

CITIZENS OF THE STREET

Everyday life experiences of Kawangware street
children, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

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During autumn 2010 the author did a three months international practical placement at a street children's organization in Kawangware, Kenya. The organization is as a result of cooperation between Fida international with Full gospel churches of Kenya. Therefore the research for this thesis was carried out on the street children in the area of Kawangware.

The main aim of my thesis is to enlighten the reader on what kind of life the children in the street face and how we should treat them. The results of this thesis present the attitudes of street children, their daily lives and what it comprises of and the challenges they face in the streets. The results can be used to help motivate people, street children's organizations and as for parents it may also widen their thinking since some ethnic groups do not believe in family planning hence get many children that they can never provide for who end up running away from their homes due to hunger and many other domestic issues.

This research has a qualitative approach. Interviews and observation were used as Methods for collecting the data. A narrative analysis method was used when analyzing the data.

Key words: Citizens of the street, street children, Kawangware.

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1 INTRODUCTION

My thesis seeks to look deeper into the challenges the street children face on a day to day basis. I got the motivation to pursue this topic when I learnt that I was going to do my international practical placement at a street children's project in Kenya even though I have always been interested in helping vulnerable children in Kenya.

During autumn 2010 I went for international practical placement in my home country Kenya for three months at Maisha Poa project which is a product of cooperation between full gospel churches of Kenya with Fida international from Finland. The aim of this project is to rehabilitate street children from the street and to also provide a place where they could go to take shower and do their laundry since clean water is scarce in Kawangware. I found out about the organization from a Canadian friend who had a Finnish friend working with this organization in Kenya.

Having been interested in issues that affect children and having read and watched so many things concerning street children, I felt that I needed to know and hear from the street children themselves so that whatever I spoke about them could come directly from them. Hence, I decided to combine my international placement with research for my thesis. I was interested in the daily experiences of street children, in order to find out what it is like. I carried out interviews on six street children and also used observation as methods of data collection.

My topic "citizens of the street" (COS) came about after interacting with so many street children. Whenever I could ask those who had relatives why they preferred the streets and not with their family I always got the response that they felt comfortable in the streets since they had friends who understood them and were willing to help them in case of any problem. While relatives made them feel inferior since whenever they lived with them in case of a minor mistake they got beaten, scolded and denied food.

It was evident that these children had a sense of belongingness in the streets which they never found in any other place. They believe that the street no matter how harsh it is was the only place they could at least feel comfortable. Therefore I came up with the topic ‘‘Citizens of the street.’’ since a citizen is someone who belongs to a particular country or place and is entitled to the rights and benefits of that place.

This thesis consists of theoretical literature review of various issues on street children globally and also focused on the research process which comprise of data collection methods, findings and professional development.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND ON STREET CHILDREN

Worldwide, the estimate number of street children sums up to 300 million who live without the basic human needs such as food, clothing and shelter (UNICEF 2001). It was approximated in the year 2007 that the population of street children residing in the streets all over Kenya to be between 250,000-300,000 with a fourth of this number residing in Nairobi (consortium for street children).

2.1 Definition of street children

More recently, According to Kamal (2007, 109), the phrase street children is plainly straight forward and covers vast differences in the lived experiences of the children whose livelihood is in the streets. In reality, the fact about street children does not include a homogenous set of troubled children with the similar important traits. In reality when one is in the street for a very long time is definitely a significant condition that differentiates the street child from other children. Nevertheless, this shared characteristic is inadequate to

differentiate street children as a specific social group. Those considered as street children exhibit a vast diversity. They vary in age from infants to eighteen-year olds both males and females.

According to Kivuli the house of street children organisation in Kawangware Nairobi, they are children who do not depend on their relatives to give them the basic needs in order to mature manically. In spite that some of them still retain a little relationship with their parents, especially with their mothers, street children have to use their intelligence in order to survive back streets of vast metropolitans, pleading, gathering trash to be used as second hand materials, stealing or prostituting themselves (Kivuli the house of street children).

Street children are children below eighteen years old (Lugalla, 1995.) UNICEF (2006) and Lugalla (1995) categorise street children in two ways; street children in the street have no responsible adult to take care of them and they live and earn their living permanently on the street. There are also those who visit the street during daytime and in the evening they go back to their homes where they either live with relative, parents or a guardian and they are referred to children on the street. (Lugalla 1995, UNICEF 2006.)

Previous research on street children in Kathmandu has been carried out by Mustafa (2010), a former student at Diaconia University of Applied sciences in Finland in his thesis work. In his work Thomas de Benítez (2007, 2) defines street children as children for whom the streets acts as a fundamental part in their life. Streets symbolize a unique relationship with the lives that these children lead. (Cited in Mustafa 2010, 10. Cited in Rede Rio Criança, 2007, 18.)

2.2 Why children turn to the streets

Worldwide, large numbers of children are faced with many problems daily. Normally the cause of street children is multidimensional where several factors play the role of pushing and pulling children into the streets. Push factors that force children to come on the streets include the following examples; intense poverty, family conflicts such as domestic violence and abuse, incurable illnesses and HIV/AIDS, abandonment and bad experience in school. Pull factors that encourage children to leave their homes include; Search of freedom, work and employment opportunities. (Butterflies programme with street children and working children.)

In every society, people have the primary duty for mingling their children into the society. It is the responsibility of the family to provide for the basic needs of the children for the physical survival, emotional, academic and social development needs. The organization and fundamental value system of Brazilian families have been destabilized by recurring economic crisis and the social revolution related with development. Such severe economic and social transformation has led to children being on the streets and has had an intense effect on the socialization of children in Brazil. (Mickelson 2000, 48.)

