

STREET KIDS IN THE CHRISTIAN WORLD: A CASE OF MUTARE URBAN –ZIMBABWE

Mr. Offard Kanjanda (Lecturer, Zimbabwe Open University)

Masters in Counselling (Zimbabwe Open University)

Bachelor of Science in Counselling (Zimbabwe Open University)

Certificate in Education (University of Zimbabwe)

Certificate in HIV and AIDS Counselling (RATN)

***Ms. Getrude Vongai Chiparange, (Lecturer, Zimbabwe Open
University)***

Masters in Educational Foundation (Psychology) (University of Zimbabwe)

Bachelor of Education (Primary) Degree (Great Zimbabwe University)

Certificate in Education (University of Zimbabwe)

Abstract

A research was conducted in the City of Mutare to establish the plight of the street kids in an environment where Christianity is influencing every member of the community. The researchers were motivated to carry out this research because of the increase of street kids in both urban and rural settings of Zimbabwe. Street kids have developed a substructure society with its own values and norms which now seem to challenge the functional flavour of the traditional religion and culture in modern society. One would then wonder the kind of society that is emerging if nothing is done to restore harmony within the family institutions. The major objectives of the study were to encourage homeostatic balance within the family circles in order to create safe environments for the children. The research also aimed at encouraging Christians to create platforms for dialogue with the street kids so that they feel the warmth and acceptance by the society. The researchers employed the qualitative paradigm and adopted the case study as the design in order to gain in-depth study into the phenomena. The design also enabled the researchers to interact with the participants to understand how the street kids constructed their culture and behaviours to maintain and sustain their life. A sample size of 50 participants was selected using the stratified, purposive and convenience sampling techniques. The data were collected using the questionnaire with open-ended questions, direct observation and semi-structured interviews. Ethical and legal issues were considered before, during and after collecting the data. The collected data were analysed descriptively. Theoretical frameworks such as the systemic, constructivism and

functionalism were used in this research. The research revealed that harsh conditions such as loss of parents, abuse, neglect and poverty within the family institutions forced children to live in the streets. It also revealed that street kids abused drugs in order to activate their ego to gain courage for self-defense. The research recommended that organisations that deal with street children should focus their programmes on family tracing and reunification since street children need care and proper upbringing in their natural family settings.

Keywords: Street kids, phenomena, subculture, sustain, reunification, Christianity, Self-defense

1. Background to the study

In a world where every community is characterised by Christianity, the nation expects human nature to balance in terms of its life-style. It is, however, regrettable that the global village is experiencing a lot of imbalances as a result of the fast growing inconsideration of the weaker societies. Coupled with gender disparities, poverty and cultural deprivation ideologies, life of the marginalized communities, the street kids, in particular, are going unnoticed (UNICEF, 2011). The street children phenomenon, which is a variant of homelessness, is a development that has come to characterise the urban spaces in the developing world and it represents a sad outcome of the rapid urbanization process. No country or city anywhere in the world today is without the presence of street children, but the problem is most acute in developing countries (Cockburn, 1991:195; Kopota, 2000: 167). According to Thako (1998: 253), street children (kids as they are named) are those children who are under 18 years of age and who live and earn their living on the street or who work on the street fulltime. Some of these are children of the street who work on part time and return to their family units each night (Thako, 1998:217; Kopota, 2000:159). UNICEF differentiates street children as those children who ran away from their families and live alone on the streets, from street working children who spend most of their time on the streets, working for themselves, but returning home on a regular basis (UNICEF, 2005). In this research the terms *street children* and *street kids* are used interchangeably to refer to children who live permanently on the streets of the city with no family care and protection. It is difficult to get accurate figures on the total number of street children globally. Estimates of street child populations are often hotly disputed, even at city level, thereby distracting from rather than informing public policy (Consortium for Street Children, 2010, 4: 69). According to research findings by UNICEF, global estimates of children in the streets range from tens of millions to over 100 million (UNICEF, 2005; UNICEF, 2010;

UNICEF, 2011); while Cockburn (1991:) puts the figure at over 400 million children living on the streets of cities across the globe, (<http://www.internationalstreetkids.com/statistics.ph>). In Zimbabwe, the population of street kids began to rise from 2005 as a result of the economic crisis and poverty (UNICEF, 2011). No matter what the exact figure could really be, it is indisputable that there is a huge global street child problem that needs to be urgently addressed. With the global community which seems to be greatly influenced by the Christian attitude, the life of the homeless (street kids) needs urgent attention as we may soon realise development of a new society/ community occupying the urban spaces.

