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**THE PLIGHT OF IMMIGRANT CHILDREN ON THE STREETS OF ACCRA:**

**The Role of Churches and NGOs**

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## ABSTRACT

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The Plight of Immigrant Children on the streets of Accra: The Role of Churches and NGOs

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The phenomenon of Street children is a growing social and political concern in many developing countries. Ghana is not an exception to the growing trend of children providing for themselves on the streets but more troubling is the trend of increasing street children of immigrant background in urban and rural cities. However, little is known about this unique population in Ghana.

This thesis work arose from the social observation of the increasing population of immigrant street children in Accra, Ghana.

The study brings to light the existence of immigrant children on the streets of Accra and examine their living conditions and establish the roles played by both The Church and NGOs in the welfare of these children. It also brings to light the problems, difficulties and challenges faced by immigrant street children. This research study was carried out in Accra, Ghana.

Interviews using questionnaire was used in the study. A total of 30 street children were interviewed and they are originally from other countries across Africa.

The result of the study presents the daily lives of street children, their attitudes, and the challenges they face on the streets. The results can be used as a motivation for organizations and religious institutions to widen their programs to include immigrant street children.

Keywords: Street children, Immigrant children



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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The problem of children living on the streets has become a worldwide phenomenon and of immense social as well as political concern. Many capitals and urban cities of the world have become havens of survival for many of the children who work, live and sleep on the streets. Many stakeholders such as researchers, government, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), individuals and the media have come to the realization of the problem of street children, but the condition is still prevalent because it has not received the urgent and practical attention that it should. Governmental policies that have been made do not amount to positive results because they are not challenged by internal or external elements and are also faced with proper implementation strategies. NGO's which intervene in the menace lament of inadequate resources to effectively deal with the situation. Thus, children on the streets are increasing day by day (Boakye-Boaten, 2008).

Street children are not necessarily orphans or children whose parents have abandoned them as many public opinions would like to state. In the case of the immigrant street child, economic and political situations of their countries might have determined their migration. Studies have shown that most people migrate from the rural to the urban towns in search of greener pastures because they feel that life is better in urban cities than in the rural villages. Reasons for this movement can be attributed to differences in income and development between rural and urban area (Gisberger, 2017).

The realization of the problem of street children has not been matched with immediate or aggressive response from government or other institutions to deal with the problem, as such street children have devised various survival strategies to cope with the hardships they encounter in their daily lives. This study therefore investigates a group of unique street children in Accra, and they are immigrant street children.

The main objective is to establish the existence of immigrant children on the streets of Accra and examine the attention they do or do not receive from societal organizations. The study specifically seeks to examine the plights of the immigrant street children on the streets of Accra: the role of The Church and Non-governmental organizations in curbing the increase of these street children.

The phenomenon of street children affects the whole of the Ghanaian society and literature suggests that institutional interventions for street children have not been given enough attention (Berckmans et al., 2012, so the social role government, non-governmental and religious institutions play with regards to immigrant street children is also explored in this study. Furthermore, according to the Social Welfare department in Accra (2014), a total of 61,492 children in Accra are victims of street life. Although the figures could be higher, but lack of accurate data makes their estimate speculative, however, their visibility on the streets signals the enormity of the problem and deserves a study.

Therefore, this study is important because it will enhance and add to existing literature on street children phenomenon in Ghana with emphasis on immigrant street children. It is relevant to explore the interventions or lack of interventions undertaken by institutions and organizations to specifically cater to the needs of this population.

## 2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

### 2.1 Ghana: Country Profile and Social Policy

Ghana is a Republican nation in West Africa. The capital is the Greater Accra region. It is located on the coast of the Gulf of Guinea on the south, and is bordered by Togo on the east, Ivory Coast on the west and the north by Burkina Faso. The climate is generally tropical, warm, and humid with variable temperatures, and is strongly influenced by the West Africa monsoon winds (world bank report on climate change).

For many years, Ghana has been a model country of democracy in Africa. It has a well-functioning multi-party system and a constitution drafted in 1992 that guarantees the freedom of speech and the right to practice any religion by its citizens. With a growing economy and stable political atmosphere, Ghana has emerged as a leader in sub-Saharan Africa. However, the overall development in Ghana has been substantial as poverty still looms in both rural and urban areas.

Despite the relative prosperity in Ghana, street children are prevalent in its capital city, Accra. They are 'unseen' but are very well visible and real although society try to ignore and shun them. The street children live at the mercy of their peer relations, scrupulous adults, and weather conditions. The government is unable to fully offer social security for its citizens let alone structures put in place for the welfare of the children and other vulnerable ones of the society. Notwithstanding, the government has certain social welfare policies in place for women and children.

The Ghana constitution has a Children's Act that has been designed to protect the rights of the child. The Children's Act consist of different laws such as the Domestic Violence Act, 2007 (Act 732) that protects children from violence in domestic settings, Human Trafficking Act, 2005 (Act 694) which protects the personal liberty of children, Juvenile Justice Act, 2003 (Act 653) which protects the Rights of the Child who has broken the Law and the Criminal offences Act, 1960 (Act 29) among other Acts enacted to protect the rights of the child(The Ghana Constitution). To this effect the government set up the Women and Juvenile Unit (WAJU) now referred to as Domestic Violence Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) to handle cases of domestic violence and child abuse as well as other abuse offences. In addition, the primary government



institution that oversees child welfare is the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP) which was created in January 2013 to replace the Ministry for Children and Women Affairs.

## 2.2 Statement of the problem

The term 'street children' is defined by the United Nations as, 'including a boy or girl to whom the street has become his or her abode and/or source of livelihood and who is inadequately protected, supervised, or directed by responsible adults' (United Nations). It follows that all children found in or on the street fall into this category, that is after they have been observed to spend a significant amount of their time or activities on the street. Ghana as stated earlier is a populous nation nevertheless it has over the years enacted policies in favour of children. However, the political and social accountability of most African societies to children is missing and not challenged either by internal or external forces. The plight of these children is therefore left in their own hands or to some few NGOs who are limited by their resources to deal effectively with the situation.

It is quite common to see children roaming the streets of Accra especially in road traffics either begging or hawking. And it has even become more common to see immigrant children also roaming the streets, working their way to survival by engaging in activities such as begging, trading, porting goods and other menial work. The presence of these immigrant street children is often problematic for motorists and pedestrians alike because some of them hang on to moving buses and cars begging for money and in some cases, accidents happen which lead to confrontations. This has become a challenge to the government but nothing substantial has been done about the situation. It is therefore a problem that requires quick and sustainable solution. The aim of this thesis is therefore to identify who these immigrant street children are, examine their living conditions and establish whatever roles played by both religious institutions, for this study churches and NGOs in the welfare of these children.

By reaching out and finding these immigrant street children, interviews were carried out using questionnaires to get responses that will determine the plight of the immigrant street children and the approaches of the institutions involved.

### 3 WHO IS AN IMMIGRANT CHILD?

An immigrant child can be said to be one who is foreign-born or born to immigrant parents in a foreign country. However, for our purpose, this definition is relative as it touches on the migration of the child from place to place (Child Trends, 2018). Children often cross borders both within and between countries for different reasons and under various circumstances, both voluntary and involuntary or legal and illegally. Economic, socio-political, and environmental factors can influence children and their parents' decision to migrate elsewhere (UNICEF, 2016). Another key factor of child migration is poverty, especially from rural to urban areas. Furthermore, children are also trafficked to provide labour or are forced to move because of political violence or environmental disasters in their home countries. In this study, immigrant children are therefore those children who are from another country and are accompanied by an adult such as members of their family or a guardian living in Accra, Ghana.