In the case of Turkey, the matter on street children is one of the most significant social problems currently in the country. During the economic development form in the 1950s, Turkey experienced fast urbanization because of huge migration from country sides to the urban centers. This process gave rise to slums, and It was also recognized that normal problems in the children's families for example poverty, joblessness, inadequate education, having big family, resettlement, inadequate shelter, and domestic violence pushed children to the streets. (Yilmaz, Dulgerler 2011.) Latin America is not different from Turkey since a common cause that push children to the street is abandonment by their poor families who are not able to feed them while in Africa AIDS have become an increasing cause. (Singh, Purohit 2011.)

India occupies a major position with the world's largest population of street children. Poverty and domestic abuse incite children to run away from their homes and seek refuge in the cities. 25 new homeless children arrive in Mumbai station everyday on the trains from all over India. They go to the cities with the mentality that there is richness in such cities. Girls face a lot of abuse since they carry the responsibility of paying dowry to the husband's family hence many parents may prefer to have male children. Many baby girls are aborted, dumped or intentionally neglected and starved simply because they are girls. (Giving street children a future.)

It is evident that pushing and pulling factors of street children to the streets universally have a similarity, for example the case of South Africa is not different from that of Turkey or India. In South Africa abuse, domestic violence or poor family relationships have made homes intolerable. When girls were interviewed they explained sexual abuse, usually by stepfathers or their mothers' boyfriends to be a major cause, whereas boys described problematical relationships with step-parents. In many situations these cases were stimulated by alcoholics. Approximately ten percent of children in South Africa are orphaned either by losing one or both parents from AID. (Ward, Seager 2010.)

The case of Russia is a little bit different from the above, in the developing countries poverty is the leading cause of pushing children to the streets while in Russia parental alcohol abuse was the leading cause. Many children claimed to have left their homes due to their parents drinking habits and were not willing to go back to their alcoholic parents. They further explained that their homes had been transformed into drinking dens. Physical abuse by their parents was another cause and in most cases the parents afflicted physical injuries to the children. (Balachova, Bonner, Levy 2009.)

Shunning the flow of street children is a global challenge which should begin with individuals themselves and especially by families. It is a phenomenon that is hard to just ignore since it affects each and every one either directly or indirectly. Ragged gangs of roaming boys preoccupied the streets of industrializing cities, where they at times engaged into committing offences. British historian E. Royston Pike noted that even though there have been homeless children in all worldwide, the mid years of the nineteenth century

generated a very high population of unofficial boys. The industrial revolution destabilized traditional family life and threw a huge amount of juveniles into the crowded streets. Due to the fact that people have been selfish they ignored the troubles of the tattered, barefoot teenagers, who struggle to sustain themselves. Boys who were in desperate needs turned into borrowing and stealing faced punishment instead of sympathy in the busy urban centers of England and the United States. (Stepenoff 2010, 36.)

2.3 Human rights on children

Having rights implies having privileges. Rights and duties go together and need to be accomplished in order to guarantee protection of the rights. Human rights are a mechanism for the legal protection of abandoned groups in society such as street children. Therefore, I found it interesting to discuss the various human rights on children that the street children have no privilege to enjoy.

Universal efforts for the safeguarding of child rights and the protection from child labor are becoming the main concern of every country. Wellbeing of street children has become a major public health problem in developing countries. The United Nations convention on the rights of the children states that the child has:

Right to survival; to develop to the fullest; to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life. The four core principles of the Convention are non-discrimination; devotion to the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and respect for the views of the child. (UNICEF.)

World Vision leaders from Albania, Lebanon and Malawi campaigned for children's rights intensely in United Nations conference in Geneva, Switzerland on March 9 2011, the United Nations day dedicated to Child Rights. The topic of this day was centered on the

challenges street children experience worldwide. (Speaking out for street children at Human Rights Council.)

According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Human rights are valid to everybody, whether big or small. Children have similar rights as adults. However, they are at risk and hence need certain rights that acknowledge their unique wants for safety. Rights of the children should be recognised to enable the child to grow well to the full capacity (UNECECF).

Children are individual creatures and not their parents' possession, the principle present youngsters as individuals who can make decisions and should be referred to as part of the family and the society. Human rights are made in order to honour self-respect and value of every person irrespective of race, colour, gender, language, religion, opinions, origins, wealth, birth status or ability and as a result they are applicable to all people (UNICEF).

The convention on the rights of children further explain that, youngsters depend on adults for care and support and if the parents are not there to provide for the child's needs then it is up to the society to take over the role. Children do not have voice in political issues and unless the care givers at school, home or in the community pay attention to them, they may go unheard and important issues concerning their lives may be neglected. The changing of the family unit, globalization, irregular employment model, and a retreating social welfare net in many countries has a great influence on the youngsters. The influence of these transformations can be overwhelming in circumstances of armed conflicts (UNICEF).

The growth of youngsters is important; they are more in danger when exposed to poor livelihood, for example: hardships, insufficient health care, nourishment, contaminated water and shelter. The effects of undernourishment, diseases and poverty have a strong influence on the life of a child as well as the society (UNICEF).

Social research results explain that the youngsters' first happenings in life completely influence their future growth. The path of their growth inspires their involvement in the society. Unicef further explain that the possible age that children should be involved in armed conflicts enrollment should be of a minimum of 18years and the government has the

obligation to ensure that no one under the age of 18 is recruited. It forbids child pornography, prostitution and child trafficking (UNICEF).

In the United Kingdom, there is a Children's Human Rights network which comprise of more than 4,500 people all over the UK upholding children's rights and advocating to eradicate the prevalent abuses that children experience globally. The network intends to, increase attention about the dilemma of child sufferers of human rights abuses and draw awareness to how particular models of human rights violations affect children. (Consortium for street children.)