Key factors that push children onto the streets include marital problems or instability in the home, poverty, hunger, insecurity, abuse, displacement due to conflict, torture, rape, neglect, death of one or both parents, inadequate family income, unemployment of one or both parents, lack of or limited opportunities in education, abandonment by parents, housing difficulties, being orphaned especially by HIV/AIDS, drug use by children and peer influence (Munoz, 2004:214; 2010:310; Mpfu, 2011:153; UNICEF, 2011). According to Mpfu (2011:154) and Munoz (2004:212), the street child phenomenon should also be understood in the context of the effects of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) in the developing world where liberalization and ascendancy of the free market economy deepened poverty, especially within the already poor communities. Particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), SAPs increased poverty levels through privatisation of state enterprises leading to retrenchment; application of user fees for social services; budget cuts and other adjustments that reduced the role of the state in providing or guaranteeing affordable access to quality services by low income groups. Zeleza and Kalipeni (1999: 198) argue that SAPs led to the “demonization of African cities”, resulting in large scale urban unemployment, the criminalisation of the city, expansion of urban agriculture and the “ruralisation of urban space.” They worsened the living conditions of the urban poor in nearly all SSA urban centres resulting in the heavy decrease of per capita incomes and an increase of poor urban planning. From a substructural perspective, poor urban planning gives birth to nonconformity (deviance) to the values and norms of the social group by some individuals. Such individuals resolve their frustration by rejecting the success goals of the mainstream culture. They replace them with an alternative set of norms and values in terms of which they can achieve success and gain prestige (Haralambos and Holborn, 2010:475). According to Cohen (1966:397), “behaviours such as stealing and stubbornness become valued activities to which glory, prowess and profound satisfaction are attached. Such attributes have become the social life within the modern

urban cities of the developing countries.... and Christianity seems to offer very little hand to that.”

There are contested definitions of poverty. Poverty is more than just a physiological condition - a lack of basic necessities such as food, health, shelter and clothing – but also a state of deprivation and powerlessness where the poor are exploited and denied participation in decision making in matters that intimately affect them (Muzale in Dhemba, 1999:291). Lack of correct, up-to-date official data, research and sometimes deliberate obfuscation makes the exercise of determining poverty levels difficult. However, although it is difficult to define and measure, the effects of poverty are apparent and cannot be contested. A focus on urban poverty is justified in that urban living conditions in many African countries are declining; with formal sector employment decreasing - resulting in the fall of real wages. These developments are further compounded by acute low cost housing shortage and rising food and fuel prices (Mpofu, 2011:136). Poverty breaks up families thereby reducing incomes, forcing many parents/ guardians to send children to work on the streets to help support the family. Reduced incomes may result in children leaving school, forcing them to find work, driving some children onto the street to find food and shelter not forthcoming from families. Uneducated and oftentimes unable to find employment, street children simply become complete destitute. Poverty deprives children of many of their rights: survival, health, nutrition, education and protection from harm, exploitation and discrimination, (UNICEF, 2005). Having “escaped” to the street as a “safe haven”, children are forced to work, beg, scavenge, pilfer, grab and steal in order to survive.

Economic, social and political pressures on the family, the bedrock for children’s welfare and safety, have resulted in the breakdown of traditional family structures and values, aggravating the street child problem. The reduction in family size as values have changed and the transformation from extended to nuclear family living in many parts of the world have led to the availability of fewer child-support resources. Family disruption in the form of death, desertion, separation and divorce has shrunk family size still further, often resulting in poor, single-parent, mother-headed households, (UNICEF, 2001). Some claim that apart from the onslaught on the family institution, schools, where children spend the greater part of their day, are also turning into centres of violence and crime, creating environments that further push children onto the street, (Kopota, 2000:158). Children are, therefore, becoming defenseless victims of all imaginable ills and human rights violations, involving denial of basic human and legal rights including the right to life, liberty and security as a people. With the declining availability of family, community and government safety nets, children caught up in such crises have few options other than life on the streets. The

HIV and AIDS pandemic caused deaths of parents has been cited as another factor behind the emergence of street children, (Kopota, 2000: 173; UNICEF, 2001; Munoz, 2004:201). Most individuals who are incapacitated by or die from AIDS are breadwinners, (UNICEF, 2001). In such cases children may find themselves in the care of relatives or older siblings. They may become completely destitute as household incomes would have been lost when sick parents are no longer able to work and have spent all their resources on treatment. HIV and AIDS orphaned children may become homeless and eventually find themselves on the street. Sadly for street children, they become highly vulnerable to the HIV and AIDS scourge themselves, (Munoz, 2004:206).

