

PSYCHOSOCIAL NEEDS, STRESSORS AND SURVIVAL STRATEGIES OF ADOLESCENT STREET CHILDREN IN MZUZU, MALAWI: A HUMAN DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

By

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

When a developing country embarks on a pathway towards modernization and urbanization, one form in which poverty expresses itself is in the outgrowth of street children. In Malawi, the number of street children increases every day.

The goal of this study is to gain a better understanding of the needs, stressors and survival strategies of street children in Mzuzu, Malawi. To achieve this goal, the objectives formulated are: to explain adolescent development within the context of a human development approach; discuss the phenomenon of street children, their needs and related stressors; describe their survival strategies; and to analyse and interpret data on investigation of the needs, stressors and survival strategies employed by adolescent street children in Mzuzu, Malawi.

A qualitative research approach was used together with an exploratory and descriptive research design in order to provide a detailed description of the phenomenon being studied, namely street children. The sample for the study was selected by means of purposive sampling. Twenty-five adolescents between the age of thirteen and fifteen living in/and or working in the streets of Mzuzu were involved in the study. Data was gathered by means of a semi-structured interview schedule which was administered during individual interviews.

The main recommendations of the study are related to improvement of households' capacity to care for their children. In addition, recommendations suggest support at grassroots level (family) as a way of mitigating the exodus of children into the streets. It is also recommended that policy should look at the issue of street children as a child rights and a child protection issue.

OPSOMMING

Wanneer 'n ontwikkelende land die pad na modernisasie en verstedeliking betree, is die voorkoms van straatkinders een manier waarop armoede na vore kom. In Malawi neem die getal straatkinders daagliks toe.

Die doel van die studie is om beter begrip te ontwikkel vir die behoefte, stressors en oorlewingstrategieë van straatkinders in die stad, Mzuzu, Malawi. Om hierdie doel te bereik is die doelwitte wat geformuleer is: om adolessente ontwikkeling binne die konteks van 'n menslike ontwikkelingsbenadering te verduidelik; die verskynsel van straatkinders, hulle behoeftes en verbandhoudende stressors te bespreek; hulle oorlewingstrategieë te beskryf; en om data oor oorlewingstrategieë van die straatkind in Mzuzu, Malawi soos verkry deur 'n ondersoek, te ontleed en interpreteer.

'n Kwalitatiewe navorsingsbenadering is tesame met 'n verkennende en beskrywende navorsingsontwerp gebruik ten einde 'n gedetailleerde beskrywing van die verskynsel wat bestudeer word, naamlik straatkinders, te verskaf. Die steekproef vir die studie is geselekteer by wyse van 'n doelbewuste steekproef. Vyf-en-twintig adolessente tussen die ouderdom van dertien en vyftien, wat leef, en/of werk in die strate van Mzuzu, is by die studie betrek. Data is ingesamel met behulp van 'n semi-gestruktureerde onderhoudskedule wat geadministreer is tydens individuele onderhoude.

Die vernaamste aanbevelings van die studie hou verband met die verbetering van huishoudings se vermoë om hulle kinders te versorg. Verder, stel aanbevelings ondersteuning op grondvlak (gesin) voor as 'n manier om die uittog van kinders na die strate te verminder.

Dit word ook aanbeveel dat beleid die kwessie van straatkinders as 'n kinderregte- en kinderbeskermingskwessie in oënskou moet neem.

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With God, all things are possible.

“Children are who they are tomorrow, as they live today.”

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 RATIONALE FOR STUDY

The phenomenon of children on the streets exist the world over. UNICEF (2006:40) estimated the number of street children worldwide to be 100 million and increasing. These increasing numbers are evident in developing contexts, such as Africa, Asia and Latin America (Schurink & Tiba cited in Veeran, 1999:2). Approximately twenty million street youths are found in Asia, 10 million in Africa and the Middle East, and about 40 million are said to be found in Latin America (UNICEF, 2006:40).

In addition, UNICEF (2006:40), in its State of the World's Children Report noted that street children are amongst the most physically visible of all vulnerable children in the world. However, they are also among the most invisible and therefore the hardest to reach with vital services such as education and health care and the most difficult to protect. To further highlight the plight of street children, UNICEF (2000:4) stated that, *"being poor is in itself a health hazard; worse, however, is being urban and poor. Much worse is being poor, urban, and a child. But worse of all is being a street child in an urban environment."*

In a 1993 report, World Health Organisation cited a number of possible causes for the street child phenomenon, which included family breakdown, armed conflict, poverty, natural and man-made disasters, famine, physical and sexual abuse, exploitation by adults, dislocation through migration, urbanization and overcrowding, acculturation, and disinheritance or being disowned.

However, there are exceptions to each explanation indicating that the phenomenon is multicausal. To support this, Aptekar (1994:210-211) cited in Epstein (1996:295), noted that, civil disturbance, for example, has not produced vast numbers of street children in Ethiopia, although they exist in relatively calm Kenya. However, the most common accepted cause of the street children phenomenon is the decline in the family environment. CHILDHOPE in De Moura (2002:21) asserted that *"the*

breakdown of traditional family and community values and structures is ... a major factor in the increase of youths on and off the streets."

A study noted that the majority of street children in the developing world are male (Epstein, 1996:295). Girls are more likely to stay at home and work. However, those who end up in the streets are more likely to work in domestic settings and prostitution (Campos, Ude, Greco, Ruff, Rolf, Antunes, Halsey & Greco, 1994:320). Furthermore, Aptekar (1994) in Epstein (1996:295) noted that a disproportionate number of street children are first-born, reflecting the severe economic pressures impoverished families confront. In addition, street children, in developing countries, are usually young, aged 5 years and above because their earning value declines as they mature (Epstein, 1996:295). From the above assertions, it is therefore clear that for children and youth living in the developing world, exposure to street life is more systematic, of a longer duration and more closely tied to direct economic deprivation than that typically experienced by children and youth in the developed world (Epstein, 1996:295).

The situation of street children in Malawian cities supports Epstein's assertions cited above. An increase in social and economic burdens in families and communities, aggravated by the breakdown of extended family structures, has been attributed to an increase in the population of street children in the country (UNICEF, 2006:40).

The problems include poverty which affects 65.2% of Malawians, chronic food insecurity, urban migration, as well as HIV infection which has rendered 330 000 to 710 000 children under the age of 18 years, orphans (Government of Malawi, 2005:12).

In Malawi, street children are included under the broad umbrella term of Orphans and other Vulnerable Children (OVC), whose figure was projected by the Government of Malawi (2005:12) in its National Plan of Action for Orphans and other Vulnerable Children 2005-2009, to constitute 18% of all children by 2010, with a figure of 1 150 000. Government of Malawi (2005:11) defined vulnerable child as "*a child who has no able parents or guardians, staying alone or with elderly grandparents or lives in a sibling headed household or has no fixed place of abode and lacks access to health care, material and psychological care, education and has*

no shelter". An orphan was defined as "a child who has lost one or both parents because of death and is under the age of 18 years" (Government of Malawi, 2005:11).

According to the Child Rights Information Network periodic report on children's rights in Malawi in 2010, the Child Rights Commission (CRC) had reiterated its concern on the increasing number of street children and lack of specific policies and programs to address the situation, and assure their rights to, in particular, adequate housing, health care, nutrition and education. CRC recommended that street children be provided with appropriate recovery assistance, that social integration within their families and communities be promoted and that a study be undertaken on the scope and causes of the phenomenon of street children (CRIN, 2010). From the above, it is clear that research on the street child phenomenon is still in its infancy in Malawi and only a few organisations countrywide assist such children. However, as noted by many authors (Epstein, 2002:295-296; UNICEF, 2006:40; Tyler & Beal, 2010:103) street children are some of the most vulnerable children who are separated from their families, and likely to be undernourished, stigmatized, abused and uneducated.

Maphatane (1994:23) contextualised the phenomenon of street children within a cause-and-effect relationship. He asserted that if a community is vulnerable, there tends to be a lack of neighbourliness, friendliness, caring, reciprocity and support towards one another. If this is combined with a community who has a low socio-economic status, then the likelihood of youths moving towards life on the street for their own survival is increased (Maphatane, 1994:23). Panicker (1993:1) also pointed out that many of the street children are basically rootless, mostly because they exist without resources, homes, education and guidance, or care and affection.

In his study in Lilongwe, Malawi, Lemba (2002:7) discovered that many of such children are not orphaned, but move to the streets to perform piece work to buy food, and supplement the family income, suggesting a high vulnerability to food insecurity. The author added that other than poverty, children resort to street life because of lack of parental care and guidance, neglect, abuse, and other social ills within the family and community environments where such children come from (Lemba, 2002:8).

Tyler and Beal (2010:103) supports the above findings by noting that a lack of stable residence results in many young people moving to the streets and participating in a variety of activities often as a means of survival.

As such, the lifestyles and daily routines of these children may expose them to potential offenders thereby increasing their chances of becoming victims of physical and/or sexual assault (Tyler & Beal, 2010:103).

They survive through scavenging, begging, stealing, or exchanging sex for money. Some work at unskilled jobs to earn money legally or engage in work requiring no capital, such as washing cars or collecting paper to sell (Campos *et al.*, 1994:327). Epstein also asserted that they engage in menial activities that include shoe shining and shoe repair, window washing, trash picking and tea serving (Epstein, 1996:295).

Often, working street children cope with developmental tasks such as attending school while contributing to the well-being of their impoverished families (Campos *et al.*, 1994:327). One possible source of developmental stress for these youngsters is having to work from an early age (Trad & Greenblatt, 1990:23-49). This interferes with their schooling and can be physically and emotionally injurious.

Another potential source of stress for working street children is exposure to the risks and temptations of the street. Going to the street does appear to be linked to earlier onset of sexual activity compared to the general population (Pathfinder International, 1991 in Campos *et al.*, 1994:327). They live in a world of decreased adult presence, increased importance of the peer group, drug and alcohol abuse, and early on-set of sexual activity. For some, drugs make street life bearable by dulling hunger (inhalants are cheaper than food), helping youngsters forget their problems, and giving youth courage to steal and face the dangers of the street (Campos *et al.*, 1994:327). However, numerous observers have noted the resiliency of street children in the developing world along with their comparatively infrequent use of drugs (Epstein, 1996:295).

Parental absence has also been identified as one of the most significant sources of childhood stress (Arnold, 1990 in Campos *et al.*, 1994:328). Many street children do not have adults to turn to in times of trouble, relying instead on peers, institutions, or

strangers. The social and behavioural contexts of street children's lives are probably linked to negative developmental outcomes (Campos *et al.*, 1994:328).

Whilst some authors (Aptekar, 1988) depict street youth as carefree Huck Finns who are better off than their peers in the slums, it has been noted that many youngsters go to the street to escape difficult family circumstances, but evidently, the street is not a positive developmental context (Campos *et al.*, 1994:328). Geldenhuys indicated that street children may experience feelings of hopelessness, inferiority, despondency, rebellion, feelings of uncertainty about life in general and rage, rejection and desertion as a result of their circumstances (Geldenhuys, 2001:128).