3 STREET CHILDREN IN KENYA

Even though Kenya is a moderately peaceful and secure country, politics differences and ethnic frictions have been existing and this has led to brutal strife, particularly after the elections of 1992, 1997, 2002 and the latest 2007/2008 elections caused clashes all over the country. In a period of two months 1,500 people were killed and more than 300,000-600,000 ran away from their homes to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPS) camps (UNICEF 2008).

Clashes in Kenya have caused an increase of the number of street children since some of them in the process of fleeing the war prone areas loose contact with their relative while some of their parents are killed during war hence leaving them to fend for themselves. During the 2008 post-election violence I was living in one of the war prone areas and it was evident that if the war did not come to a stop together with my family we would have become internally displaced persons in our country. Many radio and television stations were broadcasting about lost children whose parents were either looking for or children who were searching for their parents. Kenya was all in chaos and many children at this

period of clashes found themselves living in the streets. Therefore, I was interested to learn the different kinds of experiences these children have in the streets.

Although the Kenyan government adheres to the convention on the rights of children it is evident that more and more children continue pouring into the streets throughout the country and there are many cases of neglect and abuse of the vulnerable children. Their rights as children are systematically denied hence violating every single part of the United National Convention on Children's Rights. Many organisations have been established to help reduce this huge phenomenon of street children all over Kenya even though no major results have been recorded and the problem continues to progress.

3.1 Introduction to Kawangware

My thesis research was carried out in a small town called Kawangware in the Nairobi metropolitan area in Kenya. Kawangware is a slum that is located about 12 km from Nairobi city. Its area is estimated to be 3 square kilometers and has an estimate of 800,000 inhabitants. Kawangware has people from different tribes and cultures. The slum is widely known for its shortage of clean consumption water, the prevalence of water related infections, lung diseases and malaria. (Light Christian ministries Nairobi)

Kenya sustainable health aid (kasha) describes Kawangware as a slum in the metropolitan area of Nairobi in Kenya. It has above 600,000 inhabitants and it is a casual neighborhood characterized with deprived livelihood environment, no access to channeled water, poor sanitation, and congestion, a lot of law breaking because of joblessness. There are widespread illnesses caused by viruses and bacteria such as HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria. (Kenya sustainable health aid). Therefore, from the above information the population of

Kawangware has not been clearly defined because it is not easy to tell which one is the accurate information.

The inhabitants of Kawangware are mostly inexperienced, jobless and undeveloped. Most of these vulnerable people in the community are considered by the privileged members of the community as outsiders and wicked people who mix together with the others in the neighborhood with the aim of taking advantage of the needy. African Equip Ministry International further explains that widespread intake of beer, misuse of medicine and prostitution are common hence forming a secretive society of immorality (Africa Equip Ministry International).

3.2 Existing street children's projects in Kawangware

Kawangware street children and youth centre is a registered regional non-governmental community-based organization established by Morris and Agosto in the year 2001. It has a project known as Kawangware vision centre. Its aim was to provide encouraging chances for children without parents, helpless kids and young people in the society. The children are taught how to design and make paper bags from reused papers that are sold to visitors and expedition businesses. The profits gained are utilized to advance livelihood and also to sustain the production (Kawangware vision centre).

The major goal of Kawangware street children and youth centre is to ensure that the basic needs of children without parents and at risk are covered. Another goal is to establish and generate financial authority to the vulnerable youths. The children perform different important tasks such as designing of manually made silk souvenir bags, welcoming certificates, souvenir-covers and silk-covered engraved T shirts (Kawangware vision centre).

According to the article on the plight of Nairobi street children, the human rights reports states that the police in Kenya regard all street children as bandits and when they come across them, they beat them thoroughly and also arrest them. Girls are normally charged with loitering and prostitution. These children are taken into prisons which are intended for grown-ups. People die of diseases such as cholera since there is no hygiene in these prisons. When former Home Affairs Minister, Francis Lotodo was asked to tell his view concerning the conditions of Kenyan prisons, he answered that a prison is not a hotel (The plight of Nairobi street children).

According to Kilbride (2001) in his book 'Street children in Kenya' (voices of children in search of childhood), the research was carried out during six years in Nairobi. It describes street children not just as desperate losers and objects of compassion, but as children who have expectations, dreams for their future, and feelings of conscientiousness towards one another. Even though they are still faced by the hard and unbearable situations of life in the streets such as being victims of rape, prostitution, use of illegal drugs and harassment. This book clarifies that street children are both positive and tough even in the face of these very hard situations.

4 RESEARCH PROCESS

This is the process in which the researcher tries to answer the research question utilizing the research process. The researcher tries to follow the process and use it to represent his or her findings. The researcher may use literature to examine the problem and may use different research methodologies to gather data bearing in mind what type of research he or she is conducting and also what type of analysis will be used.

Research methodology can be defined as a variety of chronological measure to be implemented by a researcher in learning a problem with specific goal. It examines behavior

of people as a part of the world, and their emotions, reactions, attitudes in different situations. It is conducted in order to learn new things and also confirmation of those that are outdated (Phophalia 2010, 6-7).

4.1 Research Questions and aims

The main aim of my thesis is to enlighten the reader on what kind of life the children in the street face and how people should treat them. This is according to the narration of the street children and also my observation after spending three months with them. I did my research on school age children who are aged between 7 to 18 years in Kawangware. They were only boys since they were the majority and girls were few and shy to be interviewed. The children were specifically those that live in the streets. The aim of my research is to answer my research questions below,

1. What consist of a street child's daily life?
2. What kind of challenges the street children face in the streets?
3. What caused them to live in the streets?