A variety of factors, therefore, act as drivers of the street kids phenomenon worldwide. These are linked to societal stress associated with rapid industrialisation and urbanisation, inner-city decay and chronic unemployment accompanying economic down-turns in industrialised countries (Cockburn, 1991:199; Le Roux, 1994:213; Kopota, 2000: 173). The roots of the street children problem are also found in poverty and income disparities, drought and famine (Ross, 1991:95). These developments leave children vulnerable, eventually forcing some to “escape” to street life.

Munoz (2004:206), with reference to the problem in Europe and specifically in Spain, says that, the vast majority of the homeless youths come from broken homes and their lives are clearly marked by trauma. The traditional family ties typical of Mediterranean cultures are beginning to fail. Enmas (2003:265) who carried a research in Nigeria says that street children in Nigeria work as vendors or hawkers, beggars, shoe cleaners, car washers, head loaders, scavengers and bus conductors. These street children, the majority of whom are boys, live under bridges, in public buildings, markets, major streets, trains and alleys. Some of them are street wanderers who simply roam the streets.

In some countries in Africa, the numbers of street children have risen due to armed conflicts. Wars have driven many Africans away from their home areas, displacing many within their own countries, forcing others to flee to foreign lands as refugees. For example, in Zimbabwe some people from Uganda, Somalia and Democratic Republic of Congo have been accommodated at Tongogara Refugee Camp because of ethnic wars in their countries. These dramatic events have resulted in parents/ guardians perishing, in some cases parents/ guardians losing children (Kopota, 2000:176; Munoz, 2004:205; UNICEF, 2011). Therefore, children have been either orphaned or abandoned; their economies disrupted family and community ties broken, forcing some of them to move onto the streets. Research studies reflect that, in developing countries, half of all urban children under the age of fifteen live in conditions of extreme poverty and

about a fifth of them are street children with little or no family support (Miller, 1998: 217).

Street children usually group into gangs and can be found close to the city centre or in the suburban shopping centres where they charge motorists a fee for guarding their parked vehicles (all.Africa.com: Africa). They scavenge for food from the refuse heaps of restaurants, or municipal solid waste dumps and sleep wherever they can find shelter such as the entrance to an office block, under a bridge, and if they are lucky, night watchmen can put them in their shelters. Tikiwa (2004: 137), researching in Harare, Zimbabwe, states that most street children did not enjoy their experiences on the streets. Forty percent of them wanted to return to school, thereafter pursue various career paths and other income generating activities

In Zimbabwe, although the street children phenomenon appears to be relatively recent, in the colonial era it was impossible for children to work in the streets as the municipal by-laws that restricted this were strictly and brutally enforced (Rurevo and Bourdillon, 2003:152). The relaxation of the enforcement of by-laws by the City Fathers at independence in 1980 resulted in the urban population swelling dramatically, resulting in increased unemployment and rising urban poverty. The World Bank (1988, 3:93) estimated poverty prevalence in Zimbabwe in 1990/1991 at 12%, while the 1995 Poverty Assessment Study put the figure at 39%. The problem escalated over the last decade perhaps largely due to the country's economic meltdown. Save the Children estimated in 2009 that 75% of the country's population (10 million out of 13 million) was in desperate poverty, while UNICEF's 2010 estimates classify 78% of Zimbabweans as absolutely poor, with 55% of the population (6.6 million) below the food poverty line.

The phenomenon of street children surfaced on Zimbabwe's urban landscape, in the late 1980s especially in the capital Harare (Rurevo and Bourdillon, 2003:163), rapidly spreading to smaller cities and towns such as Bulawayo, Mutare and Gweru in recent years. Homeless children are increasing in both rural and urban areas. The continuous increase of street children in most Zimbabwean towns has become a major social problem. Various factors have made the children to leave their homes and live on the streets. It was, therefore, the intention of the researchers to investigate the problems that led the children to leave their homes and why they settle in the Central Business District of Mutare.