#### 3.1 The History of Immigrant Children in Accra, Ghana

Ghana is in Western Africa and borders Togo to the east, Burkina Faso to the north, Ivory Coast to the west and the ocean down south. Ghana has had many peaceful political transitions and is seen as a beacon of democratic example to other African states. Ghana has also enjoyed and sustained economic growth and has gained middle income country status in 2010 (World Bank, 2018). As a member of the ECOWAS, Ghana implements the free movement of persons which stipulates the rights of ECOWAS citizens to enter, reside, and establish economic activity (ECOWAS, 2016). Being a country of origin, transit and destination, Ghana is faced with both opportunities and challenges posed by migration as there are daily occurrences of migration into Ghana due to its opened land borders with Togo, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast and other countries such as Mali and Niger coming via Burkina Faso and as such immigrants are very well present in Ghana. However, not many studies have been done around immigrant street children in Ghana and how they ended up there. Most studies are research done on street children and their livelihood and not immigrant on street children per say. Therefore, history of immigrant children in Accra can be said to date back probably to the 1970s when the ECOWAS was formed which allowed free movement of people among member states mostly to promote economic activities within the bloc (ECOWAS, 2016).

As Ghana's economy grew better over the years alongside a peaceful political environment and a welcoming business environment, many more foreigners from member states as well as those outside of it were attracted to the small nation. Some came in legally, and by legally meaning all necessary immigration processes and so on were done, others came illegally through bush paths and paying thugs to take them across the borders and others are refugees from across Africa.

On one hand some of the foreigners are legal immigrants who come as seasonal workers on farms and textile industries up North of Ghana and then remain afterwards and migrate down to the south to the capital Accra. And on the other hand, there are undocumented refugees and foreigners upon arriving in Ghana make their way to the capital Accra where they feel they can make better living for themselves and their families. However, they are faced with difficult realities upon reaching Accra, and getting a rental house is problematic and so they are faced with the streets to make as their abode until they can make enough money to rent a place. Others who do not make enough to get out of the street remain for a long time and this is where they live, grow, give birth, and live life. The pressures and challenges of survival led some of these parents leave their children to roam the streets to 'support' the family.

### 3.2 Christianity and The Rights of The Child

Ghana is a deeply religious nation. Apart from the Christian majority in the country, there are other religions that is practiced in the nation. No matter the religion practiced, there have been instances where there are clashes between the faith and the rights of the child. For this research the Christian faith is the scope of study. There has been some improvement on the welfare of children through some form of legal policy and other instrumental means. The nation has made some strides in curbing childhood poverty and was said to be the first nation in Sub-Saharan Africa to achieve the Millennium Development Goal 1 on dividing into two the population living in abject poverty. Registration of birth has increased from 17 percent in 2002 to 66 percent in 2013 (Ghana Statistics, 2016).

Reflecting on what is perceived as the rights of the child by the Christian faith, it becomes clear that as Christians, "our understanding of children's rights is rooted in our understanding of God, how he created the world and in the Bible's calls to love and serve our neighbours"

(Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2019). Children's rights according to the Convention for the Rights of the Child (CRC) is therefore first a gift from God. It reflects God's desire for a society that is deep in peace, loving, merciful and joyous. It is indeed "a divine reality that ensures all children are flourishing". Christians believe that God created man, boys and girls (children) in his own image with dignity and value. We have rights not because we belong to a society, but because we are created by God with deep rooted rights. Therefore, Jesus the founder of Christianity appreciated and celebrated children in many ways. He asked that children come to him (Matthew 19:13-14), (CRC, World Vision international 2019).

He encouraged his disciples severally to listen to children and allow them to contribute to the church and community (Mark 9:33-37, 10:13-16, Mathew 18:3, 21:14-16). Here Jesus understood the need to give children voice, to be a contributor to the events in their society. This aligns with Lansdown, 2010 assertion that children must have a voice, take part in decision making and be recognized as individuals.

In the Old Testament of the Bible, The Lord upheld the dignity and rights of the most vulnerable in ancient Israelite society by setting guidelines for the treatment of orphans, widows, aliens and the poor. The book of Lamentations paints a descriptive picture of the painfulness and injustice of situations in which children are dying because their basic needs are not being met (Lamentations 2:11-19; 4:4). Jesus Christ shows in His ministry where He heals children and brings them back to life when they had died (Luke 8:54; Matthew 9:25; Mark 5:41; Luke 9:42; Matthew 17:18; Mark 9:26-27.). Jesus' own life is protected when He is taken to Egypt for safety as an infant (Matthew 2:13). In Matthew 18:14, Jesus informs His listeners that God the Father is not willing that any of the little children should perish. God's purpose for all children is to survive and be well and that all children should have the opportunity to thrive. The story is told of Ishmael in Genesis 21:8-20, of how protecting children is of importance to God. God 'heard the boy's cry' (Genesis 21:17) and provides for the child's need (Genesis 21:19). God also continues to be with Ishmael as he grows up (Genesis 21:20), thereby showing that by simply being there with and for children is another important aspect of protection (CRC, World Vision International).

The Holy Bible also speaks clearly against the mistreatment of children and their exploitation. Vulnerable children are particularly mentioned as deserving protection with stern warnings against oppressing and maltreating the fatherless (Isaiah 10:2; Ezekiel 22:7; Jeremiah 7:6;

Malachi 3:5). The mistreatment of children can be seen as a form of abuse of their rights as well.

### 3.3 The Contributions of The Church in Ghana towards the immigrant child

The plight of the immigrant child by extension immigrant street children is not to be left as a responsibility for government alone but also the responsibilities of religious institutions and other private organizations.

As a religious institution, The Church has always been at the forefront of protecting the interest of the child. A lot of Christian groups and international bodies have developed a tradition of defending children. It dates to the days of the early church when early Christians fought against the major practice of killing children. We can vividly recall the incident at the birth of Christ where he was almost killed at King Herod's instruction (Matthew 2: 16-18, KJV).

Many Christian organizations such as World Vision are involved in monitoring and supporting child rights processes in countries around the world.

In Ghana, The Church is represented by an ecumenical body called The Christian Council of Ghana (CCG) which unites about 31 churches in Ghana and has members from Charismatic, Pentecostal, Orthodox and other churches. This Council was formed to unite various congregations on social matters and to speak for the voiceless in society (Christian Council of Ghana).

Many Churches undertake different social responsibilities in Ghana. Owusu-Ansah and Adjei-Acquah (2020) in their study show how the church is involved in curbing the problems of the street child using the case of Perez International Chapel in Ghana. They observe that the church bridges the gap the government creates and is also a very important agent in providing the basic need of the street child.

The study will high light some of these religious institutions that reach out to street children to answer some of the research questions.

### 3.4 Catholic Action for Street Children (CAS)

Although this organisation operates as a local NGO it is run by the Catholic church of Ghana. The Catholic Church has a long history of responding to people in need and plays an important role in the international community's response to emergencies. The CAS in Ghana started its operations many years ago with the mandate of finding out who street children are, where they come from and how they can be helped. CAS advocates for children and offers a variety of educational, vocational, and counselling services. Government officials are now aware that the world's largest NGOs provide more aid than do some donor governments (Ian Smith and Larry Minear). NGOs are active in more countries than many governments, and they carry more credibility with taxpayers than do government aid agencies. Some individual NGOs have country programmes with larger budgets than the government of ministries to which they relate.' This is the reflection of CAS in Ghana. The organization has for a long time catered to the needs of street children in Accra mainly put their focus on three different kind of children that can be found on the streets, namely: (1) children who have migrated from the rural areas of Ghana to Accra city, (2) children who are born on the streets (second and third generation children), and (3) urban poor children, that is children of poor families who are on the street (CAS Ghana). There is no mention of immigrant street children, however on reaching out and enquiring about their various activities, a representative of the CAS clarified their position saying, 'help is offered to any street child irrespective of origin of region or country, as long as the person is willing to receive help.'