The outcomes of my research will help to motivate people and also various street children's organizations understand the importance of trying to reduce the number of children from the street. It will also help to motivate people to try and improve their lives by fostering them, providing them with shelter and basic needs. Lastly, as for parents, it may also widen their thinking since some ethnic groups do not believe in family planning hence get many children that they can never provide for who end up running away from their homes due to hunger and many other domestic issues.

It will also help people understand why street children behave in a certain way, for example they might act aggressively and one may think that they are being rude but it may be due to the traumatizing experiences they have had in the streets. According to an article on Nairobi street children, girls are at a higher danger of violence and abuse. They are not only beaten, but also sexually abused by grown-ups and also by street boys. Many turn to drugs or sniffing glue to help them manage with the cruelty of their lives. (The Daily Battles of Nairobi's Street Children.)

4.2 Type of research

Qualitative research was used in the research process, it deals with qualitative phenomenon such as a phenomena involving quality or manner. For example, when we are fascinated to explore the motives for people's behavior for example why they reason in a certain way, this can be defined as 'Motivation Research', a significant kind of qualitative research. This type of research intends to conceal the fundamental purposes and aspirations, using intensive interviews for the reason (Delhi, 2010, 5). This research focused on the everyday experiences of street children in Kawangware Kenya and learns more from it. This type of research helps to uncover people's attitudes and feelings that may not be possible to identify incase quantitative method was used.

5 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

The data were collected by means of interviews which were prepared and conducted by the researcher in line with the relevant literature. It was based on sixteen questions to the street boys. The interview questions were both short and open-ended (appendix1) Interview and literature review methods were used in my research.

An educational research starts with identifying the problem. The study of the problem should result in a cautiously structured account of the problem which comprises the questions to be answered (Sharma, 2007, 67). Kothari (2004) concurs with Sharma by explaining that the assignment of data collection starts after a research problem has been identified and research proposal made. When choosing the method to be used for gathering information the researcher has to remember the primary and the secondary data collection methods. The primary data involves gathering new data that has never been gathered. Conversely, the secondary data are those which have previously been gathered by another person and have already been passed through the statistical procedure (Kothari 2004, 95). Primary data collection method was used in my research since the data was collected fresh from the field.

5.1 Interviews and Observation method/process

Interviews and observation methods go hand in hand in my research. Interviews can be defined as a means of gathering ideas and attitudes on whatever matter is to be discussed. Researchers use interviews with the aim of finding the facts and attitudes (Czarniawska 2004, 47).

There are different types of interviews, for example structured and unstructured interviews. During my research I implemented the use of structured interviews. In structured questions all the participants are asked the same questions in the same order and the rate of scaling is the same. Whereas the unstructured interviews participants are asked different questions and the rate of scaling is also different. Unstructured interview emerges attractive because of their unfixed framework. Structured interviews unlike unstructured have established a high quantity of dependability, validity, and legal defensibility. (Structured interviews: a practical guide.)

I decided to use structured interviews after realizing that street children have so many things to talk about hence if I did not have a structure then the whole interview process may have lost its meaning and also may have gone out of topic.

Sometimes you do not need to ask people about their opinions or feelings because you will watch and see what they do and also listen to how they speak. Children responded differently when asked different questions for the example when talking about the issue of abuse it was evident from their facial expressions and change of tone that it was a subject that they were so bitter and angry about. The observation method is the mainly used method particularly in the learning of behavioral sciences and it is methodically designed and taped. The information is sought by way of researcher's own straight observation without asking from the respondent. The major benefit of this method is that prejudiced is eradicated if observation is done truthfully. (Kothari, 2004, 96.)

By use of both interviews and observation the data collected is accurate and it helps to portray the interviewees' feelings and also the interview questions were few and straight to the point hence it helped to reduce any kind of misunderstandings.

Being a Kenyan living and studying abroad in a developed country, it was a challenge for me to persuade some of the citizens of the streets to agree to be interviewed since they always asked me whether I would pay them but I had to make it clear that I was not doing the interviews in order to get paid by someone but I was doing it as part of my school work.

Three of the interviewees I had to buy them lunch and the interviews were conducted in hotel settings. The rest of interview took place in the compound of Maisha Poa Centre the place where my placement was being conducted.

The data was collected through the method of tape recording of interviews and also observation since I spend a lot of time with COS in my place of international practice in Kenya. Transcribing of the information was the most challenging since it took a lot of time to transcribe one interview hence I finally decided to write down whatever was relevant to my research. One interview was transcribed with a total of five hours but I took breaks in between.

5.2 Area of study and interviewees

The research was conducted in a small town called Kawangware in the outskirts of Nairobi. The main reasons for choosing this area are; first, I was doing my international practical placement at Fida international organization, Maisha Poa project in Kawangware and they deal with street children hence it was easy for me to do my research while still at my placement. Secondly Kawangware slum has recently been growing rapidly hence resulting to an increase in the number of street children and this is becoming a major concern in Kenya.

The selection criteria of interviewees were based on those that live in the streets as their permanent home. The interviews were carried out on eight participants, six were street boys aged between 7 to 14 years old and two were workers of Fida international who work with the street children. Generally most of the children seemed much smaller than their accounted age but this may be because of starvation, poor health and belated physical growth.

All the interviewees were under the age of 18 hence considered as children. A child is defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child as anybody under the age of 18 years.

The World Health Organization). Research with children is potentially dissimilar from research with grown-ups mostly due to adult opinions on children and children being seen as minorities by adult in the community but least often because children are naturally different. The manner in which researchers observe childhood and the position of children in the general public manipulates how children and childhood is understood. The distinction between research with children from adults is that it is hard for a grown-up researcher completely understand the world from a child's way of thinking. (Punch 2002, 2-6.)