2. Statement of the problem

The street kids in Zimbabwe have apparently developed a substructural society whose values, norms and goals are divorced from the mainstream structure. The research focused on finding out the kind of society that has emerged in this Christian world.

3. Purpose of the study

The study aimed at encouraging the Christian communities to create platforms in which the street kids air their views and are convinced to want to be reintegrated into the mainstream structural communities.

5. Research questions

The research was guided by the following research questions:

- 5.1 Why do children opt to be children of the streets?
- 5.2 How do street kids feel being in the streets?
- 5.3 What are the society's attitudes towards children living on the streets?
- 5.4 How do the street kids survive on the streets?
- 5.5 What is the role of the Christians towards street kids?
- 5.6 How can the life of the street kids be improved?

6. Assumptions of the study

It was assumed that:

- 6.1 Children were forced to choose life of the street by the harsh conditions in their families.
- 6.2 Street kids place a high value of deviant activities such as stealing, vandalism and truancy which condemned in the wider society.
- 6.3 Street kids are a substructural deviance which values activities that are attached to glory and profound satisfaction.
- 6.4 The society does not care about street kids.
- 6.5 Life of the street kids can improve if the multifaceted approach is implemented

7. Significance of the study

The research findings will encourage a multi-dimensional approach to the plight of the street kids. The research findings will motivate Christian families to create platforms for dialogue with the street kids so that their views are also heard. The research findings will motivate National governments and the public to acknowledge not only the existence, but also the gravity of the problem and show commitment to tackle it. Governments will have to review existing legislation and pass a specific Child Act to protect children, particularly strengthening the stability of the family relations. Perhaps more importantly, the basic institutional unit of society, the family, will be empowered with skills to be strengthened in order to maintain and sustain harmony. It is critical, however, to point out that families cannot be strengthened in the midst of poverty, injustice, inequality and gross (and growing) income inequalities. These hard issues have to be urgently addressed, particularly the need to empower the poor through

poverty reduction strategies, for any measures to strengthen the family institution to work. The research findings will encourage universities and other tertiary institutions to research on this human problem at their doorsteps. Although NGOs are playing an important role in dealing with the street child problem, this research will drive them to re-examine their role and address issues that retard their effectiveness, such as the need for a strict code of conduct, diversion of funds and underfunding street child projects.

8. Delimitation of the study

The study was carried out around the Commercial Building Department (C.B.D.) area of the City of Mutare from corner Aerodrome road and Second Street to the west and Third Street to the east. It stretched to Meikles Park and C Avenue to the south. The study only focused on children living on the streets.

9. Theoretical frameworks

The following theories were used for the research:

9.1 The substructural theory:

This explains deviance in terms of the substructure of a social group. It argues that a certain group from the society develops norms and values which are to some extent different to those held by the other members of the society (Giddens, 2011: 462).

9.2 Constructivism

From the view of Hudson and Ozanne (1983:136), constructivism is a theory that explains human learning as an active attempt to construct meaning in the world around us. It is a theory that is based on observation and scientific study about how people learn. In this study, we observed how the street kids “equip and empower” themselves with some life-long skills and learn to be active explorers of their environment. We also focussed on finding out if the street kids are linked with their families during their life in the streets.

9.3 Systemic

Guttman (1991: 86) believes that a system is a unified whole with interrelated parts. In this research, the theory was used to find out how the street kids live with each other from different systems and prepare themselves to integrate and form a substructural system without facing some problems. In the African culture, systems are important to promote collectivism and to maintain the value of “Ubuntu” within individuals. It is within the context of this value that we wanted to find out the extent to

which the Christian community accommodates the street kids as part of the valuable system for sustainable development in today's world.

10. Ethical and legal implications

The researchers sought written permission from the City Fathers of Mutare, the Social Services Personnel and the Church Pastors within the C.B.D. The participants were informed of the purpose of the study and were given informed consent before data generation. They were also made aware that they could pull out at any given time without prejudice. The researchers made sure that they would not disturb the smooth running of the participants' daily activities by making some appointments and preparing schedules on time.