The research process was informed by the human development perspective. The perspective indicates that people develop physically, cognitively, socially, emotionally, and spiritually over a life cycle (Johnson & Yanca, 2007). At each stage individuals should be developing in certain age specific ways, and certain conditions should be present for this development to take place. In the perspective, human need may be identified through noting development that would be expected at a particular life stage that has not taken place. It includes past needs that have not been met and can contribute to difficulties in present social functioning. Additionally, there is identification of developmental lags or situations in which there is danger that the expected development will not take place (Johnson & Yanca, 2007:8)

Charlotte Towle in Johnson and Yanca (2007:6) asserted that physical welfare, opportunity and emotional growth, relationships with others, and provision for spiritual needs, are essential elements if people are to be motivated to meet social goals. Abraham Maslow supported Towle's thinking in his hierarchy of needs, asserting that, a person must first satisfy primary physiological needs such as need for food before social needs are considered (Johnson & Yanca, 2007:7). The Bronfenbrenner's ecological model also explains the interaction between meeting need and different systems in the environment.

Understanding the needs of these youths in more depth provides them with an opportunity to be included in decision-making processes pertinent to their future as contributing members of society. Because many of these youth have run from abusive homes, have experienced revictimization on the street, and have limited

employment skills, programs need to be able to address a multitude of issues to be successful. Need generates feelings, and people express and fulfill need through behaviour. All behaviour has meaning (Johnson & Yanca, 2007:4).

The human development approach highlights how street children's needs shape their behaviour. It also helps in describing how the environment and their means of survival play a central role in their development. How children and adolescents spend their time is important because participation in a variety of activities of differing complexity and scope provides youngsters with learning opportunities (Bronfenbrenner, 1979 in Campos *et al.*, 1994:320). Thus, the activities street children engage in during their daily lives have the potential to influence their long-term development.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND FOCUS

UNICEF (2006:40) reported that the number of street children is on the increase in Malawian cities. According to the National Plan of Action (2005-2009:16) high urban migration is evident amongst children who, no longer having the care and support of their parents, find their way to the main cities.

An estimated eight thousand children in Malawi live under circumstances that deprive them from access to basic social services, proper shelter and at least one nutritious meal a day (Government of Malawi, 2005:16). However, there is no official statistics on the street children in Malawi.

Living on the street, with no supervision, protection or guidance often makes street children vulnerable to a wide range of problems or hazards. Children's needs are not only material, but also social and emotional though adults often believe that children do not suffer emotional problems (Sengendo & Nambi, 1997:105). Whilst not negating the importance of the provision of basic physical needs such as medical facilities, education centres, shelters, food and clothing, this study emphasises that physical needs not be seen in isolation of the mental and emotional needs of these children. As Shanahan (1999:11) points out, *"the most important right of the child is to be a child, to have adults take responsibility for you until you can reasonably take it for yourself"*.

CRIN (2010) cited in its report that the Child Rights Commission highlighted the need for research on the scope and causes of the phenomenon of street children in Malawi. However, the researcher also noted a lack of relevant literature on the psychosocial needs, stressors and survival strategies of street children in Malawi hence the need for this study.

The study focused on street children between the ages of thirteen and eighteen. This age group falls under the adolescence stage, which is described by Singer and Hussey, in the Encyclopaedia of Social Work (1995:40) as the last stage of childhood, and marks the transition between childhood and adulthood. Many of such children do not have the emotional resources to draw on from typical nurturing family experiences, let alone the challenges of meeting their basic needs and coping with the rigours of street life. It is thus important to understand their needs, the challenges they face and how they cope with these challenges as they live and work on the streets.

1.3 AIM OF THE STUDY

The goal of this study was to gain a better understanding of the needs, stressors and survival strategies of street children in Mzuzu, Malawi.

In order to meet this aim, the following objectives were formulated:

- To explain adolescent development within the context of a human development approach.
- To discuss the phenomenon of street children, their needs and related stressors.
- To describe the survival strategies used by children on the streets.
- To investigate the needs, stressors and survival strategies of adolescent street children in Mzuzu.

1.4 CLARIFICATION OF KEY TERMS

1.4.1 Street children

Persons under the age of 18 years who spend all or most of their time on the streets, maintaining little or no contact with their families, hence lacking supervision, protection, and guidance (Scanlon, Tomkins, Lynch & Scanlon, 1998:1596).

1.4.2 Psychosocial needs

That which is necessary for either a person or a social system to function within a reasonable expectation in a given situation (Johnson & Yanca, 2007:4).

1.4.3 Survival strategies

The term is used here to refer simply to actions people take to address their own needs and those of their kin in situations of stress.

The term 'survival' does not imply such actions are invariably successful or carry no costs; the term 'strategy' does not imply the implementation of a carefully prepared plan. Rather, these terms are used in recognition of the fact that people do take actions in response to crises (WHO, 1998).

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.5.1 Research approach

Research can be defined as,

“Any honest attempt to study a problem systematically or to add to [our] knowledge of a problem ...” (Reber, 1995:664).

Therefore, in order to study any phenomenon, it is important to construct a workable plan or method that will enable one to find the extent and limit of the particular topic under investigation.

Research methods can broadly be looked at from two paradigms, qualitative and quantitative approach. According to Sarantakos (in Humphries, 2008:7) the main perceived differences between qualitative and quantitative approaches are:

- Qualitative approach is 'subjective' (i.e. it is concerned with the perspective of the research subjects) and brings the researcher close to subjects; it is flexible and can be adapted according to the context and sees data as mutually constructed between research subjects and the researcher.
- Quantitative approach, on the other hand, is 'objective' (attempts to remove the researcher's views and values from the study); it emphasizes cause-effect linkages; it is based on a model of the physical sciences and on strict, inflexible rules; and distances the researcher from the research subjects.

This study used a qualitative approach.

Qualitative methodology was used to answer questions about the complex nature of a phenomenon, with an aim of understanding the phenomenon from a participants' point of view (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:64). The qualitative researcher is concerned with describing and understanding, rather than explaining behaviour, naturalistic observation and subjective exploration of an insider's perspective (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:65).

The qualitative approach helped uncover some of the complexities of street children's everyday life in order to gain a deeper insight and understand the needs, stressors and how they cope on the streets. It provided rich descriptions of the street life and brought out perceptions of the participants.

The researcher employed a semi-structured interview guide to generate data about children's socio-economic background, family-structure-related (contextual) and street based opportunity (situational) attributes. Questions on the overall family dynamics or structure (demographic compositions) of respondents include age, sex, and survival status of parents, marital status of parents; family size and what their parent(s) were doing for a living.

However, this study relied largely on qualitative methods for data collection and data analysis. The use of qualitative research improved the understanding of the needs, stressors and survival strategies of street children in Mzuzu, Malawi and represented a reasoned account of their everyday life. The researcher was also able to explore the commonalities and diversities in their social experience across time and space.

1.5.2 Research design

Some authors view research design as a blue print offering a framework for data to be collected, investigated and studied.

This study assumed an exploratory design as a method of enquiry for exploring the needs and vulnerabilities faced by children as they tried to cope on the streets.

An exploratory study can be defined as “*a preliminary study designed to provide some feeling for or general understanding of the phenomena to be studied. A good exploratory study will yield cues as to how to proceed with the major investigation*” (Reber, 1995:270). The answer to a ‘what’ question would constitute an exploratory study. The need for such a study arises out of a lack of basic information on a new area of interest, or to have knowledge of a situation so as to formulate a hypothesis (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:95).

Furthermore, exploratory research endeavours to inquire into or discuss in detail that which is being investigated (South African Pocket Oxford Dictionary, 2002, s.v. ‘explore’). According to Bless *et al.* (2006:47), exploratory research explores phenomena with the goal of understanding a situation, phenomena, a community or an individual.

The intention of this study was to explore the psychosocial needs, stressors and survival strategies adopted by adolescent street children in Mzuzu, Malawi. As little relevant or recent literature on the situation in Malawi could be found, the exploratory design was chosen in order to gain insights and to gather information on the topic of interest (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:106; Mouton & Marais, 1988:43).

1.5.3 Research methodology

1.5.3.1 Literature study

A literature study was conducted in the research field in order to gain an understanding of the research topic and to establish a frame of reference from which to proceed, understand what has been done and establish what gaps exist so as to premise our own study. A review was used to collect national and international data in relation to (street) children in order to understand the nature, scope and aetiology

of the street child phenomenon. The review aimed to avoid the duplication of previous studies and highlight possibilities to be explored in the research field (Bless *et al.*, 2006:24; Mouton, 2001:87).

Similarly, it provided current state of knowledge regarding the research problem, to narrow the focus of the problem and ensure that there is no duplication (Monette *et al.*, 2008:81 in De Vos *et al.*, 2011:93).

Therefore, both local and international literature was studied in order to gain a better understanding of the needs, stressors and survival strategies of street children.

1.5.3.2 Population and sampling

Population refers to individuals who possess specific characteristics necessary for the study (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:223). The term sets boundaries on the study units. A population is the “*totality of persons, events, organisation units, case records or other sampling units with which the research problem is concerned*” (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:223). Sampling is necessary because the universe and population are of too great a magnitude to be studied effectively. The researcher, as a result, selects a small group that is still representative of the larger group and that includes all the elements of the larger group (Brynard & Hanekom, 1997:43).

The population for this study was defined as adolescent street children accessing services at the St John of God Hospitaller Services, Umoza drop-in centre. The children are mainly from densely populated suburbs within Mzuzu and its environs.

Non-probability, purposive sampling methods were used to select the sample. Non-probability sampling is done when the population size or the members of the population are unknown. It is a sampling technique according to which the probability of including each element of the population in the sample is not known (Bless *et al.*, 2006:184). Qualitative research tends to use non-probability sampling methods (Bowling, 2002:190). For this study, purposive sampling was used. It is a non-random method of sampling which aims to sample a group of people, or settings, with a particular characteristic (Bowling, 2002:187). This method is also called judgemental sampling as respondents are selected because they have knowledge

that is important to the research process (Bowling, 2002:188). Purposive sampling is based entirely on the judgement of the researcher.

The researcher obtained the identifying particulars of potential participants from the drop in centre, and then selected participants appropriately according to the criteria of inclusion. Therefore, sample selection process was aided by the Social Worker at St John of God Community Services. He helped identify children meeting required criteria. The results based on the sample can then be generalised to the population group.

The sample consisted of twenty-five (street) children, between the ages of thirteen and fifteen, accessing services at the drop-in centre for a period of not less than one month. The restriction on the period was because within the first month of contact with a child in the streets, a thorough assessment is conducted so as to come up with relevant intervention strategies. Children visit the drop-in centre for use of bathroom facilities, meals and recreational activities offered at the centre.

The sample comprised ten girls and fifteen boys. According to (Barker & Knaul, 1991 in Campos *et al.*, 1994:320; Epstein, 1996:295), most research with street children indicates that boys greatly outnumber girls hence the sample comprised a larger number of boys than girls.