The reason for having fewer participants was for the fact that each participant required enough time and also time was not on my side since I was staying in Kenya for only three months. I explained to the interviewees that there were no personal risks or benefits for them in participating for the interview but the findings would help people understand the situations of street children better.

It took two and a half months to complete the six interviews. This was between October the year 2011 and December. Each interview for the street children approximately took one hour fifteen minutes. The maximum time that was used for the interviews was one hour and thirty minutes. Mostly, the interviews were conducted during the weekends and this was in agreement with the interviewees. This was the appropriate time for me since during the weekdays I was busy with my placement. All the interviews were audio recorded; I later transcribed and translated them from Swahili language to English.

5.3 Ethics and validity

In this research, ethical consideration has been the foundation for the whole process, without them the information could be biased. When analyzing data I was careful to protect the interviewee's identity for their own privacy. An ethical approach to research performed with youngsters is necessary especially that children are mostly vulnerable to invasion of

their private lives and behavior by researchers (Cited in Homan, 2001, Tinson 2009). An ethical approach to research design

In this research, ethical consideration has been the foundation for the whole process, without them the information could be biased. When analyzing data I was careful to protect the interviewee's identity for their own privacy.

I was mindful that street children are vulnerable to abuse hence before conducting the interviews I explained to them the purpose of my research and the possibility that they could be part of my study. I further explained the reason why I wanted to conduct the interviews with them. The clarification for their participation was verbal and they did not wish to have a written consent. I also made it clear to them that the interviews did not have any risks or benefits to them. When interviewing the children I choose not to call them the different kinds of street names they have and instead preferred to call them by the name the child wished to be called.

Children who are mature enough to reflect on their experiences should be participants in consideration not only of the meaning of the data as they relate to the children's 'lived experience', but also of ethics policies and guidelines pertaining to social research with children, the individual contribution and unique perspective that children of all ages can bring to the deliberations should be valued. (Vokaoti 2009.)

It is evident that I interviewed only street boys hence the information may appear biased but it is because girls were not easy to find and those available were shy to be interviewed hence I respected their decision. I read the interview questions out to them since some of them were illiterate.

Observation was one of my methods of gathering data and according to Vakaoti (2009) observation allows one to embark into the world of those who are being researched, listening to their stories and experiences furthermore observing their way of life on the

streets. It reveals parts of street life that go unidentified and have no obvious significance to strangers. (Cited in Patton 1990, Vakaoti 2009,9). I incurred some limitations that might affect the validity of this research, the period for my research was 3 months which was quite short and also even though Kawangware has over a thousand street children I was able to interview only six of them.

6 FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

Narrative analysis was used to summarize the main points from the six interviews that were conducted. Narrative is portrayed as a detailed way of framework, which is arranged within a time framework of specific happenings (Herman 2009, 9). It is also described as an incident, circumstance, want or hope communicated through a story (Riessman 2008). The early development of narrative analysis can traced from the old studies of the Bible, Talmud and Koran. Modern versions generally started with the work of a Russian formalist named as Vladimir Propp, who published a book titled, *Morphology of the Folktale* in 1928. This book carefully examines what he saw as the fundamental organization of Russian legends (Cxarniawska 2004, 1).

The narrative analysis of the text helps to bring out not only the properly linguistic characteristics of the story- a task perhaps better left in the hands of those who know how to do this best: linguists- but also a great deal of sociology hidden behind a handful of lines.(Franzosi 1998, 519). It is the story, the chrono-logical succession of events that provides the basic building blocks of narrative. Without story there is no narrative. .The presence or absence of a story is what distinguishes narrative from non-narrative texts. (Rimmon-Kenan 1983:15 in Franzosi1998.)

6.1 ‘‘They are part of us’’

The below paragraph is a combination of different stories that the street children narrated concerning their experiences with drugs.

They are part of us we cannot do without them; they make you feel on top of the world. When we use them they make us feel that nothing matters at all, they give us strength to do things a sober minded person cannot do such as eating garbage and rotten food in those smelly unsightly dumping sites that people do not dare to go. Each and every day they give us strength and reduce our hunger. They are a very good remedy for helping us not think about the hardships of this life.

With just 10 Kenyan shillings you can buy glue to last you for a whole day. They are locally available and have special names so that the police and other authorities may never know what we are talking about. Some of us earn their living by selling this kind of stuff to our fellow street children and to other honorable people in the society. It is our secret and if you are not part of us we cannot give you any information.

Substance abuse and use of drugs have been a social behavioral dilemma related with street children anywhere in the world (Pinto 1994, 179). When the ‘ordinary people’ wake up in the morning, they always take a warm cup of tea or coffee with a slice of bread and sometimes they feel that they are not hungry. Sometimes they go to an extent of dieting since they think that they have grown too fat. The ‘ordinary people’ deny themselves food which is readily available to them but for a street child it is the opposite. All the street children I encountered used drugs such as Glue to help reduce their hunger since to them food which is supposed to be a basic need is like a luxury.

It was evident that the entire COS use one or more drugs in their lifetime. As I was conducting the interviews half of these children had a piece of cloth that they hid in their pocket and after a few minutes they would take it out and breath in it. Having stayed in the street children center for one month I understood what the cloth was meant for. They always put glue which they sniff and it is very addictive hence hard to stop when one has started.

The following are the commonly used drugs in Kawangware by the COS from the commonly used to the least. This is according to my findings from the interviews that I conducted.