11. Research Methodology

11.1 Research Paradigm and design

The qualitative paradigm was employed in this study because it enabled the researchers to collect in-depth information on what the community say or do in their natural settings, (Borgdan and Biklen, 1990:213). The design involved in-depth study of the phenomena by focusing on the affective, cognitive and behaviour domains of the participants on the street kids phenomena. The question of perceptions and attitudes is an abstract concept and requires direct inquiry so as to unravel perceptions because they lie in the heart of the participants (Barbie, 1998:217). Punch (2009:251) also argues that qualitative paradigm involves intense contact with life situations which are normal and reflective of the everyday life of the society. The researchers' role was to obtain a holistic overview of the context under study. Marshall and Roseman (2006:238) contend that in qualitative paradigm , the researchers explicate the way people in particular settings come to understand , account for, take action and manage their daily situations. Although this approach was successfully used, the researchers experienced some difficulties because of the multiplicity of perceptions resulting from the multiplicity of cultures in this area. To overcome this short coming, the researchers borrowed some quantitative techniques in data presentation, analysis and interpretation.

For the purpose of this study, the researchers employed the case study design in order to establish the plight of the street kids and to find ways of assisting them. Stake (1994) in Punch (2009:262) defines case study as a bounded system that emphasizes the unity and wholeness of that system, but confining the attention to those aspects that are relevant to the research problem at that time. A further definition of a case study by Theordoson and Theordoson (1969) in Punch (2009:224) is that, it is a method of studying phenomena using a thorough analysis of an individual case among many.

Marshall and Roseman (2006:276) contend that a case study provides a unitary character to the data being studied through triangulating facts that are derived from a variety of instruments. Therefore, the richness of a case study lies in its ability to provide in-depth understanding of important aspects of a new problematic area.

11.2 The target Population and sampling procedures

The target population were the street kids, vendors, taxi drivers, shop owners, till operators, church pastors, the Social Services Personnel and the City Fathers of Mutare. The researchers selected 50 participants (25 males and 25 females) for the study. There were an equal number of participants because the researchers wanted to get balanced responses. However, the street kids constituted the largest number of 20 in order to have in-depth understanding of their feelings. Because the researchers worked with different people, the stratified and systematic sampling techniques were used to select the sample. Using the systematic sampling technique, every 10th shop and vendor were selected as a sample. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the Social Services Personnel and church pastors. Convenience sampling technique was used to select the taxi drivers as well as the street kids.

11.3 Research Instruments

In order to collect data the researchers used the questionnaire, direct observation and interviews to generate data. The questionnaire had open-ended questions to solicit in-depth understanding of the phenomena (Borgdan and Biklen, 1992:235). The questionnaires were issued to the church pastors, shop owners/ till operators, Social Services Personnel, vendors and personnel from the City of Mutare. Questionnaires were easy to complete because they were self-administered. Each respondent received a questionnaire to complete at his or her own time. The respondents were given ample time of seven (7) days to complete the questionnaires; this would give them enough time to attend to all the items on the questionnaire. The researchers collected the completed questionnaires from the selected respondents.

The researchers also used direct observation to generate data. According to Hill (2005:216), observation allows the researcher to collect data in participants' natural environment. This was rich because it enabled the researchers to record what was happening in the real world of the participants (Johnson, 2007:364). The researchers also observed the street kids scavenging food from bins, attempting to steal valuables from parked vehicles and from the vendors. The researchers also observed the street kids sleeping on the corridors and in bins as well as taking baths in open spaces

around Meikles Park. They also observed the street kids begging for food from the vendors and taxi drivers. This facilitated for accurate and unbiased data.

In order to generate more data, the researchers also employed semi-structured interview questions which were prepared to guide the researchers on what to ask the participants. The questions were structured in such a manner that they were short and precise and enabled the researchers to interact with the participants and to get their in-depth feelings and attitudes towards the phenomena, (Marshall and Rossman, 2007:286). However, because the issue seemed to be sensitive, some participants were not willing to release information for fear of victimization. In this case, anonymity and confidentiality were assured. Each interviewee had a code. The participants were made aware of the codes. This increased confidence and relationship between the researchers and the participants.

12. Data Collection Procedures

The researchers sought written permission from the City Fathers, Social Services Department and Church Pastors. The data were collected using questionnaire, direct observation and semi-structured interviews.

13. Data Presentation, Analysis, Discussion/ Conclusions

Collected data were carefully coded and presented descriptively. Tables, graphs, analysis and discussion were done.

Item1: The causes of street kids' phenomenon. N=50

The research findings showed that death of both parents had 75%; physical and sexual abuse in the home and poverty had 80% each; neglect had scored 55%; separation of parents and abandonment by family members had 60% each.