Another criterion for inclusion was that the children would have lived on/worked on the streets for a period of not less than a year prior to their accessing services at the drop in centre.

1.5.3.3 Data collection

i. Research instrument

The researcher collected data using a semi-structured interview guide during interviews. A semi-structured interview guide provided the researcher with a set of predetermined questions used to engage the participant and direct the interview (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:352). The guide was semi-structured and included both open and closed question and was administered by the researcher by means of an interview (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:174). Hence the research followed a deductive approach, in

which knowledge progressed from the general to the specific. The interviews were conducted in the local language of Tumbuka used in the Northern region of Malawi.

ii. Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted for the semi structured interview guide. According to De Vos *et al.* (2011:73), a pilot study can be viewed as a “dress rehearsal” for the main investigation as its purpose is to assess the feasibility of the study and test the measuring instrument. The pilot study was conducted with four participants. This allowed for the researcher to ensure that the research instrument gathered all the appropriate data. It further ensured that the participants understood the questions and terminology used in the semi-structured questionnaire. It also brought out possible deficiencies to the attention of the researcher.

iii. Method of data analysis

Data analysis in qualitative studies is mainly interpretive; involving descriptions of the phenomenon (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:315). The process of data analysis began after data collection had reached point of saturation. All field data, for example, audio recordings, written field notes and/or texts, were listened to, read, transcribed and categorised. Though the dominant method of analysis was qualitative, the researcher also employed some descriptive statistics to analyze the data generated from the semi-structured interview guide. The data collected was coded and represented by means of graphs and figures. This allowed for the data to be interpreted and for trends to be identified in the findings (Bless *et al.*, 2006:163; De Vos *et al.*, 2005:337). The data was then summarised and interpreted in the research report and compared to the existing data in the literature study.

1.5.3.4 Ethical considerations

It is of utmost importance that any research carried out should be conducted in an ethical way. The researcher is in a privileged position and information obtained must be treated with care and consideration. The ethics of science is concerned with what is right and what is wrong in the conduct of research. Research ethics places emphasis on the humane and sensitive treatment of research participants, and

provide expectations about the most correct manner of conduct towards participants (Bless *et al.*, 2006:140; Mouton, 2001:238).

The following ethical considerations were relevant whilst conducting the study:

- **Informed consent**

Informed consent refers to the participant's right to know what the research is about, what research procedures will be adopted, and any related risks or disadvantages. It includes the opportunity for participants to discontinue their involvement in the research at any time (Bless *et al.*, 2006:142; De Vos *et al.*, 2005:59; Mouton, 2001:244). Participants in this study were thoroughly informed about the purpose of the research, the procedures that were to be followed, information required from them, and their general role in the research. The participants were given an informed consent form once they understood the information pertaining to the research and had expressed that they were willing to participate voluntarily in the research (Appendix B). Formal consent was also obtained from the shelter for the children to participate in the study.

- **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality refers to the privacy of the participants in the research. Participants have the right to remain anonymous and to be assured that their data will not be associated with their identity in any way (Bless *et al.*, 2006:143; Mouton, 2001:243). The participants' confidentiality was maintained throughout the course of the research. All information was not available to anyone besides the researcher and supervisor, unless the participants had given written consent for the information to be disclosed. The research data was stored in a secure place and the participants' personal information was removed.

Participation in the study was voluntary and participants were informed of the freedom to withdraw at any time.

- **Debriefing**

Debriefing allows participants to work through the experience of the research, and minimizes the possibility of harm. Through debriefing, problems that are generated

by the research experience can be corrected and the participants can discuss their feelings (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:66). Participants had debriefing sessions with a Social Worker in the Department of Social Services, Mzuzu.

1.5.3.5 Limitations of the study

There was limited literature pertaining directly to the street child situation in Malawi.

Some street children were reluctant to participate in the research study. This posed a limitation as they did not want to attend interviews.

A relatively small sample was taken, and therefore the findings cannot be generalised.

1.6 CHAPTER LAYOUT

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the study and presents a plan of how the research was undertaken. Chapter 2 gives a global and regional view of the street child phenomenon. Chapter 3 provides an overview of adolescent development within a human development approach. Chapter 4 discusses the phenomenon of street children, their needs and related stressors, and survival strategies they employ in the streets. Chapter 5 presents the research methodology and processes employed. Chapter 6 presents the situation analysis on the needs, stressors and survival strategies of adolescent street children in Mzuzu. The findings from the empirical study and recommendations will be presented in the final chapter, Chapter 7.

Chapter 2

THE PHENOMENON OF STREET CHILDREN: A GLOBAL AND LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Children making their home/livelihoods on the street are not a new or modern phenomenon. In the introduction to his history of abandoned children in Soviet Russia 1918-1930, Alan Ball stated that “*concerning abandoned children, there is a general complaint that they are nowadays exposed more to dogs than kindness*” (Wikipedia, 2011). In contrast, in the late twentieth century, the presence of children living on the street has elicited emotive public concern, been given considerable media coverage, and has become a matter of priority for national and international child welfare organizations (Panter-Brick, 2002:147). In both developed and developing countries, a telling portrait of how well a society is performing can be obtained by exploring the lives of its children (Karabanow, 2000).

This chapter examines the nature and extent of the street child phenomenon both regionally and internationally. General defining characteristics of street children and how they are perceived will be highlighted.

2.2 DEFINITIONS OF STREET CHILDREN

Street children have always existed on the fringes of mainstream culture, and throughout history have been variously labelled. Similarly, Swart (1988b) asserts that the belief that streets are ‘schools of crime’ is a myth and that treating street youths as if they were criminals may only result in them becoming criminals. 19th century categorisations included “street sinners”, “petty thieves” and “begging imposters”. In the early 20th century, street children were known as “young barbarians” and “street wandering children” (Karabanow, 2000). Consequently, there have been overwhelming responses by professionals in the field of child and youth care to provide a suitable definition for street children.

The most popular general working definition for street children is from the Inter-Non-Governmental Organisation (Inter-NGO) in Switzerland who identifies a street child as: *"any girl or boy who has not reached adulthood, for whom the street (in the widest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) is inadequately protected, supervised or directed by responsible adults"* (Inter-NGO, 1985 in Schurink, 1993:5).

A basic definition of the term is *"a homeless or neglected child who lives chiefly in the streets"* (Oxford Dictionary cited in Panter-Brick, 2002:148). The statement emphasizes two peculiarities about street children: the place they occupy (the streets) and the absence of proper contacts or links with adults in the family home and in society (Panter-Brick, 2002:148).

Similarly, the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) defined a street child as *"a person who is under the age of 18 years, has left his or her home either permanently or temporarily because of a variety of familial and social problems that have impacted negatively on the child, and who spend a large amount of time unsupervised on the street, depending on themselves and a subculture of other youths for their physical and emotional existence"* (Schurink, 1993:5).

The term, 'street child', is widely used by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and academics as shorthand to denote children working and/or living on the streets of urban centres throughout the so-called Third World and beyond (Baker, 1999:1).

Most authors and agencies have broadened their understanding of the term 'street child' to include not only those homeless children who live chiefly on the streets but also children who work on the streets by day and who return home at night. Hence, the term 'street child' has come to mean little more than a child who spends at least part of his/her daily life on the streets, working in the 'urban informal sector' (Baker, 1999:1).

The circumstances, for example, of a child who lives, works and sleeps on the street are markedly different from those of one who sells fruit on the street for an hour before school each morning, which in turn are very different to those of a child who has been abandoned by his/her parents or of a child who is required to beg on the

streets by day as part of a household income maximisation strategy. Yet all these children would share the 'street child' label.

In recent times, however, it has been argued that these definitions are too general and broad-based and many people feel that these children are not adequately defined according to the uniqueness of their experiences, resulting in many youths being under recognised and therefore under-reported. With this in mind, the following section examines the definitions and some current debates around street youths.

2.1.1 Classifications of street children

In seeking to eliminate confusion over who a street child is, various categorisations and hierarchies of street use have been proposed. These distinctions have provided the foundation of much of the conceptual work on street children and are still retained by UNICEF in its current literature.

The fact that street children are not a homogeneous group but experience very different circumstances and lifestyles, was already obvious more than 20 years ago hence most of the literature on categorisations was done by academics and welfare organisations in the 1980s. Welfare agencies, in particular UNICEF and Save the Children, have reworked their definition of street children many times, finding it difficult to devise meaningful statements about these children as people, to define various categories of street life, and more recently, to identify appropriate categories of "at risk" children (Panter-Brick, 2001a cited in Panter-Brick, 2002).

The most commonly accepted of these categorisations has been UNICEF's classical distinction between children who work on the streets but live with their families (children *on* the streets) and children who live on the streets and have no functional family support (children *of* the streets) (UNICEF, 1997; UNICEF 1998 cited in Baker, 1999:1). Table 2.1 below shows a graphic detail of characteristics of street children.

Table 2.1: General defining characteristics of street children

Categories	Characteristics
Children of the street No family ties Work on the streets Developed on coping and survival skills	Either minimal family contact, which is eventually severed, or no contact with family Earn their own income Make own arrangements for sleeping
Children with family ties who live on the streets	This group constitutes the majority of street children They work and contribute towards the family income Some attend school on an ad hoc basis
Children who abandon their families or are abandoned by their families	No adult supervision. Homelessness characterised by a highly nomadic lifestyle

Source: Veeran (1999:52)

2.1.2 Children 'on the street'

Children who are referred to as 'on the street' are those who work on the street in order to supplement their biological family income but who return home in the evenings (Richter, 1988:11). Where children live on the street, the family support base has generally become weakened and so children share the responsibility for family survival by working on city streets. Often the family encourages them to make money by begging or prostituting themselves (Tsetetsi, 1998). For these children, the home ceases to be the centre of play, culture and daily life. Nevertheless, while the street becomes their daytime location, the majority return home most nights. Despite potentially deteriorating family relationships, familial ties are still in place and the children continue to view life from the perspective of their families.

2.1.3 Children 'of the street'

This category comprises youths who live and work on the street, using it as a means of attaining food and shelter (Richter, 1988:11). Often they have been abandoned or sent away by their families, and therefore live without family support. As a result,

they live in surrogate 'street families' that are made up of companions of other street youths who work together for the survival of their substitute family units.

2.1.4 Children 'for the streets'

A third category, identified as children '*for*' the street is subject of increasing discussion. This third group is generally understood to comprise 'candidates for the street who live in the slums and suffer from family break-up, abuse, and who do not go to school' (Dunford, 1996 in Baker, 1999:1). The identification of this category of 'latent' street children reflects a growing awareness that 'visible' street children are but one sub-category of what UNICEF began in the 1980s to identify as 'Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances'.

Therefore, there are important distinctions to be made between children living and working on the street and then returning home to an intact family structure; children of the street who may maintain some ties to parents and relatives, but live independently on the street and children who in living on the street are completely independent. Nonetheless, the gradual progress from working on the street to living on the street, to abandoning familial ties completely seems to be universal.