CAS has five departments of social welfare activities: the House of refuge, Demonstration, Short and Long Sponsorship and Hopeland. The street children are made to go through all the programs and activities organized by each department as part of their preparation to get off the streets. The main goal of CAS is to make these children functional literates (Casghana.org).

### 3.5 Perez Chapel International

Although there are other denominational Churches that are prevalent in Ghana, it is assumed that they have become too involved in the spiritual lives of their congregation and have forgotten social problems and their social responsibilities thereof. However, there is the claim that very much is done as regards the churches' social obligations.

The Perez Chapel which is located along one of the research areas in Accra is a Charismatic Pentecostal Church that believes in the totality of The Holy Bible and seeks to reach the world with the compassion of Christ via The Gospel. The Perez church does not only offer spiritual solutions to the problems of humanity, but also believes in undertaking its social obligations based on its biblical beliefs and principles that humans are the like image of God and must therefore be our brothers' keepers. They as a ministry try to replicate Christ's example of drawing the children close to himself; and have often had street evangelism and outreach where they give out free food to the street children and offer on the spot free health checks. However not much is mentioned of immigrant street children, for to them all children are welcomed whether they be or immigrant status or not, Christ welcomes everyone to His fold (Ohlmann et al. cit. pg 212).

## 4 THE PLIGHT OF IMMIGRANT CHILDREN ON THE STREETS OF ACCRA

Although there are research studies that have been carried out on street children in Accra and other big cities in Ghana, there is limited literature for studies on immigrant street children. In a working paper exploring the decision- making process of children who migrate from North to Southern Ghana (Kwankya, Anarfi, et al., 2009) discuss the reasons for migration, how the decision is made and those involved in the decision process. They conclude their research by observing that the primary reason for migrating among these street children is basically economic, which is poverty. These migrants hope that money could bring some economic relief to them and their household. In addition, it was realized that some other socio-cultural factors are also responsible for such migration (Kwankya, Anarfi et al.2009.)

### 4.1 Theoretical Framework

Creswell (2017) postulates that the use of theory serves as a lens for finding answers to the research questions as well as providing broad explanations (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The theory serving as the explanatory framework for this study is the well-being theory. There are many different conceptualizations of the well-being (McGillivray 2007, 1), but all these concepts and definitions are related to the idea of how good life is or how satisfied any person is with his own life (Saari 2011,10). However, there is consensus that the wellbeing phenomenon is a very complex and multifaceted concept.

#### Well-Being Theory and Immigrant Street Children

The well-being theory provides a useful framework within which to examine the plight of immigrant children on the streets of Accra. There are many different conceptualizations of well-being, but all these concepts and definitions are related to the idea of how good life is or how satisfied a person is with his/her own life (Saari, 2011, pg 10). Well-being as concept is related and used in many cases interchangeably with other concepts like happiness, quality of life, subjective well-being, satisfaction, utility, and welfare (Easterlin 2001, 465). According to Michaelson (taken from Forgeard 2011, 98) the well-being is a “dynamic process that gives people a sense of how their lives is going through the



interaction between their circumstances, activities, and psychological resources”, so the well-being is a multifaceted process where different dimensions of our life are in combination (Vilches, S.P., 2012.)

Well-being can be divided into objective and subjective issues and the choice of scope influences measurement (Alatartseva & Barysheva, 2015, 37-38, cited in Banahene & Varto, 2020). In objective well-being, it is possible to recognize universal needs whereas in subjective well-being it is necessary to have in consideration the psychological aspects of any personal evaluation about the quality of life itself and the cultural aspects that can affect the perception of good life (Diener, 2009, cited by Vilches, 2012).

The specific well-being approach in this study is the Erik Allardt well-being system. Allardt states that well-being is a system with three different dimension of needs – having, loving and being. ‘Having’ refers to material conditions which people need to satisfy to survive, ‘Loving’ is about the social needs like social support and self-identity that is developed in social life, and finally ‘being’ that refers to personal growth (Allardt, cit. Vilches, 2012). These three dimensions are important to understand and satisfy the well-being of a person. This concept of well-being is important as it captures the processes of economic, social, and cultural life of the immigrant street children in Accra.

In other words, it embodies the changes that takes place within the environment of the child over a period in the child’s existence that influences development and progress. It consists of major life events, changes, and historical events that are critical to the child’s well-being.

The well-being system of ‘having, loving and being’ put together is expected to nurture the child and be at the centre of their existence but sometimes these systems fail, and the result is children being left on their own thereby ending up on the streets. Studies have shown that the number of children ending up in the streets is increasing (Department of Social Welfare, Ghana, 2011). It is evident then that the well-being system in Ghana has not met up to standards in its role in the well-being of the immigrant street child. Some of the services necessary for the well-being of the child are not provided, thus, many immigrant street children seem hopeless, and find themselves on the streets as a means for survival.

The situation of immigrant children is almost the same everywhere but only the dynamics of their plights might differ. For instance, in America immigrant children suffer from low

educational attainment, poor health analysis, social and cognitive development challenges and no economic importance (Tienda and Hastins, 2011). Enu (2014) examines the effects of rural-urban migration in Ghana using Okaishie an outskirts of the Greater Accra region as a case study. The study indicates that majority of the migrants were youths whose main reason for migrating was to look for employment in the urban towns for better living. The other factor that encouraged them to migrate from the villages to the urban cities was the access to amenities such as good drinking water, quality health care and education, good roads, electricity, and entertainment (Enu, 2014.)

The word plight signifies a condition or state that is very unfavourable. It is an abnormal situation, one that one finds himself which he can decide to change or accept. Thus, we have been preoccupied by discussing the contributions of the Church and NGOs to alleviate these unpleasant and unfavourable challenges immigrant street children face daily in a bid to survive. We have been able to determine that if not for the contributions of these organizations the problem and challenges would be overwhelming. Any study on street children and by extension immigrant street children cannot completely exclude discussions on refugee children. Refugee children are children that find themselves in other countries other than theirs because of war or crisis in their own home countries. This on itself is a different study entirely. But in most cases, it is observed that some immigrant children end up in refugee camps in the cities they sojourn (Boakye-Boaten, 2008).

Conducting research on the review of the literature on sexual and reproductive health of African migrant and refugee children, Kwankye, Richter, et al. observe that migration and unprepared displacement of children and young people has become a major problem of African countries due to the wide challenges of poverty, growth in urbanization, lack of jobs and instability which motivates these children to seek a means of livelihood outside their homes of origin. Due to their predicaments, these children become vulnerable socially, economically, and are exposed to sexual and reproductive health problems.

Furthermore, Boafo-Arthur (2015) in her study of the livelihood strategies of street children, noted that street children and by extension immigrant street children suffered untold hardships. She was able to find that the children's livelihood activities included head potters (usually girls), scrap collection, barrow pushers, shoeshine boys among other menial activities. Besides this, there is also the challenge of education of these immigrant children

This chapter discusses the daily challenges and difficulties encountered by these immigrant street children.

#### 4.2 Homelessness and poor feeding habits

Homelessness and poor feeding habits are two major social challenges the immigrant street child. Many of them sleep with their parents or guardians in front of shops, at bus stations, uncompleted buildings, car parks, just to mention a few. They cannot afford an apartment. Housing in Accra is very expensive with landlords charging a year's rent up front which is very hard to come up with for immigrants, especially those working menial jobs or have no jobs. They therefore end up making the streets their home until they can afford which is quite rare.