The most common reasons cited in the semi-structured interviews, apart from loss of one parent or both, and/ or broken homes, were physical (including sexual) abuse and violence in the home, as well as abandonment by family members. Poverty was a major cause that was also cited. It would appear that this factor stems largely from loss of parents which deprives children sufficient care and livelihood resources. These findings confirm research results on the street child problem in Zimbabwe and other parts of the world (Wattle, 1996:213; Miller, 1998:296; Enmas, 2003:325; Rurevo and Bourdillon, 2003:260; Kurt, 2004:116). Fourteen of the interviewed children who had lost a parent gave the cause of death as HIV and AIDS. This result seems to confirm Rurevo and Bourdillon's (2003:264) findings that HIV and IDS is one of the factors that drive children to street life. These findings suggest that the fundamental roots of the street kids' problems are

embedded in socio-economic issues. Attempts to tackle the problem should, therefore, address these underlying social and economic issues first.

From a systemic stand, when the family systems are disintegrated, the off-springs do not feel secure and the end result is the development of broken behaviours. Disserting the harsh environment becomes inevitable in order to find refuge and independence elsewhere. What this would imply is that when they are out there, such children learn irrational behaviours which become part of their life-style. From the sub-structural argument, the deviant children develop their own norms and values as a small society. On the other end, street children feel happy to be in the streets because they develop some freedom and no one forces them to obey rules. Some of the children are not free with their families such that when they are alone in the streets they feel relaxed and comfortable in the streets. They also enjoy mixing with members of their age groups and work for themselves. Therefore, attempts to solve the problem should focus on assisting the social systems to accommodate all children irrespective of their statuses.

Item 2: Responses on age groups at which the children join life of the street:

0-2 years = 15%; 2-4 years= 55%; 4- 6 years= 80%; 6-8years= 65%

The above figures show that children are harshly treated by the family members as early as 2 years. It may suggest that at this tender age such unfortunate beings are taken by their siblings who may already be living in the streets for safety in the streets because they are unable to defend themselves. From the Zimbabwean point of view, the figures also indicate that the children join the street life before they attain primary education. The implication here is that street children are generally illiterate and are governed by the id personality. This could be the reason why street kids are always violent. From the humanistic angle, children need satisfaction and care in order to achieve their self-actualisation. They also have the need for self-concept, self-growth and freedom. This confirms why they decide to emancipate themselves from the family's harsh conditions (Kopota, 2000:213; Giddens 2011:432). It is therefore, important that our community should be child-sensitive when addressing issues that affect the home environments in order to achieve sustainable economic and social development.

From a psychological view, parents should be responsible for the social, emotional, spiritual, cognitive and physical development of their children. If children flee to the streets no one will nurture them except nurturing themselves. What kind of character will they teach themselves then, if they are all governed by the id personality? Therefore, the role of the church is to educate the parents on their roles as parents. In the Bible Jesus

remained in the church and His parents found Him in the church. He obeyed His parents and stayed with them doing all the household chores. Joseph and Mary were role models to Jesus. Children should also be taught on the importance of their parents and emulate from them.

Item 3: Responses on the view of the street kids towards their life in the streets; N=50

- We feel happy because this is our home=65%
- We are independent and safe here=78%
- There is nothing we can do if we were abandoned by our own people=75%
- We could be productive if resources were available= 85%

The responses above indicate some mixed feelings from the street kids. While some were happy about their life in the street, some showed willingness to participate in the community activities.as indicated by the75% and 85% respectively. From the interactionalist argument (Haralambos and Holborn, 2010:438), the street kids regard the community systems as important in their life and they would want to be productive as their behaviour is primarily shaped by the society. From the systemic stand, peer influence greatly plays a significant role in shaping the behaviour of the street kids. This explains the reason for them to develop their own values and norms and to remain compatible.

Item 4; Responses on the society’s attitudes towards the street kids; N= 50

They are disturbing our life = 75%; If something could be done to remove them from the environment= 70%; we are sick and tired of these children= 75%; they are human beings who need our care and love=75%; Sometimes they help us in our daily activities such as carrying luggage and cleaning our cars=65%

The responses above also show mixed feelings on the street kids by the society. The mixed feelings arose because there were also some adults who resided in the streets because of poverty. They leave their places early in the morning so that they are not seen where they stay for fear of being associated with the street children and also for safety reasons. However, there were also those adults who even encourage their children to live in the streets in order to get a living. Such adults train their children to be skilled in street life.