Keen (1988:12) asserted that an urban street youth can be defined according to the broad category of youths that live in the inner city. Richter (1988:12) has elaborated on this definition by identifying a further five categories of street youths within the category of urban youths: throw-away youths, run-away youths, slum youths, dump youths and bush youths.

2.1.5 Throw-away youths

This definition is used to refer to youths who have been completely abandoned and neglected by their parents or caregivers and who do not have any contact with their biological families at all depending solely on themselves and their 'street family' for physical and psychological survival (Richter, 1988:12).

2.1.6 Run-away youths

Richter (1988) in Tsoetsi (1998) identify 'runaway youths' as those children who have run away from their homes due to deprivation, physical or sexual abuse,

alcohol abuse and general peer pressure to join the 'perceived' freedom that street life seems to offer (Richter, 1988; Tsotetsi, 1998).

2.1.7 Slum youths

Richter (1988) in Tsotetsi (1998) further identified a group of street youths who belong to 'slum families' that live in areas of squalor. Slum youths are those children whose mothers are usually domestic workers and spend long hours away from their children, who are then left to look after themselves resulting in them roaming the streets during the day (Tsotetsi, 1998).

2.1.8 Dump youths

These are youths who live on rubbish dumps and scavenge for food daily (Keen, 1988:12).

2.1.9 Bush youths

These youths live in the bush and are often from homeless families (Keen, 1988:12). In the same vein, the definition of street children in industrialized countries is also elastic and can include those who sleep rough, live in shelters, squat, or double up with other families, encompassing the "literally homeless" and the "precariously housed" (Glasser & Bridgman, 1999; Chamberlain & Johnson, 2001 quoted in Panter-Brick, 2002:153).

It has been noted that street children also use idiosyncratic terms for themselves. Generally, these definitions depend on such factors as where they come from, what they do and where they spend most of their time. For example, in Johannesburg and Durban Street youths refer to themselves as '*malunde*', whereas, those youths who sleep in pipes tend to refer to themselves as the '*malalapipe*' (Richter, 1988:13). In the Cape, street youths define themselves according to their daily activities and way of life, referring to themselves as '*strollers*'. Although strolling consists of complex social processes, three particular activities distinguish strolling from other forms of street life: firstly, there are those youths that are involved in 'aanklop' - the activity of those who beg on the streets and from door-to-door; secondly, there are those strollers who are involved in 'parking' cars; and thirdly, there are those other strollers

who are identified as the 'glue-sniffers'. Often, while strollers see themselves as young they do not necessarily view themselves as 'children' and often distinguish themselves from the older homeless vagrants to whom they refer to as the 'bergies' (Keen, 1989).

In summation, it has been noted that the use of UNICEF distinctions and terminology has been found unsatisfactory as children themselves defied these generalizations (Panter-Brick, 2002:150). Many children sleep both at home and on the streets, and they also spend significant periods of time in residential institutions like orphanages, refuges, or correctional establishments. Current research makes distinctions between street and working children that essentially uphold the original UNICEF typology. According to Ennew (2000:171), "*the category of street children may be impossibly constructed but there are few practical alternatives available - beyond local terms - to refer to these particular groups of children*". A classification of children is still useful, as long as it is understood that categories are neither discrete nor necessarily homogeneous, and that they may not always coincide with children's own views about their lives.

It is with these important provisos that current research makes distinctions between street and working children (Ennew, 1994; Barker & Knaul, 1991), between street-living and street-working children (Consortium for Street Children, 1998), between family-based street workers and independent street workers, or between homeless and working youth (Raffaelli, 1999), distinctions that essentially uphold the original UNICEF typology.

2.3 THE DEFINITION DEBATE

There are three important elements in these definitions: the time children spend on the street, the street as a source of livelihood, and the lack of protection and care from adults (Le Roux & Smith, 1998).

Several terms in these definitions have led to confusion on what is meant by home, family, protection, and a "responsible" adult (Panter-Brick, 2002:150). Adult-child relationships may be construed differently from culture to culture, and may be premised upon a radically different understanding of "normal" childhood (Panter-

Brick, 2002:150). In some poverty ridden communities, children are the prime caretakers of incapacitated adults and the prime income earners in the household, such that relationships of care, protection, and provision flow from the child to the adult rather than from the adult to the child (Boyden & Mann, 2000 cited in Panter-Brick, 2002:150).

Child rearing practices also vary amongst cultures. Cobos (1979) in Aptekar (1994:329) described 'passive abandonment' as a method of child-rearing that allowed children to roam the neighbourhood, finding company outside of the immediate view of their mothers. This is similar to child-rearing among the poor in the Caribbean, in Mexico and in Brazil, which are the areas of Latin America where the largest numbers of street children are found (Aptekar, 1994:329).

Being homeless is also variously rendered across cultures, as *desamparado* (defenceless, unprotected) in Latin America, *furosha* (floating) in Japan, and *khate* (rag-picker) in Nepal. These terms evoke disaffiliation, transience, and marginal economic work, rather than notions of lack of home or abode (Desjarlais, 1996). Ennew (2003) emphasised the importance of understanding the lives and roles of youths in any culture. For example, she asserts that the notion of The African Child is as much of an obstacle in this process as the global construct of The Child. Youths in different cultures experience different childhoods and so must be understood according to their history and culture (Ennew, 2003).

Moreover, street children are constructed differently in different countries. For example, although, the term 'homeless' and 'street youths' have been used interchangeably, the term 'homeless' is often used in North America and Western Europe, while the term 'street youths' is most frequently used in Latin America, Africa, Eastern Europe and Asia. This indicates that by adopting different socially constructed discourses around street youths, interventions which support and uphold the status quo of social inequalities are maintained (De Moura, 2002:353).

According to Cosgrove (1990:185), many professionals feel that definitions oscillate between the portrayal of street children as either victim or deviant.

Le Roux and Smith (1998a:915) explored the concept of deviance as a label placed on street children because of a lack of understanding and insight into their lifestyles.

They point out that society has negative perceptions of street youths as ‘sly, manipulative, deceitful troublemakers’, and that while these children may use these as tactics for survival, the response is one where they are perceived by the public as negative (Le Roux & Smith, 1998a:915). They are often thought to be deviants and criminals who should be locked away as they are a danger to society in general, “*a lost generation, hooligans, ‘good-for-nothings’, thieves, violent youngsters, nuisances and parasites*” (Barrette, 1995:4). While it may be true that a child is more likely to enter into criminal activities the longer he or she is on the street, the negative stereotype that *all* street children are violent, homeless criminals and a burden to society is still maintained (Le Roux *et al.*, 1998a:915).

Similar to the views of Le Roux *et al.* (1998a) and Barrette (1995) cited above, Panter-Brick (2002:149), asserted that the term “street child” is imbued with pejorative or pitying connotations (Panter-Brick, 2002:149). Ironically, the term “street children” itself was widely adopted by international agencies in an attempt to avoid negative connotations for children who had been known as street urchins, vagrants, gamines, rag-pickers, glue sniffers, street Arabs, or vagrants (Williams, 1993 in Panter-Brick, 2002:150). It has been argued that the label street child, now so emotionally charged, does little to serve the interests of the children in question.

For Invernizzi (2001:79), the term, ‘street child’, has a stigmatising effect, since the child is, as it were, allocated to the street and to delinquent behaviour. The term neither gives consideration to the experience or testimony of the children in question nor to other facets of their identity, which do not necessarily have any relevance to the street. Thus it becomes a cause of discrimination of the children and triggers or strengthens negative social reactions. This social reaction leads to stereotypes related to gender, ethnicity, and age; for instance, that all street girls are prostitutes (Lucchini, 1994:6) and street boys are junkies, and that younger children should be pitied but teenagers, especially dark-skinned ones, should be feared.

Taçon (1991) cited in Williams (1993:831), for example, formulated a profile of a ‘typical Namibian street child’ who would most likely:

- be male, black, poor, and between 11 and 14 years of age;

- come from and have a family which is also poor, and to which he goes home regularly if not nightly;
- have a mother who heads his family, and who is very possibly unemployed;
- have four to seven siblings, making a total family group of six to nine members, who live together with from four to six other persons in the same house (ten to fifteen people in all);
- work on the street to earn food and/or money to support his family;
- experience alcohol and/or substance abuse within the family and home, perhaps even affecting himself;
- attend school in or have dropped out of Standards one or two;
- be physically and/or psychologically abused at home;
- still have self-esteem and the desire to be esteemed and respected by others; and
- be full of spirit, eager to learn and anxious to improve his lot in life.

Whilst some of Taçon's (1991) assertions are true, they cannot be generalised to all street children. Thus, this point of view is considered too simplistic, and there is a multiplicity of viewpoints and opinions currently emerging as to how to define a street child. In this way, formulating an accurate definition of what exactly constitutes a street child has become problematic and has often fostered much hot debate amongst the professionals.

In addressing the definition problem further, Aptekar (1995) also emphasised the individual aspects of street children. He believes that, while street children may be part of some homogenous group, the uniqueness of each child should be acknowledged as varying reasons exist for them being on the street. The appellation "street children" it is a generic term that obscures the heterogeneity in children's actual circumstances (Panter-Brick, 2002:150). In the words of Raffaelli and Larson (1999:1), *"the term street youth, or street children ... conceals enormous variation in the experiences of youngsters who share the common condition of being 'out of place' in street environments, spending their lives largely outside the spheres typically considered appropriate for children, such as home, school, and recreational*

settings.” The individuals concerned are all minors under eighteen years of age, but from a broad age spectrum including teenage and near-teen youth as well as children as young as five, and sometimes, also the infants of homeless parents (Panter-Brick, 2002:148).

Additionally, Panter-Brick (2002:149), noted that the term does not correspond to the ways many children relate their own experiences or to the reality of their movements on and off the street. In his study of Brazilian children, for example, Hecht (1998) sought to explain why some youth describe themselves as street children when their siblings, who lead very similar lives, do not. Hecht (1998) argued that in the context of Northeast Brazil, the difference of identity hinges on how they see themselves in relation to their family and society at large. In his words, some children “*work in the street, dance in the street, beg in the street, sleep in the street, but the street is the venue for their actions not the essence of their character*” (Hecht, 1998:103).

Most recent studies agree that portrayals of street children cannot be reduced to a one or two dimensional focus on the street environment, defining the children’s existence solely with reference to a physical and/or social dimension, that is, permanence in the street and contacts with responsible adults (Panter-Brick, 2002:149). This approach serves to highlight some striking differences in the life circumstances and negotiated identities of street children.

Furthermore, Panter-Brick (2002:149), noted that the use of the term ‘street child’ deflects attention from the broader population of children affected by poverty and social exclusion (Panter-Brick, 2002:149).

A significant argument in some of the literature is that a focus on street children, easily represented as the symbol of child poverty and social exclusion, concentrates attention toward only the most visible tip of a huge iceberg. A focus on street children, however well-intentioned, deflects attention from the broader population of low income children and youth in poverty. Focusing attention on street children can thus lead agencies to overlook or ignore the much larger problem of urban and rural poverty.