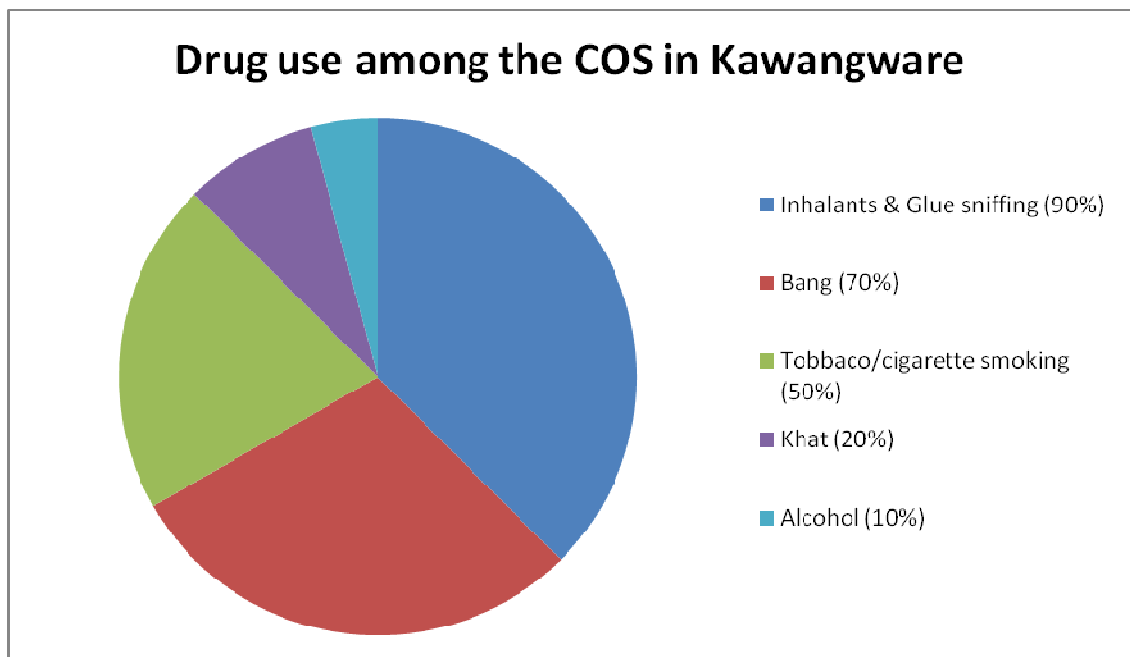


FIGURE 1. Drug use among the COS in Kawangware

Inhalants, and glue sniffing was the reading drug with 90 percent of the street children claiming to be using it, this is because it is the cheapest and readily available. Bang (Marijuana in the local language) was followed with 70 percent use and many confessed to

have it planted in various places in Kawangware, use of tobacco-cigarette smoking was the third and the least used were Khat (Miraa) and Alcohol (Cheap liquor known in the local language as Chang'aa or kumikumi. Singh and Purohit 2011 concurs with my findings when the states in their journal that the drugs used by street children are normally those that are very affordable, available and cheap. The examples he gave are glue in areas where shoemaking is common, solvents in industrial areas, coca paste and cocaine in coca-producing areas, opium and heroin in opium-producing regions, and general types of inhalants, alcohol, nicotine, cannabis, and pharmaceutical products. (Singh, Purohit2011.)

The use of drugs by street children, even though useful in most situations have a tendency to add other difficulties to their health. While drugs may be used by street children to reduce or increase sleep, be vigilant to possible violence, reduce physical or emotional pain, or to reduce hunger, they also endanger their health. (Singh, Purohit 2011.)

6.2 A street child's daily life

The below paragraph is a combination of different stories that the street children narrated.

There are certain junctions in Kawangware where you can find us whenever you might need us. During the morning hours you will find some of us in our 'base' resting thinking about how the day is going to be, some of us hang around NJoro's hotel in case we might get some free left over foods or even land a job. Our day cannot go to waste, we have to do something constructive by either searching for food, a job or even someone or an organization that may sponsor us.

As many people would expect a street child's life to be chaotic and without any order, it was evident that they do also have a way of doing things. During the interview sessions it was evident that street children have similar activities that they perform and they also

appeared to fall under a time line. Hence, I came up with a time table that illustrates the activities.

Time	Activity
4am-7am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ‘ordinary people’ are going to work and during this time a street child can get some work to help the market people carry language to their shops and to the market place. • It is also a good time for hijacking and stealing from those going to work since it is still dark and not many people are outside.
7am-10am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collecting and selling of scrap metals • Begging for some money or even food from passersby.
10am-2pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate time to visit street children’s organizations in case they may have the chance to get some food there or either gets involve in an activity that may earn them some money such as making baskets from recycled papers. • Going to other various places where food may be dumped such as the market, hotels and garbage areas. • Performing different jobs such as taking trash from people’s homes and transporting it to the dumping sites.
2pm-7pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basking in the sun with either a full or rumbling stomach due to hunger. • Playing games such as football. • Going to the street to beg or looking for scrap metals or other things they can sell or steal.

7pm-9pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the market place in case they might land a job to help carry the seller's language back to the stores. • Going to the various places they can get some food. • The lazy or weak street children have already retired to bed.
9pm-4am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hijacking those going home at late hours of the night. • Breaking various places such as shops and homes to steal whatever they can get. • Facing the law enforcers (police). During this time of the night many street children get killed or get involved in serious fights with the police with use of arms such as guns. Several street children use guns to either kill the police or people while hijacking them or for scarring them off. • Time for retiring to sleep either in a slum house, under a vehicle, benches or in a rug.