The other challenge faced by the immigrant child is the problem of having proper meals. It is quite easy to tell that these children do not feed properly, they look malnourished and ill, and as such people tend to steer away from them when they are approached by the children. Some of these immigrant street children come from large families, therefore whatever small money that has been made for the day is what is used to make food for the whole family (Arthur-Boafor, 2015). Even those without a family must share their food or earnings with so called keeper who is usually an older peer who is thug. Others work together as pairs or groups and if one person is unable to provide food, another will provide, and they will share. An account is given of one respondent who said,

*'If I'm not able to work and get money, some of the girls I work with will buy food then we all eat. If they also don't have and I have, I buy for them to eat'.*

#### 4.3 Living with harsh weather conditions and infections

Harsh weather conditions are some of the challenges faced by immigrant street children in Accra. Due to the poor nature of their environment and lack of sanitary to bath and clean themselves, they suffer from different forms of infections and other health challenges.

According to statistics during the census of street children in Accra, 68.4% complained of malaria which was the most common ailment among them; 13.6% complained of colds; 7.7% had infections; 5.8% had rashes; 3.3% had headaches and 1.1 % had fever” (Census on Street Children, department of social welfare, 2011).

Ghana is a tropical country and like most tropics it experiences heavy rainfalls. When it rains in Accra it usually comes with the loss of lives and properties because many parts of the city do not have a well-planned drainage system for outflow of rainwater. This therefore creates waterlogs in many areas for a long time thereby breeding mosquitoes which are the carriers of malaria parasite. So, street children suffer very much from malaria because of mosquito bites because they sleep in open spaces like the front of shops and in bus station. They are also exposed to cold weather during the rainy and harmattan seasons. They suffer from skin diseases and infections as they dwell in dirty environments and floors with mats, cardboard papers, and anything they can on.

#### 4.4 Emotional, Physical and Sexual Abuse

Street children suffer different forms of abuses especially sexual and physical abuse in the hands of their peers, adults, and even public officials such The Police, road safety officials or other officials. The respondents gave this information through the interview questionnaire saying,

*“Policemen consider us as pickpockets and sometimes abuse us physically, they see us as criminals, and they beat us and sometimes take us to jail”.*

These abuses sometimes begin from physical and extends into sexual or vice versa and sometimes the victims are threatened. On the streets some of these children endure physical and sexual abuse and are viewed and used as sex tools, and to some it has become an accepted way of life. This leaves a negative impact such as hopelessness, guilt, shame on them and their general outlook in life is blurred.

In their study of the lived experiences of street children in Durban et al. (2016), have observed that sexual abuse is the unwanted norm for these children. Through the respondents, we get to

know the extent of abuse on these children. One of the respondents interviewed responds as follows about how they are often raped:

*“There are boys that rape us, who don't see us as sisters, but as girls that are there to get raped. I was raped by a guy. When it happened, I felt so violated and alone. I felt so powerless when I got raped, I did not even try to fight back. I just let him do whatever he was doing, and I just kept on crying.”*

The above situation is not farfetched from what is experienced by street children in Accra Ghana. However, some scholars have argued that sexual abuse or crime has the lowest reporting rate, as there is not enough data on this. This is in part as a result of the stigma associated with those that have been sexually abused.

#### 4.5 Exposure to drugs and other social vices

Street children are often exposed to various kinds of drugs and are usually agents of social vices due to the situation they find themselves. Some use drugs to forget their present life situations, while others peddle it to survive. Others consume in order to feel very ‘high’ so they can gather the courage to fight the older boys and to handle the challenges of everyday life on the streets.

It has been reported by World Health Education (WHO) that globally about 90% of street children use drugs, although there may be variations in the kind of drugs used.

The cases of substance use found among street children and youths could be said to be caused by factors like peer influences, gender, homelessness and age. It has been observed generally those males are likely to use drugs such as, marijuana, cocaine and all other substances than females. According to Oppong, Meyer-Weitz, et al. (2014), although among the male and the female street children alike, there are cases of substance use disorders as they cited.

The idea of surviving in the street poses a challenge to these children, leading them into several vices. It is evident that many crimes like pickpocketing, robbery, prostitution and drug use and abuse are common among street children. Since most of these children are not given opportunities to have formal education or learn a trade in Accra Ghana, their life situation

pushes them into vices as a means of survival, although there is no statistics in Accra to determine the number or extent of drug use among these street children.

#### 4.6 The Working Life Partner: An Example of Street Children Empowerment Foundation (SCEF, Ghana)

There are many NGOs that have emerged over the years to supplement government's efforts in curbing and reducing social inequality when it comes to children. SCEF works under the guidelines provided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNHRC) which emphasizes that children should be protected from all manner of physical and mental violence, injury, abuse, neglect, maltreatment, and exploitation. SCEF is a privately registered NGO that provides certain child protection services. It was started by a Ghanaian and supported by three Finnish students in 2010. He was inspired to establish it after observing the experiences of street children during his national service with another Ngo. He began a study of the street children that revealed a high percentage of the interviewed children had challenges in accessing their rights to basic education in Accra. These challenges he grouped into funding for required school tools and accessories like uniforms, backpacks, exercise books, textbooks. His main aim of creating this organization is to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children. The SCEF child protection policy entails as follows: (1) Protecting children from maltreatment, (2) Preventing impairment on children's health or development, (3) Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care, and (4) Undertaking that role to enable those children to have optimum life chances and enter adulthood successfully (Brown, 2014).

Although SCEF's focus are children in its immediate vicinity of James Town which is a suburb of Accra, they also reach out to children in other environs of Accra 'Our work is meant to eradicate street-living amongst children across the James Town and Accra neighborhood and in doing so alleviate poverty'. Such an achievement would drastically boost the area's economic standing and inspire much-needed development in a forgotten neighborhood of a currently fast-developing urban center" (SCEF, 2020). Their major aim is to tackle the basic needs of the children, through their social work activities especially in the areas of giving them access to education via scholarships and coaching. Using their social work approach, they monitor the children in the respective schools where their scholarship beneficiaries attend, to

know their performance and determine that their funds are judiciously utilized for the purpose for which it was given. Apart from taking care of the children, they also try to reach out to the parents of the children, empower them so they can take up the responsibility of taking care of their children. There are three approaches to how they run their programs for these street children. Firstly, is to selectively approach them to know those who are interested, then they are rescued. Secondly, after being rescued, they go through the rehabilitation process which entails three months training where they are given basic knowledge such as basic numeracy, literacy, creative arts, life skills, classroom rules, and other regulations to prepare them for school (SCEF, 2020.) When this is achieved, final stage is reintegration which is done by contacting the parents of the children if possible and creating a means of uniting them.

## 5 METHODOLOGY

Since the focus of the research will entail interview in the form of questionnaires with the children, and other stakeholders, the methodological approach will be quantitative. Quantitative method can be said to be the method of collecting data that is focused on individuals and numerical values. According to Chonody (2021), “Quantitative methods emphasize objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires, and surveys, or by manipulating pre-existing statistical data using computational techniques”. He further explains that quantitative research deals on gathering numerical data and generalizing it across groups of people or to examine a particular phenomenon. By using variables, quantitative research tries to measure change, and allows us to make important comparisons and quantify some correlations. It also aims at some generalizations to large populations by using specific sampling methods and large data sets. It can also provide very important descriptive statistics about a group of persons or location and help us know the characteristics of the subject in question (Scarnato, 2019). Whereas quantitative research deals with numbers, qualitative research deals with facts and details that are not counted in numbers. The research will adopt both qualitative and quantitative method to research. The research will be carried out using questionnaires to sample the opinions of the street children from their various locations around the study area, from their responses, data will be collected which will serve as evidence to tackle the research questions and give answers to understanding the plight of the street children.

### 5.1 Research objections and Questions

The general objective of this study is to identify who these immigrant street children are, examine the problems and difficulties they encounter on the streets as immigrant children and establish the roles played by religious institution and NGOs in the welfare of these children. The study seeks to bring to light their existence to so stakeholders such as religious institutions and nongovernmental organizations can come together to develop a long-term strategy to protect and promote the rights of these children.