However, Cosgrove (1990) believed that a definition based on a classification system is possible despite limitations of existing knowledge. To this extent, he

asserts that *“a street child is any individual under the age of majority whose behaviour is predominantly at variance with ‘community norms’ for behaviour and whose primary support for his/her developmental needs is not a family or family substitute”* (Cosgrove, 1990:192).

On a different note, Payne (1997) has argued that contemporary social work is a creation by social workers, clients and agency contexts. Therefore, an awareness of the role of language in social work is also significant as it can have far-reaching implications that influence decision-making processes (Payne, 1997 cited by Tudoric-Ghemo, 2005). This ‘reality’ created by the use of language can be seen in some of the discourses around street youths, for example, the use of phrases such as ‘child protection’ or ‘youths in particularly difficult circumstances’, ‘working youths’ prove for very strong rhetoric. This indicates the marked effect that language can have on social work policy and practice.

While the above definitions and categories may seem plausible and perhaps practical, Aptekar (2003) later pointed out that a variety of situations that contribute to the movement of youths must also be taken into account. This fluidity in their movement is contingent on the various situations they are faced with. For example, movement of youths fluctuates between living at home, on the street or in welfare organisations. This movement also depends on changes in weather, police or public focus, or changes in the family environment (economic change or the removal of a stepparent). In this way, he believes that it would be more accurate to conceive of youths as falling on a continuum of environmental differences rather than on emphasising their personal characteristics (Aptekar, 2003).

Taçon (1991) cited in Williams (1993:832-833) has also attempted to provide a working definition based on a continuum of minimal street use to total dependency on the streets. He characterised these overlapping levels within a distinct hierarchy of beneficial street use. These levels are based on an ‘assumed adulthood’, the child’s general status, school exclusion and ‘degenerative estrangement’. He believes that these levels serve the purpose of identifying where along the continuum these youths lie. Table 2.2 below highlights the levels.

Table 2.2: Taçon's hierarchical classifications of street use

UNICEF 1980s	Of (or in) the streets			On the streets	
Peter Taçon (UNICEF 1985: 45)	Totally abandoned 3.70%	Of the streets 7.50%	On the streets 22.20%	In families	66.60%
LONDON (Greenwood 1869: 6)	Homeless		Home Owning		
ENGLAND Ragged children (Carpenter 1850: 74)	Professional thieves	Regular Beggars	Dwelling without a home ... dependen on themselves without even a nominal protector	Parents low and ignorant with no interest in education	Parents too poor to send them to pay schools but who desire education for their children
INDIA (Striastava 1963: 12)	Vagrants from criminal or immoral homes		Home abandoning vagrants	Regular vagrants	Early vagrants
NAIROBI (Dallape 1987: 35)	Totally abandoned	Living in a gang with no ties to any community		With parents or relatives who could be able to look after them	
MEXICO (UNICEF 1987a.: 19)	Completely abandoned Live on the street No relationships with families Use drugs Do not work		Semi-abandoned Live in the street Sporadic relations families Use drugs Do not work	Vagrant children Wander the streets Maintain relations with families Do not use drugs Do not work	Working children Wander as they work Live sporadically or continuously with families Do not use drugs Work is principal activity
Determinates Of InterventionBeneficial Street Use				
Assumed Adulthood.....				
School Exclusion.....				
Degenerative Estrangement				

Source: Williams (1993:833)

Finally, acknowledging the problems in finding suitable definitions for street youths, Ennew (2003) concludes that in this sense, there is no one ideal. It is however, important that in the scramble to find the politically correct definition, these youth's needs not be overlooked or somehow become lost in the process. Figure 2.1 below shows the interconnectedness of issue affecting a child on the streets and differing labels attached.

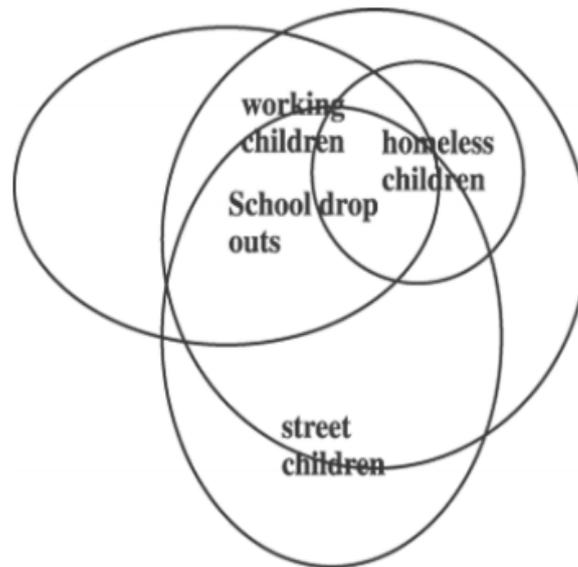


Figure 2.1: Intersecting circles of street children

Source: Chowdhury (n.d.:24)

No term has yet been coined to capture both the peculiar nature of street life and its interconnection with other aspects of vulnerability. The study will keep adopting the term street children, aware of its partially unsatisfactory character. Figure 2.1 above shows the complex nature of streetism.

In summary, there are a variety of definitions that have been given to street children. These are generally broad-based references according to behavioural characteristics or living experiences. The traditional definitions such as urban, slum, dump, bush youths or those children that are 'on' or 'of' the street, throwaway and run-away have been discussed. For purposes of this study, the heterogeneous nature of the definitions described above, is used loosely and interchangeably. In each instance, references to street children are essentially determined by the context, while still preserving the essence and import of the discussion at hand. In terms of the debates and contradictions within the varying definitions, it can argued that wide definitions may at best still be an effective approach in sensitising audiences to the problems of street youths, even if it be at the expense of consistency and reliability.

The following section will examine the nature and extent of the phenomenon of street children.

2.4 THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE STREET CHILD PHENOMENON

Many publications on street children impress upon their readership the sheer magnitude of the phenomenon. The talk is of numbers, and the numbers cited are huge. Titles such as *A Growing Urban Tragedy* (Agnelli 1986), *Causes and Characteristics of the Street Child Phenomenon* (Le Roux & Smith, 1998), and *Homelessness is not Healthy for Children* (Wright 1990) capture the essence of such concern (Panter-Brick, 2002:147).

According to a report from the Consortium for Street Children, estimating the number of street children is fraught with difficulties. In 1989, UNICEF estimated 100 million children were growing up on urban streets around the world. Fourteen years later UNICEF reported: 'The latest estimates put the numbers of these children as high as 100 million' (UNICEF, 2002:37).

In 2005, UNICEF reported that, 'the exact number of street children is impossible to quantify, but the figure almost certainly runs into tens of millions across the world. It is likely that the numbers are increasing' (UNICEF, 2005:40-1).

Estimates will vary, of course, in relation to how a mobile population of children is counted and, most importantly, exactly who is considered for inclusion, because the term street children has different meanings in different regions. For example, in the Philippines, it denotes those who "*spend most of their time on the streets yet who maintain some regular contact with a family*" (UNESCO, 1995:117). In contrast, it may denote more strictly those children who at night have no parental home to go to. Thus the estimates of welfare agencies are not always concerned with the same children. Ennew (1994:32) states categorically that neither United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) nor the International Labour Organisation (ILO) can give reliable or verifiable figures for the number of working children worldwide, including street children. A basic reason for the lack of accurate figures is that no one can agree on definitions.

It is also debatable whether numbers of street children are growing globally or whether it is the awareness of street children within societies which has grown. While there are understandable pressures for policies to be informed by aggregate

numbers, estimates of street child populations, even at city levels, are often hotly disputed and can distract rather than inform policy makers (Benitez, 2007:64).

Some reasons for the lack of dependable statistics may be linked to the fact that constructionists and post-modern discourses are challenging current definitions of what exactly constitutes a street child.

Whatever the discrepancies may be, some professionals believe that these figures are still conservative and the number of youths living on our streets is expected to increase as poverty, population growth, breakdown in the family structure and a general disruption in the social infrastructure continues (Maree, 1991:33-35).

The following section gives an indication of the nature and extent of street children both internationally and regionally in order to gain a clearer perspective of this phenomenon.

2.4.1 Africa

Africa is young, urban and poor. Half of the continent's population is under the age of fifteen. Thirty seven percent of the population lives in towns or cities with the majority living in slums and squatter settlements. Thirty-four of the world's Highly Indebted Poor Countries are in Africa (Sexton, 2005:4). Below is a discussion on the numbers and nature of street children in some African countries.

2.4.1.1 Ethiopia

The Government estimates that 150 000 children live on the streets in Ethiopia. Around 60 000 are in Addis Ababa, many arriving from rural areas looking for work. NGOs estimate that the problem is far worse, with nearly 600 000 street children and 100 000 of these in Addis Ababa (Veale *et al.*, in Schrader *et al.*, 1999:51).

A study in Ethiopia found that street working children reported that they commonly worked for an average of two to three hours a day on the streets, typically for an hour before school and for another hour in the evenings. Eight percent worked on the streets only at the weekends (Veale *et al.*, in Schrader *et al.*, 1999:51). The average age at which children first become involved in street life in Ethiopia is 10.7 years. In a survey that carried out on fifty-one children in Addis Ababa in 1994, the

average age of initiation to the streets was 9.95 years (with 9.96 for boys and 10.47 for girls) (Veale *et al.*, in Schrader *et al.*, 1999:51).

2.4.1.2 Kenya

There are several differing statistics about the number of street children in Nairobi, Kenya (UNICEF, 2005:40-1). In 1999 it was reported that there were over 50 000 street children in Nairobi, and the government estimated that their numbers grew at ten percent per year. However, in 2001, it was stated that conservative estimates indicated that 300 000 children live and work on the streets in Kenya, with over fifty percent of them concentrated in and around the capital Nairobi. In the same year, another report estimated that there were about 40 000 street children in Kenya, with about half concentrated in Nairobi (Kenya CRC Coalition, 2001:4).

Despite these contradictions, it is apparent that the number of street children is high. The increase of youths living on the street is believed to be related to the complex socio-economic status of the country, including factors such as rapid urbanisation and the general breakdown of traditional support structures of the African extended family. The Human Rights Watch report also highlighted the impact of single-parent households, the lack of funds for resources and education, the displacement of large numbers of people due to urban slum clearance programs (Human Rights Watch, 1997). In order to survive on the streets, young people often beg, carry luggage, or clean business premises and vehicles (Human Rights Watch, 2001:2).

Girls are often forced to resort to prostitution in order to get clothes or food. According to a 2004 report from The Cradle and The Undugu Society, they earn as little as ten or twenty Kenyan Shillings (\$0.30-0.50) for each client (Human Rights Watch, 2001:2).