TABLE 2. A Rough sketch of a schedule of a street child

In the above time table, one important thing is missing; the time when they use and buy drugs. Drugs are bought and used anytime and anywhere hence they do not have a specific time. It is evident that stealing is one major activity that COS get involved in. During the interview process one street boy who has a one year old child informed me that his child's hair will not turn brown while other people are eating, he meant that his child will not be malnutrition where else he can steal from people and provide for his child.

Street children in Kawangware in most cases work as a group, team work is evident amongst themselves. It is evident that even though they receive support from different street children organization, the greatest support comes from their peers. According to

Psychological researchers in south Africa who were studying concerning the characteristics of street children put forward that street children tend to be tough since they have social support from their street friends and these can be inform of being accepted, understood and also having company (Roux 1999, 423). Street children in Ghana put forward that they trusted their friends more than adult and were always curious about their intentions. Whatever the street children do they do it as a team work for example they work together to earn money and also in search of food which is shared amongst themselves. (Suda 1997, 199.)

Street children have strong and influential peer relationships. Street peers sustain and assist one another to survive daily. In Latin America and Guatemala Street children were mentioned as main source of trust. In these areas it was evident that street children lived as a family caring for one another and taught one other various ways and methods for survival. They have good communication skills and problems are solved amongst themselves. (Ali 2004, Raffaelli 1997.)

6.3 Challenges

Sometimes I have this bad feeling whenever I visit an organization that claims to help street children and see the workers eating while we are basking in the sun hunger killing us. I feel like rushing to where they are, grab the food and hit them with it in their faces. They do not see as if we are human beings who also have needs, we also feel hungry and they cannot expect us to watch them eating. (A combined narration of five street boys.)

The police beat us mercilessly without any specific reason. Whenever a crime is committed somewhere the blame is heaped on us. Even though some of us are armed robbers it does not justify what the police do to us and this normally happen at night when nobody else is

seeing them. We wish we could have people who would fight for us and show us that they care about us.

Street children are people who care and are aware of what is happening around them. There are several things a person may find him or herself think about all the time. As for a street child during the conducting of the interviews and also from the observations, several things never missed in a street child's vocabulary and they have been represented below with the use of a brain diagram.



FIGURE 2. (Drawn by use of elker sketch art.) Thoughts of a street child

It is evident from the above diagram that food was something the citizens of the street keep thinking about all the time. They go to the extremes of eating garbage and rotten food just to curb the hunger. Having a family with people who love them was the second thing that a street child yawns for. It was clear from their conversations that they dreamt of leading one day a comfortable life surrounded by people who loved them and not being worried by anything. A quarter of street children wished they had either the opportunity to go back to

school or either get a decent employment. Drugs use was also something they kept thinking about since they believed that they helped them in one way or the other, for example one street children told me that;

When I am sober there are things I cannot do but when I use some bang my head goes round and round, I feel so excited. When hungry I do not care whatever I eat whether it comes from the smelly dumping site or not. I can even eat uncooked rotten food (translated from Swahili). (Interviewee 5)

Sex was among the list thing they were thinking about even though some of the young street girls and boys below the age of twenty had a child and many of them were in one way or the other sexually abused but were not willing at all to talk about it. Street children because of their poor living standards are easy prey to sexual exploitation from adults or amongst themselves. World health organization (WHO) illustrated that worldwide 25 percent of girls and eight percent of boys are sexually abused annually. (World Health Organization 2002.)

6.4 The 'we' and 'them' attitude

During the interviews with the street child, the following phrase was commonly used;

‘People like you do not like any association with people like us’

It was evident that there was a very big boundary between the street children and the ordinary people. The street children believe that whoever is against one street child is against them all. For example I happened to be present when a scenario occurred in one children's home in Kawangware. One street child stole a phone and a guard saw him and held him so that he could not escape. Even though the rest of the street children understood what the boy had done, they started throwing stones at the guard without caring whether he got hurt or not so long as he released the street child.

Street children live as a community; most of the things such as food, shelter are shared among them. It was amazing that in spite of being homeless they knew each other's whereabouts. The following question was asked to the street children;

What have you done in order to improve your life and also the lives of other street boys?

The following response was received by three quarter of the street children.

For those who are harassed by other people or the police we have to make sure that we come up with a strategy to solve the solution or either fights them back. We always share whatever little we have amongst ourselves and if we do not have any food then our hair will not turn brown due to malnutrition when other people have food and money, if they do not give it to us then we have to take it from them by force.

6.5 Life as victim

Life in the street is tough because nobody cares whether you live or die, whether you starve to death or get sick from the contaminated food or the chilly nights. whenever a street child passes by people are shouting at you calling you all sorts of bad names demanding that you get out of sight, some are warning their fellows to watch for their pockets since all street children are considered as thieves.

It feels as if the world has come to an end knowing that nobody wants you and all they want to do is get rid of you. Many organizations use us to enrich themselves, they take photos of us and send them to donors claiming to help us and whenever the donor visits we are bought good clothes and feed well in order to appear well in the donors' eyes. Many of us would wish to have been born in rich families and life would be perfect.

As a stranger when you walk in the streets of cities or towns in Kenya and other Swahili speaking countries such as Tanzania it is most likely that if street children are in these vicinities you will absolutely hear the name “chokora” from the civilians. Whenever a street a child passes by you may hear someone shout ‘*watch out for your pockets ‘chokoraa’ is here.*’ Chokora is a local name used in Kenya to refer to street children and its meaning is ‘one who eats rubbish.’ Many street children visit dumping sites and even on the streets to collect whatever they can find that is edible. The community mostly takes no notice of the conditions that force children to the street and instead brand them as dirty pests, thieves, killers and accordingly treat them as if they are not human beings (Gakuru et al: 2002).