The research questions of this thesis are:

1. Who the immigrant street children are and what they do in Accra?



2. What problems and difficulties do they encounter?
3. Which institutions reach out to them and how?

### Significance of the study

This study will contribute to already existing literature on street children in Ghana by examining the role of selected stakeholders in addressing the plight of immigrant street children on the streets of Accra and shed more light on institutional approaches that exist to address the phenomenon.

The study also contributes significant information to existing literature by studying the unique case of immigrant street children.

### Study Area: Accra Metropolitan Area

The research is centred in the Accra metropolitan area which is the capital of Ghana. Accra being the capital has much infrastructure and international presence thereby making it an attraction for both local migrants and immigrants. It is seen as a place of endless opportunities. There are different locations where immigrant street children and their parents or guardians are usually found in Accra, and it is these places the study was based on. The selected areas are Tema bus station, Roman Ridge, Dzorwulu junction, 37, Airport junction and the Spintex Road. By choosing these different areas and locating the immigrant street children to respond to the questionnaires, the researcher believes that the areas selected will sufficiently represent the Accra city in general and as well serve the purpose.

### 5.2 Data collection and Method

The method of data collection was the use of questionnaires. For a better understanding, questionnaire can be said to be a research tool which has a lot of questions which is used for gathering information from respondents. To achieve this purpose, the study was done on different days and time to observe the activities of the children as well as interact with them to

sample them from local children who are also inhabitants of the street. The study was also carried out with the help of an interpreter. A total of about 42 multiple choice and open-ended questions were properly structured into the questionnaire to enable the researcher to get the exact details needed. After some days of observation and interaction, the questionnaire with several structured multiple choice and open-ended questions was administered to different respondents. Some of respondents on the streets were going about their daily activities, hanging out with friends, and trading. In some cases, the researcher was asked to contact some gang or group leaders who were said to oversee some of the street children, whose permission needed to be taken before they were allowed to be participate in the research.

The study made use of primary and secondary data. Primary data are data collected for a specific research problem using procedures that best fit the research problem (Hox & Boeijs, 2005). With the use of research strategies such as interview questionnaire information was collected from the streetchildren and other stakeholders. Secondary sources were very relevant in the study. Hox & Boeijs (2005) states that secondary data points the researcher into targeting specific areas. Secondary data was therefore collected from books, surveys, web journals to give credence to the study.

Data gathering in research is essential thus it is imperative that selecting the way the data should be obtained and from whom is also taken into consideration (Tongco, 2007). This study gathered data by sampling. Schmidt and Hollensen (2006) define sample as the selected group that represents the study population while sampling is the process of identifying the selected group to be interviewed from the study population. The selection of the research participants required a purposeful and deliberate selection for the purpose of the study, hence the selection of immigrant street children. Tongco defines purposeful samplings as the deliberate choice of an informant based on the qualities they possess (Tongco, 2007).

Furthermore, it was stated in the questionnaire that respondents could feel free to express themselves and could decide at any point to discontinue with the questionnaire, as so, some of them did not disclose their identities because they feared the researcher might want to get them into trouble. While some respondents answered the questionnaire without much persuasion, others requested for money and other incentives to give the researcher the information needed.

The use of questionnaire was the choice of method because the topic deals with many respondents such that the responses will go a long way to represent a proportion of the immigrant street children. McLeod (2018) states the importance of questionnaire as a data collection tool. He stated that ‘questionnaires provide a relatively cheap, quick and efficient way of obtaining information from many people’. Although it may have its own challenges when applied in research but for this purpose one can infer that using questionnaire will make it easier for respondents to express themselves rather than interviews or focus groups. Let us consider the variables that will be used for the data collection in this study.

### Description of Study Variables

Ben Davis (2021) has stated that variables are very important in quantitative research. He states that variables are important as they help the researcher to measure concepts in his study. As quantitative studies focus on measuring and explaining variables, it will be necessary to choose the right variables. To begin with, it will be necessary to isolate the correct variable for usage in measuring the property. Two basic variables were utilized. They are dependable variable and independent variables.

### Dependent Variables

The dependent variable is what is measured in research and what is affected during the research. The dependent variable responds to the independent variable. In this study, this variable can be said to be the income that the immigrant street children make from their daily activities. This examined using the daily minimum wage at the time data was collected. Data was analysed based on the income made by the immigrant street children which was got from the questionnaire segment ‘livelihood and experiences’ which was achieved using various questions. In essence the dependent variable is the effect, and its value depends on changes in the independent variable.

## Independent Variables

The independent variable is the cause. Its value is independent of other variable in the study which is the dependent variable. The independent variables here deal with the personal information of the children, the religious network and affiliations, institutional interventions and provisions which shall be broken down further in the study. For easy data collection, the questionnaire was categorized into several parts which shall be investigated briefly as follows to tabulate data.

The sections to which the questionnaire was categorized are explained below.

### I. Personal Information

Information such as age, sex, state of origin, educational attainment, languages spoken, duration of stay in Accra was under personal information category of the questionnaire.

### II. Livelihood and experiences

This was an important aspect of the questionnaire because it is the focus of the study. Here the respondents were asked the duration of their stay on the streets, the reasons for being there, where they sleep and whether it is paid for or free. Other questions that came into play were the economic activities they were engaged in on the streets, their daily earnings, who the money goes to or what is used for, the activities of their parents or guardians as well as the difficulties and problems they encounter on the street. They were also asked how they felt about their current state

### III. Religion and Networks

In this category the respondents were asked about their faith, their place of worship and how often they visited there. They were asked if they received support or help from members of their religious groups and the type of help. Furthermore, they were asked about their social network and the impact it has on them.

### IV. Institutional intervention/provision

Respondents were asked if they know any institution responsible for their welfare, whether they had received help or undertaken any kind of program and how often they received such help.

The above question category was structured into a questionnaire of multiple-choice answer to get data for the analysis. To summarise, all the respondents in the research participated on voluntary basis and in some respect availability of the participants. The criteria used to select the children was of them being of immigrant background. Some children showed little interest while others were interested in talking.

## 6 DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis was carried out through the various responses from the respondents after receiving back the questionnaires. Methods used in analysing data for a case study includes the categorization and interpretation of data in terms of common themes, and the synthesis of data into an overall portrait of the case (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). The data was organised around the responses from the respondents on the plight of immigrant children on the streets of Accra. The use of tabular analysis was employed as the technique for the analysis.

Table 1. Summary of respondents

| <b>Place of data collection</b> | <b>Number and sex of respondents</b> | <b>Age range</b> |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| Tema Station                    | 10 females, 7 males                  | 7–16             |
| Roman Ridge                     | 7 females, 3 males                   | 3–15             |
| 37/Dzorwulu                     | 6 females, 9 males                   | 3–16             |
| Spintex/Airport Rd              | 6 females, 4 males                   | 3–14             |
| <b>Total respondents</b>        | 52                                   | <b>3–16</b>      |

The table gives an overview of the respondents and the age group they fall into as well as the location they are concentrated in. From the above one can infer that the females outnumber the males on the streets. The Tema station location has the highest number of respondents due to the high influx of daily commuters and market seller, as such it is a place where these street children carry out their economic activities. Roman Ridge, Dzorwulu and Spintex/Airport Rd are highbrow areas and as such are the starting and ending points for these immigrant street children.

Table 2. Proportion of children by sex, origin, religious affiliation

| <b>SEX</b>                 | <b>PERCENTAGE</b> |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Male                       | 47                |
| Female                     | 53                |
| <b>Total</b>               | <b>100</b>        |
| <b>RELIGIOUS AFFILIATE</b> |                   |

|               |            |
|---------------|------------|
| Christian     | 47         |
| Moslem        | 52         |
| Other         | 1          |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>100</b> |
| <b>ORIGIN</b> |            |
| Niger         | 20         |
| Mali          | 16         |
| Chad          | 30         |
| Burkina Faso  | 34         |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>100</b> |

Many respondents are immigrants from countries such as Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, and Guinea who came as refugees but ended up on the streets.