2.4.1.3 South Africa

There are an estimated 10 000 to 12 000 homeless children in South Africa (Le Roux, 1996 in Consortium for Street Children, 2009). Children find their way on to the streets because of poverty, overcrowding, abuse, neglect, family disintegration and HIV/AIDS (Save the children, 2005:43). It is only since the 1970s and 1980s that focus has been directed towards street youths in South Africa. While it is difficult to

ascertain the true figure of street youths today, various researchers in the 1980s to early 1990s have estimated that it was anything between 6 276 and 9 390 respectively with ages ranging between seven and sixteen years of age (Richter, 1988; Swart, 1990; Maree, 1991). One study in Pretoria, South Africa found that the average age of the respondents to a study on street children was between thirteen and fourteen years. A similar study also found street children in South Africa to be between seven and eighteen years of age, with the majority between the ages of thirteen and sixteen (Richter, 1991 in Consortium for Street Children, 2009). As with many African countries, South Africa is also considered to be especially vulnerable to fragile political and socio-economic problems.

2.4.1.4 Ghana

A 'headcount' of street children and young mothers in the different parts of Accra, the capital of Ghana, categorised the numbers as follows:

- 21 140 street children
- 6 000 street babies
- 7 170 street 'mothers' under the age of twenty
- 14 050 urban poor children (Consortium for Street Children, 2009).

2.4.1.5 Malawi

In Malawi, a 1999 study found that the word 'vagabond' was used to describe eight percent of young offenders, which the study noted was "*a term ... representing obvious cases of street children*" (Consortium for Street Children, 2009).

2.4.1.6 Zimbabwe

While it is reported that it is difficult to establish the exact number of street youths in Zimbabwe, the Department of Social Welfare in 2000 estimated that there were about 12 000 street children, 5 000 in the capital city of Harare. These numbers were expected to increase along with political strife, unemployment and poverty. In 2005, the Government of Zimbabwe embarked on an operation to 'clean up' its cities known as 'Operation Murambatsvina', referred to also as Operation Restore Order. It evolved into a nationwide demolition of housing structures and eviction campaign

carried out by the police and the arm, rendering an estimated 700 000 people homeless. This event is believed to have drastically increased the number of street children (Sexton, 2005).

Many African countries are especially vulnerable to fragile political and socio-economic problems. Therefore, the existence of street youths is thought to be linked to the fact that Africa is a developing Third World continent with increasing urbanisation, unemployment, poverty, inadequate housing and family disintegration (Schurink, 1993). One of the results of the situation facing Africa is an increasing number of street children. There are an estimated ten million street children in Africa. The related challenges these statistics bring, are compounded by the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Sexton, 2005).

2.4.2 Asia

Estimates on the number of children roaming the streets of Asia were cited by UNICEF (2002:37) as approximately twenty million. The section below will highlight the nature and numbers of street children in different Asian countries.

2.4.2.1 India

UNICEF's estimate of 11 million street children in India is considered to be a conservative figure. Two in three are male. Moreover, while the majority are between eleven and fifteen years old, a large percentage belongs to the six and ten age groups. The Indian Embassy has estimated that there are 314 700 street children in metros such as Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Kanpur, Bangalore and Hyderabad and around 100 000 in Delhi alone (Consortium for Street Children, 2009). A study in 2007 in India found that 65.9% of the street children lived with their families on the streets. Out of these children, 51.84% slept on the footpaths, 17.48% slept in night shelters and 30.67% slept in other places including under flyovers and bridges, railway platforms, bus stops, parks, market places (Kacker *et al.*, 2007:38-39).

2.4.2.2 Bangladesh

There are an estimated 400 000 street children in Bangladesh. Furthermore, an estimated ten percent have been forced into prostitution for survival (Thomas De Benitez, 2007:9).

2.4.2.3 Cambodia

In Cambodia, Phnom Penh, there are an estimated 616 023 working children aged between five and seventeen years. A further 15 000 children, while not homeless, spend more than six hours a day scavenging and begging. One study estimated that there were between 10 000 and 20 000 street working children in Cambodia, whilst another study of 'vulnerable' children, including street children, in Phnom Penh found 88% had had sexual relations with tourists (Consortium for street Children, 2009).

Asia has the second largest number of street children in the world, after Latin America. However, reliable statistics are compounded by the fact that in some Indo-Asian countries, whole families live out in public spaces, and, living and begging on the streets is viewed as a cultural norm.

2.4.3 Europe

Europe is a highly urbanised continent and as such, high numbers of street children are found.

2.4.3.1 United Kingdom (UK)

A report by the Children's Society in the UK found that 100 000 young people run away in the UK each year (Rees *et al.*, 2005:29). About seven percent of UK's runaways had both birth parents, 13% had only a single birth parent, 18% had a stepfamily, and 30.8% had 'other family form' (Rees *et al.*, 2005:11 cited in Consortium for Street Children, 2009).

2.4.3.2 Russia

A report by ILO/IPEC in 2000, estimated that the number of working street children in St. Petersburg, Russia, to be between 10 000 and 16 000. It could be broken down as follows:

- 50 to 70% of the total number of street children are under 13;
- They collect bottles and refuse, picking and selling berries and mushrooms.
- 10 to 30% are involved in illicit activities.
- Working street children under 18 involved in prostitution account for 20%.

The same report in Russia also found that two out of five working street children only worked in order to buy food (42%), and one in four worked to help his or her family (22.1%) or brother/sister (3.5%) (ILO/IPEC, 2000:5).

2.4.3.3 Ukraine

According to local authorities in Kharkiv, Ukraine, it is estimated that there are more than 600 children sleeping on the streets. It is estimated that 300 000 children are outside the school system and some of the teenagers have been on the streets for seven to eight years. Orphanages in Ukraine say that 97% of children leaving their institutions become homeless (Consortium for Street Children, 2009).

2.4.3.4 Georgia

About 2 500 children in Georgia have turned to the street to earn money either by begging or prostituting themselves (Consortium for Street Children, 2009).

2.4.3.5 Romania

There are at least 2 000 street children in Bucharest, Romania, and 5 000 in the whole country. A study by Save the Children in 2005 showed that 42% of the children were sexually abused between the ages of six and twelve (Save the Children, 2005:43).

2.4.4 United States of America (USA)

It has been estimated that 2.5 million people in the USA are homeless, one-third of the homeless population consists of single mothers and young children and twenty percent of all homeless people in shelters are children and adolescents (Epstein, 1996:290). Aside from children under ten years living with intact families, there are an estimated 750 000 to over one million unaccompanied homeless children

between the ages of ten and seventeen years (Epstein, 1996:290). Kidd (2003:235) puts the number of street involved youth between one and two million.

2.4.5 Latin America

According to a report from the Inter-American Development Bank in 2001, cited in the Consortium for Street Children (2009), approximately seven million children and adolescents wander in the streets of different countries of Latin America. Although Latin America has only ten percent of the world's child population, it has nearly fifty percent of the world's street children.

The number of Latin American street children is equal to the total population of Colombia and all of Central America (Aptekar, 1991:326). Most commonly, the children have been described as being abandoned by their families, an inevitable consequence of cruelty or poverty (Munoz & Pachon, 1980; Munoz & Palacios, 1980 in Aptekar, 1991:326).

Samper (1984), a well-known Colombian journalist, referred to the children in the leading Bogota daily as a "plague" threatening the fabric of traditional family discipline (Aptekar, 1991:327). That the children were described in terms that elicited pity was not surprising, but that they were perceived as a disease and, indeed, as a threat to the family arouses interest, which leads to the need to carefully, consider the children's lives (Aptekar, 1991:327). Latin America includes a host of countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Peru, Uruguay, Brazil, Costa Rica, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Ecuador, Mexico and El Salvador.

These Latin American countries also estimate the age of street youths to range from between eight and seventeen years, with the average child being about nine years old (Anderson, 1997). Seventy five percent of these youths are said to have family links, but the remaining twenty five percent are considered to be actually homeless (Report on the Meeting on Children in the Street, 2003).

2.4.5.1 Peru

In Lima, Peru it is estimated that around 250 000 children are working on the city's streets, and three percent of children living on the streets are under the age of six

years. In San Juan de Lurigancho and Cercado de Lima districts, over 25 000 children are considered to be at very high risk of taking to a life on the streets (Consortium for Street Children, 2009).

A study in Peru found that 90% of street children come from rebuilt (with step father or step mother) or mono parental families, or from rural families that had 'given' their child to other people (relatives or not) to be raised by the latter in the city (Schraeder *et al.*, 1999:27 in Consortium for Street Children, 2009). The same study also found that more than half of the children had abandoned schooling several months before leaving home and that ninety percent of the street children population used drugs.

2.4.5.2 Bolivia

A report in Bolivia cited in Consortium for Street Children (2009), found that there are over 2 500 children living on the streets of major cities such as Cochabamba, La Paz and Santa Cruz, Bolivia. An estimated twenty percent of street children in Bolivia left home because there was not enough to eat, twenty percent were abandoned by their parents, and sixty percent were physically abused. In Bolivia, eighty percent of street children inhale "clefa" (glue) and some adolescents are alcoholics. Ninety percent of street children in Bolivia use solvents as a form of escapism. Most street children in Bolivia are functionally illiterate because they left school. They can read and write with difficulty.

2.4.5.3 Brazil

Brazil is considered to have one of the largest population of street youths in Latin America (Anderson, 1997). It was reported that there were more than one hundred and sixty million people living below the poverty line, with forty million of these being street youths (Connolly, 1990). UNICEF estimated in the late 1980s that seven million youth spent most of their time and/or slept on the street, and this figure readily came to designate homeless children. Hecht (1998:101) suggests the true number of homeless children in Brazil is less than one percent of that figure. The estimate of seven million in Brazil is certainly an overstatement (Barker & Knaul, 1991 in Aptekar, 2003).

2.4.5.4 Guatemala

Human Rights Watch (1997) reported that there are between 1 500 to 5 000 street youths in Guatemala, sixty five percent of whom were between the ages of ten and seventeen years, with three percent being below the age of ten years. Approximately ninety percent of these youths are addicted to chemical inhalants, and begging, stealing and prostitution is their main source of income. The rate of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases and infections is also reported to be on the increase.

2.4.5.5 Colombia

Most literature on street youths has come out from Colombia. According to official estimates, there are more than 25 000 street children in Colombia (Limmat Foundation, 1999). In Colombia, street children are judged with contempt and are often viewed as nuisances who should be put to death. In 1994, statistics published by Colombia's National Statistical Bureau DANE, found that two thousand one hundred and ninety street youths were murdered in 1993. It was also reported that the torture of these children in this country appears to be the norm, often falling under a banner of so-called 'social cleansing' (*limpieza social*) (Human Rights Watch, 1994). Colombia is unstable politically and economically that is linked to the prevalence of uprisings, drug cartels, overpopulation and poverty, largely contributing to the existence of street youths in this country (Le Roux & Smith, 1998a:915-926).

From the above discussion, it can be noted that the numbers and proportions of street children for Latin America are staggering. An estimated forty million children roam the streets of Latin America (Aptekar, 1991:326), and Latin America holds the largest number of street children in the world.