According to all the six street children I interviewed, it was evident that they are all aware that nobody wants anything to do with them in the society and they strongly feel that half of those people who proclaim that they want to help are after something. For example they believe that those who own street children organizations just want to get rich from the money the donors send. Half of them claimed to have been visiting many street children for more than five years but their lives have never improved in any way.

One of the interviewees came with very dirty clothes that really stunk and he looked like he had been swimming in a pool of black paint and upon asking him why he looked that horrifying below was his reply,

Ahh mwalimu, nimetoka kazi, wajua nikiwaa vizuri watu watathani mimi ninakwetu nataka kuwachezea tu lakini nikiwaa hivi nikija kwako kukuomba doo utanipa mara moja kwani utaniogopa. nikivaa hivi watu watanihurumia.(Interviewee 1)

Translated as;

Ahh teacher, I’m coming from work, you know if I dress well people will think that I come from a good family and just want to take advantage of them, but if I dress this way and come to borrow money from you, since I look horrifying you may give me money immediately without asking a question.

I learnt that these dirty clothes 'chokora' use for scaring people do not make them feel comfortable too and are kept far away from where they sleep. After taking off these clothes they always take a shower to get rid of the dirt and the stinking smell. Having lived in a radical society the street children have come to learn that if you would like something from the society you have to demand for it even if you have to use force.

7 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Doing my research on street children gave me more passion for working with vulnerable children in future and also made me feel that I can act as their advocate. It has also improved my awareness on the issues of street children. The fear I had of street children during those three months of my research seems to have evaporated, I now consider them as vulnerable children who need care, love and support from the people and society as well.

I learnt to adopt ethical principles, reflect and also implement them throughout my research; I did not want to take advantage of the vulnerability of street children hence whatever I did had to be an agreement of both of us. I learnt not to be selfless but always putting the interviewees' needs ahead of mine, for example if a certain subject triggered bad memories to the interviewee no matter how important the response could have been to me I had to drop the issue for the sake of the interviewees wellbeing.

Even though when interviewing the children most of them had many negative things to say concerning the organizations that deal with street children, I had to be neutral concerning the issues they raised. Many times they told me that I might end up becoming like those selfish people who use them but I had to try and make them realize how they can benefit from those organizations and also gave those examples of some of the boys who have benefited from the organizations. I had to make them learn to always look at the positive side which I also learnt to do and implement in whatever I do.

The issue of equality was always visible because some of the boys wanted to be treated more special than others but I learnt to show them that they are all equal irrespective of whom they are. I learnt to act like a professional by taking all things that I heard or saw with a calm face, for example some of the things that the street children told me they do were shocking but I had to learn not to show that whatever they have told me has puzzled me.

I learnt to work as an intermediate between the street children and the organizations. The organization I was doing my placement had given me the task of trying to find out what these children would wish to do with their lives, for example whether they wanted to go back to school or enroll in short term course which could lead to employment.

I learnt how to create a professional interaction and also a cooperative relationship by also showing the street children I had my own values and they had to respect me. I came to realize that if one does not stand firm with his or her values when dealing with the street children they are very good at manipulating a person and also taking advantage.

8 CONCLUSION

I find it ironical that Kawangware has so many street children organizations but the number of street children continues to increase. It was also sad when conversing with the street children that they came from large families for example many of them had more than five siblings whom were also either in the street or doing other odd jobs such as collecting garbage in order to earn a living.

The rescue and rehabilitation of street children is a hard process. Due to the fact that they have been living in desperation it has contributed considerably to their tough characteristics. They try to self-govern themselves. If they are not tough and determined it is hard to survive in the harsh conditions of chilly nights, harassment by police and lack of food and shelter. Re-socialising street children with the society or their relative can be a

hard mission. Due to the fact that they decide what to do without the consent of any adult it is tough for them when they are reunited with relatives to follow new rules hence many end up returning to the streets. They feel more comfortable and at home in the streets than with their relatives.

Many Kenyan street children have been deserted by their families or they have escaped from home due to domestic violence or poverty. It is hard to understand why even though family planning methods are cheaply charged and are locally available in health centres many parents still opt to get many children who later become a burden. I feel that this is something that needs to be researched on since even though they can blame poverty for their situations, it is also possible for one to try and evade it by ensuring that you get children whom you are capable of taking care of.

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APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEWS QUESTIONS TO THE STREET CHILDREN

1. How old is the child?
2. Whether the child knows where we can find his relatives.
3. Where was she\he living before they got separated? and if the child does not remember the name I can ask him or her to tell about the environment where they used to live whether there were such things as, hills, mountains, rivers, market places, churches, mosques or schools.
4. Ask the children to describe the events of separation, what caused it?
5. What has been happening to the child's life since the separation took place?
6. What are the child's wishes for the future?
7. What is your opinion concerning other people for example the church? (I have asked specifically concerning the church, since in Kenya many churches have been claiming that they are helping street children)
8. How do other Kenyan citizens treat you and what kind of attitude do you feel they have towards you? (For this question I mean those people who lead normal lives, who do not live and have never lived in the streets) and by attitude it may comprise of feelings such as, hate, anger, pity, compassion and others.
9. How do you relate with your fellow street children?
10. What has been the most challenging experience in the streets?
11. For those who have been reunited with their families, how did it happen?

12. Since the reunification has life improved or is it still the same as before you ran into the streets?
13. what do you think the Kenyan Government and the many NGOS in Kawangware can do in order to improve the lives of street children
14. Since in Kawangware the police have been killing a lot of street children claiming that they were involved in robberies, what message if given the chance would you like to pass to them?
15. What have you done in order to improve your life and also the lives of other street boys?
16. What do you wish to be when you grow up

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