## 7 RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 7.1 Challenges immigrant children encounter on the street

The experiences of every individual child are very different and unique in their own perspective. But they also share very similar characteristics, and same applies to the immigrant street child.

Table 3. Immigrant street children's economic activities

| Economic activity   | Number of Males<br>Aged 3 – 16 years | Number of Females<br>Aged 3 – 16 years |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| Begging             | 10                                   | 10                                     |
| Hawking             | 8                                    | 10                                     |
| Car window cleaning | 10                                   | 0                                      |
| Head porting        | 0                                    | 0                                      |
| Truck pusher        | 10                                   | 0                                      |
|                     | MALE                                 | FEMALE                                 |
| Daily amount made   | 10–20 (GH cedis)                     | 0–15 (GH cedis)                        |

A big proportion of economic activities are undertaken by the females aged five to sixteen and it was observed that a number of these female immigrant children were young children and some babies 'used' by adults to solicit sympathy from passers-by or drivers to obtain money by begging at busy street intersections and shopping areas. Very young children between the ages of three and six years were sent onto the streets by their parents or guardian to beg, and they would in turn watch over them from a distance. These children will then hand over the monies given to them by passers-by to their parents.

The table 3 indicates that begging is the top economic activity that the immigrant street children engage in as it is evidently more lucrative than engaging in menial work. Studies indicate that street children of Ghanaian background also engage in begging as they see it as a fast way to make money without having to work. It is also clear from the table that income made from begging is higher compared to other forms of economic activity. It should be noted however



that some of the children aged three – five are often accompanied by their parent, the child does the begging while the adult tags from behind.

Table 4 Where immigrant street children slept

| Place                 | Male | Female |
|-----------------------|------|--------|
| Kiosk                 | 9    | 9      |
| Streets (sidewalk)    | 7    | 2      |
| Market stalls         | 9    | 8      |
| Bus terminals         | 8    | 8      |
| Uncompleted buildings | 10   | 10     |

As stated earlier in the study, homelessness is one of the problems faced by immigrant street children. In this table we notice ten of the respondents sleep in uncompleted buildings which they call home. They live there with their parents or guardian. The other most common place of sleep for these immigrant street children is in kiosks. Arrangements are made with kiosk owners to occupy the kiosk during the night and then when morning come, they go out. This arrangement seems beneficial to both parties involved such that the children have a place to sleep at night and the kiosk owner has a ‘guard’ at night.

It is evident that the results from the respondents show that they go through many challenges to survive. Many of them face common challenges like hunger, mosquito bites, harsh weather conditions and sickness due to dirty environment as have been explained earlier. One respondent Alimah from Niger has this to say about the difficulties she faces on the street:

*The sun is too much sometimes, when it rains, it's very cold here and mosquitoes bite me terribly. Sometimes I get sick and no money to go to the hospital and get better treatment.*

One male respondent said he faces extortion from older boys and street touts. Many street children are exploited daily. The street children are cheated when they sell things to people ((Agarwal et al., 1997; Orme & Speipel, 2007; Yeboah & Appiah-Yeboah, 2009). Head porters

and truck pushers are exploited by their patrons. Patrons sometimes refuse to pay them or pay less for the services they perform. A male respondent had this to say:

*“Sometimes they don’t pay me the agreed amount after carrying their load, they will just give me small money and say manage it.”*

Respondents’ answers when asked how they felt about their current state in life point to the fact that they are children after all and do have dreams and aspirations like Aminatu a 7-year-old Malian replied,

*‘I am not happy! I wish I live in a nice big house and attend a nice School so I can become an important person like you’.*

Many of the respondents said they are unhappy about their situation but could do only what they are able to do to survive.

The findings indicate that both the street children and the stake holders acknowledge the plight of the immigrant street children on the streets of Accra. Stakeholders tend to be sympathetic towards street children and see them as people who need help as well as support and as such attempt to provide them with what they think is necessary support. However, these stakeholders adopt a religious frame of support in rendering their support. Religiosity has been found to be the main constituent of the worldview of social action in Ghana and in essence, it is deep-rooted in the Ghanaian culture playing a major role in the principles of everyday life thereby keeping the Ghanaian culture alive (Bedu-Addo, cited in Payne, 2004; Nukunya, 2003).

The research findings were derived from the analysis of the interviews conducted with the use of questionnaires with all respondents. There were two sets of interview guides in this study to get responses from participants. The first group of respondents made up of the street children and the second group comprised staff of some of the religious and non-governmental institutions that were profiled for the study. Many of the data was collected by meeting the respondents on the streets at any time as they were always on the move. Descriptive statistics were used by the researcher in the collection of quantitative data. It is suitable because descriptive statistics is used for describing the basic features of the available data in a study. It provides simple summaries about the sample and the measures as utilized (Trochim, 2021).

Reflecting on the purpose of study, the following were the findings that was derived from the research- identification and activity, problems and difficulties, placement and social resources which are relevant to the findings of the plight of immigrant children on the streets of Accra.

## 7.2 Identification and Activity

From the study it has been identified that many of these immigrant street children are from neighbouring countries such as Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Togo and Chad. Many of whom are refugees who have fled political and economic instability in their own countries, and labour migrants that come to Ghana for temporary or seasonal work and end up not returning to their countries.

It can be inferred from the analysis of the economic activities that these immigrant children are not usually idle, they hustle together sharing information, food and anything they can with one another. They have become active urban economic agents because they have access to the urban informal labour market and have taken advantage of this by rendering services which 'cannot be dispensed with' in the Ghanaian urban market setting.

## 7.3 Problems and Difficulties

The study found the arduous nature of economic activities these immigrant street children do, their sleeping places and positions as well as the overall living conditions which makes them vulnerable to many social difficulties and health problems.

Accommodation and recurring ill health were the major problems that was mentioned stating that they slept in open market spaces, bus stops, old or uncompleted building and had sleeping patterns includes lying side by side tightly packed, or at least two people keeping watch while others slept, as form of protection from outside intruders. Some respondents shared their thoughts as follows,

*'Children on the streets do not have good accommodation' (a 10-year-old Fulani girl).*

*'We the children here that sleep on the street get malaria and cholera because the gutters are not covered, and we don't sleep in mosquito nets' (a 13-year-old boy).*

*'There is a shed in the market where I sleep with other boys as a group in the evening. Some owners of the place let us stay and some others sack us, but we always manage to get a different place (Abou from Burkina Faso).*

*'We sleep at the lorry parks, in lotto kiosks, and at Tema station. Falling sick is a normal thing for us' (A respondent).*

The nature of the economic and living environment of these immigrant street children is an indication that working conditions are basically poor and unhealthy, thereby leaving them vulnerable health wise.

#### 7.4 Social resources and Placement

Placement here refers to gainful positioning in the society and acquiring the rights associated with positions and the opportunity to establish social relations (Adduow, 2012). The Department for Social Welfare in Accra, (DSW) have come up with publications and press releases over the years but notable amongst them is the Child and Family Welfare Policy (CFWP) publishes in 2015. This policy was established in view of one of their core mandates for strengthening families. To address the issue of street children, the department launched the 'Operation Get Off the streets for a Better Life' in 2017. However, these campaigns or programs have no offerings to the immigrant street child. The immigrant street child has no opportunity to participate in any decision making or programs related to child issues in the society with focus aimed at them.