2.5 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

Street children are present in every country and almost every city in the world. Every child has a unique story to tell. When considering the meaning of "the street", major differences between Asia, USA, Africa and Latin America become noticeable. In the first place, the rates of urbanization remain dissimilar thus representing different factors among the root causes of streetism (Ennew, 2003). Poverty, domestic abuse,

modernization trends including rural/urban migration patterns, civil disturbance and armed conflict, famine, drought, foreign tourism and changing family structures have all been listed as explanatory causes for the existence of street children. Yet there are exceptions to each explanation indicating that the phenomenon is multicausal. Aptekar (1994:210-211) noted, for example, that civil disturbance has not produced vast numbers of street children in Ethiopia, although they exist in relatively calm Kenya.

This chapter has discussed the incidence and prevalence of street youths both internationally and locally. It has been pointed out that reporting the exact numbers of street youths has been problematic, and it is thought that this is largely linked to definitions around street youth. Other professionals have argued that incorrect definitions can result in exclusion, and so favour more all-inclusive and broad-based definitions as being more realistic.

However, as important as it is to quantify this phenomenon, numbers alone are of little help in understanding the context in which they live, the desperation that leads them to run away from home, and the challenges they struggle with to survive on the streets (Ferrara & Ferrara, 2005:2).

Chapter 3

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES RELATED TO THE PHENOMENON OF STREET CHILDREN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The process of becoming a street child does not occur within a vacuum and it is therefore essential to identify the relevant interrelationships between street youths and their social environment (Maphatane, 1994). This is confirmed by developmental theorists who assert that the development of all children in general is influenced at different levels of the environment. This principle can therefore be applied to street children as well. By viewing street youths in relation to their environment would imply that the street child phenomenon is not viewed as a child problem, but rather as a systems problem.

In this way, Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of development provides a suitable framework in which to understand the dynamic relationship between individual behaviour and social contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1993).

3.2 ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Although cultural backgrounds and social dynamics may differ substantially in different countries, international agencies and health workers tend to focus on similar issues in environmental systems to characterise and explain the aetiology of street youths (De Moura, 2002). To this extent, Bronfenbrenner (1993) proposed an ecological model consisting of five interdependent 'systems', namely the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro- and chronosystems. The figure below is an illustration of the five levels.

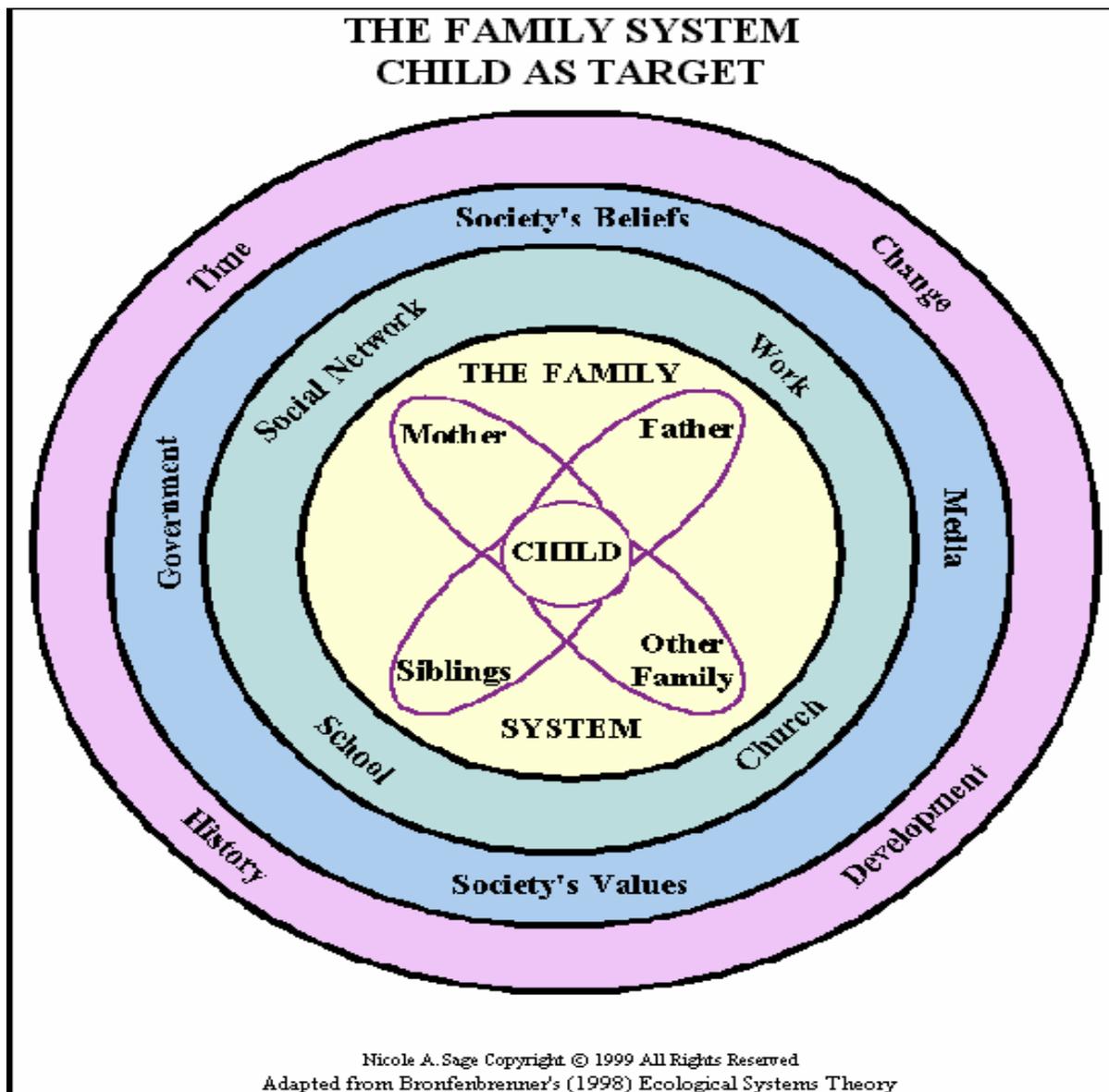


Figure 3.1: Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development

Source: Adapted from Bronfenbrenner (1998)

The five levels in the ecological perspective will be discussed in detail to show how different environmental aspects affect a child.

3.2.1 Micro system

The most basic system is that which functions at the innermost level, the micro system. Herein, the person's immediate day-to-day experience of their environment is taken into account. The micro system looks at the patterns of the roles, activities and personal relations that the individual has in the face-to-face settings that

comprise their particular social encounters (Maphatane, 1994; Harper & Carver, 1999).

3.2.1.1 *Microsystem influences: Individual experiences of the child*

As mentioned above, the microsystem includes the interpersonal activities in the immediate environment and the face-to-face settings within which a child lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1993). This includes the most direct interactions the child has with his or her family, peers, school and neighbourhood. By using a child at the centre of this microsystem, other systems can be evaluated.

3.2.1.2 *Individual relationship*

The role of the family is the care and protection of the child's most basic needs and so, the extent to which the family is involved, will influence the quality of the child's social environment. Consequently, the degree to which the child experiences positive and fulfilling interactions with the family and immediate environment will influence the child's feelings about its' family and role orientation (Daly, 1993).

At this level, assumptions about the causality of street youths can often be linked to adverse factors in the child's immediate experience within the family system (De Moura, 2002). Some of these adversities include poverty, hunger, abusive family-life, degradation, violence, abuse, and feelings of unwantedness and unlovedness. These children are often viewed as a financial burden on the family and their basic needs often go unfulfilled. Moreover, lack of money for education or for books and school uniforms influence poor academic performance by the child and as a result, a negative view towards schooling, coupled with low self-motivation and general learning problems exist.

Therefore, the quality of the interactions that youths have with their immediate families will be a large contributory factor in whether they move onto the streets or not.

3.2.2 Mesosystem

The second level of analysis is the mesosystem. This level considers the interactions between several microsystems in which individuals shift between various roles as a

result of moving between one microsystem context to the next (Bronfenbrenner, 1993). For example, this would include the individual's roles in relation to school, the neighbourhood, day-care centres, peers, doctors, religious institutions and the family

3.2.2.1 *Mesosystem influences: Immediate environment of the family*

The mesosystem includes the interactions between microsystems, and involves the different roles that individuals have within their environment and in particular their relationships with their families (Lake, 2003).

3.2.2.2 *Multi-problem families*

Many youths that end up living on the street tend to be from multi-problem families that are often characterised by marital problems, substance abuse, health and sometimes the death of a parent. Often many of their problems are related to a lower socio-economic status, unemployment and poor housing and poverty. Studies indicate that these families are on the whole socially and emotionally isolated often producing reactionary problems especially with regard to their children (Maphatane, 1994).

3.2.2.3 *Family relationships*

As previously mentioned, every child has the basic need for food, clothing, shelter, nurturance and security for which the family system is the most appropriate provider (Cosgrove, 1990). As such, the family system operates as the primary microsystem for emotional nurturance, support and guidance necessary for healthy development (Bronfenbrenner, 1993). If children do not receive this from their families, they will then rely on their own resourcefulness in order to meet their needs, which in turn will expose them to negative elements on the street (Cosgrove, 1990). As a result, they move away from mainstream society, becoming more and more involved in a subculture of their own. This 'street culture' becomes their immediate experience and involves relationships with other youths in transit, gangs and other families who live on the streets. They also come into contact with child traffickers, police, criminals and others groups of individuals who are ready to exploit them as well.

Violence and sexual abuse in the family home has also been cited as an important contributing factor in youths turning to street life. In a study conducted by Powers, Jaklitsch and Eckenrode (1990) it was found that a history of maltreatment at home caused many of the youths to run away and live on the streets. They found that sixty percent of the youths had been exposed to physical abuse, forty two percent to emotional abuse, forty eight percent to neglect, and twenty one percent to sexual abuse. Their study also revealed that over one-third of the adolescents were 'pushed out', and that sixty three percent of the biological mothers were often cited as perpetrators, followed by forty five percent being the biological fathers. Their study also revealed that youths who were physically abused had been severely beaten with extension cords, belt buckles and broom sticks, or had been kicked, slapped or punched.

Neglect and abandonment was also found to be common and the failure to provide adequate food, clothing or any medical care was also prevalent. Emotional maltreatment, however, was found to be the most common occurrence. This included verbal abuse such as swearing, name-calling, derogatory comments and a constant barrage of shouting, blaming and scape-goating (Powers, Jaklitsch & Eckenrode, 1990).

Similarly, in a study conducted by Peacock (1994) a direct link between family stress in the lives of street youths and them adopting street life was established. He found that eighty percent of street youths had experienced parental rejection, sixty five percent had overly strict parental discipline, seventy five percent experienced parental alcohol abuse and a hundred percent of the sample was exposed to poverty within the family (Peacock, 1994).

