved by the University of Burundi's Research and Innovation Department and the principles of the Helsinki Declaration were followed.

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