On April 12, 2018, the department had a meeting at Agboghloshi with street children to discuss issues concerning ventures to get children off the streets. In an interview, Afua Cann, the Public Relations Officer (PRO) for the program explained that Operation get off the Streets for a Better Life is a novel approach which presents a holistic perspective to addressing the issue of street children in the country. Thus, the approach took into consideration child beggars,

commercial sex workers, child hawkers, headporters and many others who spend time on the streets. Ironically, 99% of the street children who patronized the program at Agbogbloshie were head porters. Clearly, the street representation was also limited to Agbogbloshie which defeated the purpose of the holistic nature of the program (Tetteh, W. 2018). Sadly, this is the case for many of such programs aimed at street children.

Furthermore, many immigrant street children are aware of NGOs and religious institutions and as far as they (immigrant street children) are concerned, those organizations are only around to distribute food packages and as such are unaware of the programs those organizations have. This unawareness can be attributed partly to the fact that many of these institutions usually come to the streets to share food and gifts, sometimes flyers, on festive occasions such as Easter, Christmas, Eid and other organisational, without deep interaction with the immigrant street children. It can also be attributed to the fact that some programs are targeted at specific localities and a particular group of children.

## 8 ASSESSEMENT, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Ghanaian society has changed over the years and these changes have affected society, most especially children. The study set out to investigate a peculiar group of street children – immigrant children. This chapter presents discussions, assessments, and conclusion of the study.

The study was aimed at investigating who are and where the immigrant children on the streets of Accra came from, the problems and difficulties they faced and the interventions they receive if any. Observations were made and questionnaire forms were used to achieve answers to the research questions. It was observed that children who are homeless posed problems for social security and protection which gives a clear indication that social protection has not been given to these children. Despite the strengths exhibited by the children in being able to independently cater for themselves and their family, they also face difficulties and challenges on the streets. When children are exposed to hazardous conditions, it may result in or lead to psychological, health or physical challenges that may affect their lives in several ways.

The result of the study revealed the problems faced by immigrant street children on the streets of Accra is not very different from the problems faced by other street children. As stated by the findings of Tetteh (2015), that there exist other categories of street children which differs from what has been identified by or in previous studies. The street children recounted problems faced in their homes which is the streets. Problems encountered included exposure to bad weather conditions, ill-health, insecurity, and accommodation. The study identified a category of children who do not belong to the generally researched population of street children in literature. These are immigrant street children who have become street children by virtue of their activities, living as well as sleeping places. The role of religious institutions which have not been explored in Ghanaian street children literature was explored in this study. The immigrant street parents in an interesting phenomenon worth exploring or studying in the future. Consequently, there is the need to add to the literature on such immigrant street life that exist.

From observing the daily activities of these immigrant street children, the possibility of rescuing and rehabilitating immigrant street children could be a long and hard process due to

some reasons, one being that some parents may be unwilling to let their children get into programs as it will result in decrease in their daily sustenance and secondly these children have formed strong bonds in the streets which may make it difficult to separate or take the children off the streets completely.

## 8.1 Ethical Consideration

Ethical consideration has been the foundation for the study process otherwise information could be biased. As postulated by Tinson 2009, an ethical approach to research performed with youngsters is necessary especially with children that are mostly vulnerable to invasion of their private lives and behaviour by researchers (cited in Homan, 2001; Tinson, 2009). In this study, respondents were informed about the content of the questionnaire and the rationale behind it before being handed to them. The information provided by respondents was kept confidential, and respondents were informed beforehand of the possibility to discontinue the study if they wished to stop. The clarification of their participation was made verbal and stated in the questionnaire where respondents provided informed consent before engaging in completing the questionnaire.

## 8.2 Diaconia in Ghanaian society

Diaconia in Ghana is an aspect of spiritual leadership and by extension an expression of religious beliefs and practices as a core constituent of one's world view of social action and as such practical expressions of religions and beliefs seem to manifest in coping with difficult situations as well as a helping behaviour toward others.

In the area of a well-being system of 'having, loving and being' put together as an expectation to nurture the child and the church being at the forefront of this implementation has been unable to achieve desired results. Social welfare department of Ghana study bulletin shows that the number of children ending up in the streets are increasing (Department of Social Welfare, Ghana, 2011.) It is evident then that the well-being system in Ghana and by extension the church has not met up to standards in its role in the well-being of the immigrant street child.

This is not put blame on any institution but sometimes these systems or campaigns fail, and the result is children being left to the streets. However, this can be turned around through increased meaningful engagement and competence of religious institutions and faith groups, religious institutions becoming safer places for children and increased policy advocacy for street children.

Although local churches in Ghana are active and trying to shape the life of the local street children, the nation church leadership, which is the council of all churches in Ghana, seems silent on issues concerning street children. This is because some churches start projects in the name of street children just to generate donations from donors, and yet these children get little or no help. To manage and carry out projects, creation of a safe space for faith leaders and faith communities from different denominations and/or different religions to learn, share and debate issues related to street children; thereby fulfilling the mission that they have been ordained to accomplish.

Therefore, for a Church that is responsive to the plight of society, fresh empowerment approaches to address poverty and social problems are needed (Tettey et al. 2020.)

### 8.3 Further Research

Information from this study has provided a picture of some sort of this unique population and phenomenon of street children. Immigrant street children in Accra have formed some complex relationships on the streets to ensure their survival. For instance, they work together in groups as well as pass on relevant information to one another. Very little attention has been given to immigrant street children because focus has always been on migrant children from the rural areas of the country. The problems faced by the rural migrant street children are the same problems and more encountered by immigrant street children. Further exploration into this unique population could be studied as there are many layers to this population of street children. For instance, a study of the parents of these immigrant children can be undertaken.



#### 8.4 Limitations

Language was a challenge which may have affected the collection of data from the respondents because information was passed back and forth by an interpreter. The reason being some of the street children did not understand the language in which the questionnaire was written, and this could only have been done through the local language they understood, which is the local dialect. On the other hand, those who were literate enough were still aided for them to truly understand the process and their responses were recorded accordingly.

Another limitation was that some of the parents of the children that lived on the street with them have a strong influence over their children and so was the presence of street lords who usurped power over the children. Therefore, there may be distortions to some information that the street children have provided.

#### 8.5 Recommendations

Many of these children have been deprived of their childhoods and the skills available to them are those learned from the streets. Therefore, religious and faith groups and other organizations need to consider alternative ways of meeting the needs of the immigrant street children population by pooling their expertise and resources together to develop interventions that meet their needs of these children. Government institutions responsible for the welfare of children should liaise with all other institutions including religious and interfaith groups to pursue awareness programs and outreach campaigns for these children, carried out within their environmental setting where they will feel at ease. The children should also be involved in process of policies, programs or skill trainings designed for them.

Furthermore, networks that the immigrant street children utilize that have been identified should be used as channels to address some of the difficulties and challenges that they face and finally to lessen the rising number of street children, cheap accommodation or hostel facilities should be considered by all concerned institutions.

## 8.6 Professional Development

The researcher developed and further deepened research stages and methods during the thesis process. Valuable knowledge was attained about projects and the financing processes that NGOs adopt to implement programs and campaigns.

The researcher also adopted ethical principles and implemented them throughout the research process and did not take advantage of the immigrant street children, hence everything done was in mutual agreement without force, intimidation, or coercion.

The interest of the researcher on the issues of immigrant street children grew since this group of children are unique and have other areas that can be explored.

## 8.7 Conclusion

The process of rescuing and rehabilitating the immigrant street children could be a long and hard process due the reason that some parents may be unwilling to let their children get into programs as it will result in decrease in their daily sustenance. The religious institutions as well as the non-governmental organizations have roles to play in the lives of these immigrant street children. Many of these institutions claim to have rescue and rehabilitation programs but there seem to be a lack of coordination and cooperation in carrying their programs or creating public awareness.