However, there is a general feeling that the society would want the street kids back to their family members where they can participate in the production of the environment. According to the functionalist perspective (Giddens 2011:295), society has certain basic needs or functional

prerequisites which must be met if it is to survive. Functionalists, therefore, look at the social stratification to see how far the society meets these functional prerequisites. They assume that the parts of society form an integrated whole and thus examine the ways in which the social stratification system is integrated with other parts of the society. These views imply that the society would want a situation where gender imbalances are eradicated for effective functioning. In fact, the global world cannot talk of development when other people still remain segregated in enjoying their full life. It is, therefore, important that issues of social discrimination are addressed for sustainable and meaningful development. This is part of the Christians' role.

Item 5: Responses on how the street kids survive N=50

Through stealing = 65%; through begging from shops and vendors = 60%; through picking from the bins =90%; through taking drugs/ inhalants such as spirit and glue 70%; Sleeping in the bins, around the churches and shop corridors= 90%

The responses above show that street kids develop numerous behaviours which make them survive. Stealing is an indication that the street kids develop skills through some illegitimate opportunities. According to Cloward and Ohlin (1961:324), criminal substructures tend to emerge in areas where there is an established pattern of organised adult crime. In such areas a learning environment is provided for the young: they are exposed to criminal skills, deviant values and presented with criminal role models. Those who perform successfully in terms of these deviant values have the opportunity to rise in the professional criminal hierarchy. This suggests that street kids become experts in stealing in order to survive. They are influenced by the older peers to be professionals in such activities. When they take drugs their ego is strengthened they gain courage to approach anybody for anything that they want. This is why some of them are not ashamed to defecate in some plastic bags and place them on the corridors or on the vendors' tables (Cohen, 1966:186).

From a Biblical stand, the Holy Spirit dwells in us because our body is the temple of God. This means that the Holy Spirit dwells in clean body in order to guide and protect us. If the street children spoil their bodies by taking drugs and other substances, they also disappoint the Holy Spirit and they lack protection and heavenly guidance. Therefore, the Christian community should inculcate spiritual growth in the societies so as shun evil deeds for children learn good behaviours. Our communities should also make concerted efforts to assist children to develop some acceptable behaviours which make them function according to demands of the Holy Spirit.

Item 6: Role of Christianity in the life of the street kids N=50

- Offer accommodation in churches= 40%
- Build safe houses (homes) for the street kids= 50%
- Establish orphans and vulnerable orphanages= 60%
- Educate the society to be patient with the vulnerable/orphaned children=60%
- Seek police assistance to bring the street kids together and talk to them=65%

The responses above show some positive attitudes by the society towards the street kids' plight. Dialogue with the street kids would demonstrate some measure of degree towards accepting the unvalued beings. This should come not only from the pastor or person of God, but from all people (Narramore and Carter, 1979:179). From a pastoral care point of view, dialogue offers a platform for sharing views and understanding what is in the heart of the other individual. Dialogue paves way for reconciliation, reformation and transformation (Jackson, 1975:227). If the Christian community establishes such relationship with the street kids, then the world will be guaranteed of a better future where subculture finds no space. However, to achieve this goal, there is need for skills and competences to win the war. It is, therefore, imperative for communities to reorganise their efforts and attitudes to restore sanity in the young generation for sustainable moral, economic and spiritual growth.

12. Recommendations

On the basis of the above findings and conclusions the following recommendations could help to tackle the problem:

- Organisations that deal with street children should focus their programmes on family tracing and reunification since street children, as with all other children in hard circumstances, need care and proper upbringing in their natural family settings.
- While other organizations already have intervention programmes, the strategies for intervention should consider ways of strengthening family and parental responsibilities for children.
- The number of organizations giving assistance to street children and other efforts in networking should be widely publicised, and their efforts could be coordinated at a national level.
- There is need for the Department of Social Welfare, local authorities such as municipalities, corporate entities, NGOs and other interested stakeholders to coordinate their efforts in order to manage the street kids' phenomenon.

- Placing children in homes or foster placement should be the last resort.
- Central and local government in partnership with the corporate world, need to address the root socio-economic causes of the problem. This could be done through financial support programmes that target orphans, free primary education, financial support to poverty-stricken families for food and education, funded vocational training and job creation.

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