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APPENDIX 1. SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

PLIGHT OF IMMIGRANT STREET CHILDREN IN ACCRA:  
THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH AND NGOs

NOTE: Informed Consent

To be administered to street children of immigrant background in Accra.

Hello, my name is LATOYA FAFA AUGUSTT, a student of Diaconia University of Applied Sciences, Finland. I am undertaking a study on the Plight of immigrant children on the streets of Accra and seeking the role of Churches and NGOs in addressing their plight. This study will draw respondents from areas such Tema Bus station, Roman Ridge, 37 area, Dzorwulu junction, Airport Road and Spintex road, all suburbs of Accra. To carry out this study, I would like to ask you some questions about your living conditions, developed relationships on the streets and any institutional support as well as the interventions that has been made on your behalf.

I would like to assure you that the information given would be kept strictly confidential and your identity will remain anonymous.

Your participation in this work is very important to help the student gather relevant information for the study. You are free to participate in this study which takes about 30 minutes to complete. If you agree to participate, there are questions you may skip if they make you uncomfortable – you can also discontinue the interview at any stage if you wish.

You are free to ask questions about this study if you feel the need to at any stage.

Please, are you willing to participate in this study based on the information I have given you?

YES = 1

NO = 2

Date of interview (dd/mm/yyyy) ..... /...../2018

Address: .....

SECTION A: PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

1. Sex: Male  Female

2. Age:

3. Have you ever been to school? YES  NO

4. What level have you reached? Primary complete  Primary incomplete   
Secondary complete  Secondary incomplete   
Other: .....

5. Where is your country of origin? .....

6. From where have you come into Accra? .....

7. How long have you been in Accra? .....

8. What language(s) do you speak? English  French  Arabic   
Bambara  Hausa  Twi  Ga  Ewe

9. Are your parents on the streets with you? YES  NO

If no, where are they? .....

10 Are your parents alive? YES  NO  MOTHER  FATHER

11. Father's occupation: ..... Mother's occupation: .....

12. Do you have someone else who takes care of you on the street? YES  NO

13. Who is this person? A Sibling  An older person   
A friend  Good Samaritan

14. What does this person do for you? .....

15. What is your religious affiliation? Christian  Muslim  Pagan

Traditional  None  Other: .....



SECTION B: LIVELIHOOD AND EXPERIENCES

1. How long have you been on the streets? .....
2. What brought you to the streets? .....
3. Where do you go stay/sleep at? .....
4. How long have you been staying/sleeping there? .....
5. How did you find it? .....
6. Is it paid for or is it free? Paid  How much? ..... Free
7. What economic activities do you engage in on the street?  
Begging  Car window cleanin  Hawking  Garbage collection   
Carpark attendant  Market porter
8. Do you face any problems in your chosen economic activity? Yes  No   
Sometimes  Don't want to say
9. What kind of problems do you face? Exploitation  Rape   
Shelter  Attack  Theft  OTHER: .....
10. How regularly do you face these problems? All the time   
Sometimes  Rarely  Never  OTHER .....
10. How much do you make a day? .....
11. What do you use the money for? Or who do you give it to? .....
12. Do your parents also engage in economic activities? YES  NO   
What kind? .....
13. Do you face other problems which have nothing to do with your chosen activity?  
.....
14. How do you feel about your current state of being?  
.....
15. Are there others your age and same ethnicity as you on the street?  
YES  NO  I don't know
16. How do you relate with them?  
.....
17. How often do you encounter The Police and other authorities?  
.....
18. How does the public treat you?  
.....

SECTION C: RELIGION AND NETWORKS

1. Do you hold any beliefs and are you a member of any religious group? YES  NO

2. What kind of group have you joined? Church groups  Mosque

Traditional  social groups  Other: .....

3. What do you do as a group? Pray and Sing  Encourage ourselves

Socialise

4. How often do you meet with your group? Once  Always  Not at all

5. How does your belief help your life on the street?

.....

6. Do you get any support/help from your group? YES  NO

7. What kind of help do you get from your group?

Encouragement  Financial  Job Opportunities

Other: .....

8. Do you have friends from the street? YES  NO

9. What does the friendships mean to you?.....

.....

10. What do you get from your friendship association? .....

.....

11. Do you encounter problems with your friends? YES  NO

What kind of problems? .....

.....

SECTION D: INSTITUTIONAL INTERVENTIONS/PROVISIONS

1. Do you know any institution(s) responsible for the welfare of children?

YES  NO

2. What institutions do you know? NGOs  DOVVSU

Social Welfare  Religious Groups  Other: .....

3. Have any of the institutions offered you help in any way? YES  NO

4. What kind of help were you offered? Job  Food  Information

Financial  Accommodation  Other: .....

5. Did you like what you were offered? YES  NO

6. If YES, why? .....

.....

If NO, why? .....

.....

7. Were you asked what kind of help you needed before it was given? YES  NO

8. Did you receive the kind of help you asked for? YES  NO

9. How often do you get assistance from these institutions?

Weekly  Monthly  Sometimes  Not at all

10. What is does the relationship with these institutions feel like?

Cordial  Bothersome  Strained

Indifferent  OTHER: .....

## APPENDIX 2 INTERVIEW GUIDE ONE

### The Plight of Immigrant Street Children in Accra: The Role of The Church And NGOs

Instruments for data collection

Interview Guide for Immigrant Street Children

Age:.....

Gender: .....

#### A. PERSONAL BACKGROUND

1. Where is your country of origin?
2. How long have you been in Accra?
3. How did you come to Accra?
4. What language(s) do you speak?
5. What is your educational level?

#### B. FAMILY BACKGROUND

1. Are your parents alive?
2. Do you live with them?
3. What do your parents do for a living?
4. Are they on the streets with you?

#### C. LIVELIHOOD AND EXPERIENCES ON THE STREET

1. How long have you been on the streets?
2. What brought you to the streets?
3. What are the difficulties you face on the street?
4. What kind of work activities do you engage in?
5. How much do you make?
6. Where do you stay/sleep?

#### D. RELIGION AND NETWORKS

1. Do you have a belief?
2. How does your belief help you in daily living?
3. Do you get any support from members of your religious group?
4. What kind of support do they give you?

5. Do you have friends?
6. How do your friends support you?
7. Do you encounter problems with your friends?

## APPENDIX 3 INTERVIEW GUIDE TWO

### Interview guide for Stakeholders

This interview is done for academic purposes only. It is to find out the intervention programs or provisions that have been carried out on immigrant street children in Accra by Churches and NGOs and how the provisions or programs are made to meet their needs.

Date of Interview: .....

Name of Organization/Institution: .....

1. What is your stance for vulnerable street children?

- Objectives/aim of your institution
- Do you have the statistics on immigrant children on the streets of Accra?

2. What role does your institution have to play in the lives of street children?

- What relationship does your institution have with immigrant street children in Accra?

3. What program(s) do you offer to the children?

- What has been introduced previously and what is in place now?

4. What is the rationale behind the programs already introduced? What were your considerations?

5. How targeted are your programs?

- To cater for the needs of the immigrant street children.
- To get them off the streets.
- To send them back home to parents or guardians if needed?

6. Do you get any external assistance/support? What is the source of your assistance/support?

7. How do the children meet their needs? What social networks do they have?

- How are these networks established (before the streets or on the streets)?
- How do they make use of this networks?

8. Do you include the children when making the decisions on the programs to be implemented?

- What contributions/inputs have they made in the past or making currently?
- How do you decide on what to put in place for their benefit?

9. How would you measure the performance of those programs?

- Success rates, failures, limitations

10. Are there any policies you use when dealing with the street children?

- What policies deal directly with immigrant street children?

11. What are the plans for street children? Do you hope to get them off the streets entirely, support with vocations, skills, or alternative livelihoods?

12. Taking previous interventions into consideration, what should be done differently in tackling the immigrant street children situation?