3.2.2.4 *Multiple-headed households*

Another important factor that contributes to street youths taking to street life is related to multiple-headed households where structural characteristics within the family system often influence a child's decision to leave home. Frequently, street youths are from female-headed households, in which single parenthood is mostly headed by grandmothers and extended family members. There are usually two or more generations living in one household with children often alternating between

more than one household. As a result, there are many caretakers in the home with each one responding toward the responsibilities of the child in his or her own way. Often this results in confusion and a general atmosphere of control rather than of nurturance, guidance and discipline (Maphatane, 1994).

Maphatane (1994) has noted that while single parenting is becoming more and more acceptable, especially in Black communities, single parents often struggle to raise their children. Those individuals who function as caretakers frequently misunderstand their children. This results in feelings of inadequacy in dealing with problems and emotional issues. Consequently, many parents experience loneliness, anxiety, loss of self-esteem and impaired coping skills that results in the child being viewed as a stress and burden on the family (Maphatane, 1994).

3.2.2.5 Overcrowding

Often multiple generations co-exist in one household and therefore, overcrowding combines to create ongoing stress that contributes to poor family cohesiveness. Many families are within the lower socio-economic bracket and therefore overcrowding is exacerbated by the general housing shortage and poor housing conditions found in townships and informal settlements in South Africa. Moreover, poor living conditions are also exacerbated by low educational and occupational status (Maphatane, 1994).

3.2.2.6 Low income

Studies indicate that a low-income status within families can also have an influence on a child's decision to live on the street. While families frequently tend to depend on their grandparents' grants and pensions, many families actually encourage their children to 'work' on the street in order to supplement the family income (Maphatane, 1994). Some researchers have argued that this can be seen as a creative and innovative strategy that families in dire circumstances have developed in order to survive. In this sense, the child is seen as 'working' on the street to help maintain the family, which often fosters more family cohesiveness, and so generating income in this way does not necessarily mean that these youths do not have a supportive family environment. It has also been found that youths in these circumstances often feel that they are contributing to the welfare of their parents and siblings. Moreover,

while in some instances a low income can be correlated with the increase in street youths, other studies have found that this is not necessarily universal, and many communities that are characterised by poverty do not necessarily have street youths. This factor reinforces the fact that family cohesion can overcome poverty in keeping most families working together towards the benefit of the family (Dallape, 1996).

3.2.2.7 Attitude of the community

The attitude and behaviour of the general community towards youths who roam the streets has also been found to have a large influence on whether these youths are more likely to remain on the streets or not. In a study conducted by Maphatane (1994) it was found that the general attitude towards street youths in South Africa was one of indifference and their presence was often accepted as the 'norm'. This unconcerned attitude was manifest, not only by the community in general, but particularly by family members themselves, which was further compounded by the fact that there was no pressure being exerted by the community on the family either. As a result, an apathetic attitude by family members to discipline or regulate the behaviour of their children was maintained (Maphatane, 1994).

3.2.3 Exosystem

The exosystem, the third level of analysis, involves the social settings not containing the individual. For example, at this level the structure of the larger community, the community's resources, the workplace, schooling, the education board, community health organisations and welfare services, legal services, neighbours, the extended family, friends of the family and the mass media in general are relevant. The processes of the exosystem are thought to exert a one-way influence on the individual, even though he or she does not have an immediate participation in its processes. Any resources made available by the exosystem will either operate to impoverish or to enrich the quality of the micro- and mesosystem interactions (Harper *et al.*, 1999). Therefore, this level takes into account how the experiences in one setting will influence the experiences in the individual's immediate context which can be either advantageous, fostering a better quality of life, or disadvantageous, resulting in the individual existing at a lowered standard of living.

3.2.3.1 Exosystem influences

The exosystem is the next level of explanation in Bronfenbrenner's (1993) ecological theory. At this level the environment in which the child is not directly involved in or in which the child has no control over is taken into account (Lake, 2003). Herein, the welfare and infrastructure of the larger community and resources are relevant. Government policies, legal services and community-based programs that are external to the family's experience, but nevertheless still affect the child are emphasised.

3.2.4 Macrosystem

The fourth level of analysis, the macrosystem, is the largest level of the environmental system. Bronfenbrenner (1993) describes this level as the overarching societal ground plan for the ecology of human development. At this level there is a hierarchical pattern of systems that include the government, policies, laws and customs of one's culture, subculture or social class, broad social ideologies, and values and belief systems. Within this system opportunity structures and life-course options for the individual exist.

3.2.4.1 Macrosystem influences

At this level the larger cultural context that influence social processes, beliefs and ideologies of a society are emphasised.

3.2.5 Chronosystem

The chronosystem, which is the fifth level of analysis, deals with the socio-historical conditions and changes in individuals and their environments over time. The chronosystem involves history, development and change. It therefore reflects dynamic environmental (ecological) transitions, encompassing entries, exits, milestones, and turning points over time (Cobb & Seery, 2001).

3.2.5.1 Chronosystem influences

The chronosystem consists of change in the environment over time (Pleck & Pleck, 1997 in Lamb, 1997). Time is something that is related to events and transitions that

impact on political, economic and social change in history and which has often altered cultural practices and belief systems.

The ecological approach indicates how important it is to understand the street youth in contexts other than just the family (Cobb *et al.*, 2001). Moreover, in understanding street youths within their historical, cultural and community contexts, is thought to be useful in grasping the challenges, traumas and unmet needs that impact on the mental, emotional and physical wellbeing of these youths. In this way, it was concluded that the process of becoming a street child does not occur within a vacuum. Consequently, five interdependent levels of analysis were proposed to contribute to the aetiology of the street child, namely the micro- meso- exo- macro- and chronosystems.

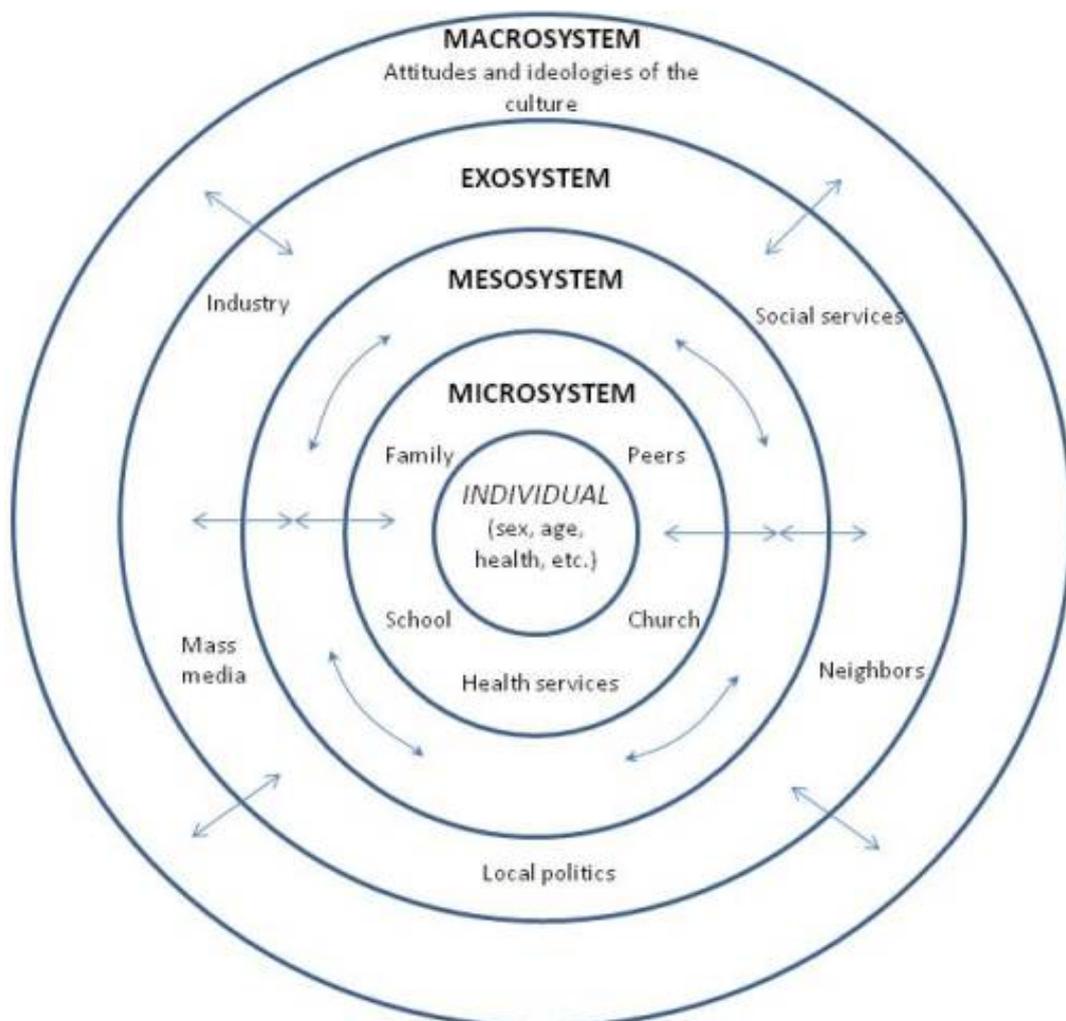


Figure 3.2: Bronfenbrenner's Ecosystemic model

Source: Adapted from Bronfenbrenner (1979)

3.3 THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT THEORIES

Every stable society transmits values from one generation to the next. By examining the shape of childhood, we understand it (Santrock, 1991:306). Each individual develops somewhat like *all* other individuals, like *some* other individual and like *no* other individual (Santrock, 1991:306).

The theories of Maslow (1954) and Erikson (1963) make allowance for the totality of the individual's experience. They focus on physical, psychological and spiritual characteristics placed within the context of the environment. The Self-Actualisation theory of Maslow (1954) contends that development occurs according to a hierarchy of needs whereby lower needs must be met first before there is a motivation to fulfill any higher needs. The Psychosocial theory of development of Erikson (1963) asserts that development of the personality occurs in stages across the lifespan with each stage consisting of a crisis that the individual must learn to deal with before moving onto the next stage. Accordingly, successful resolution of each stage results in optimum development (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 1997:440). It is thus, important to identify the needs of youths as this will decide what factors are important to healthy or unhealthy development in children.

3.3.1 Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Maslow (1954) asserted that the needs of humans are innate and operate at different levels of functioning motivated towards the satisfaction of higher levels of needs to which people strive. He believed that the lower the need in the hierarchy, the more dominant it is. He referred to these as deficiency needs or D-needs (Boeree, 1994). The motive here is the need to maintain physical or emotional homeostasis. D-needs are found in all animals.

The higher needs in the hierarchy Maslow (1954) termed Being motives, or B-motives (Boeree, 1994). He believed that the higher the need on the hierarchy is, the weaker the lower need will be. B-motives are distinctly human and refer to the need to understand and love and the need to reach one's full potential.

The first four needs in the hierarchy represent deficiency, while growth or actualisation motives are represented by the last two needs. If the individual's

behaviour is primarily directed by deficiency needs, then cognitive abilities are being applied negatively because they are merely trying to survive, hampering further growth of their true potential (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 1997:440). Figure 3.3 is presented below to highlight Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs.

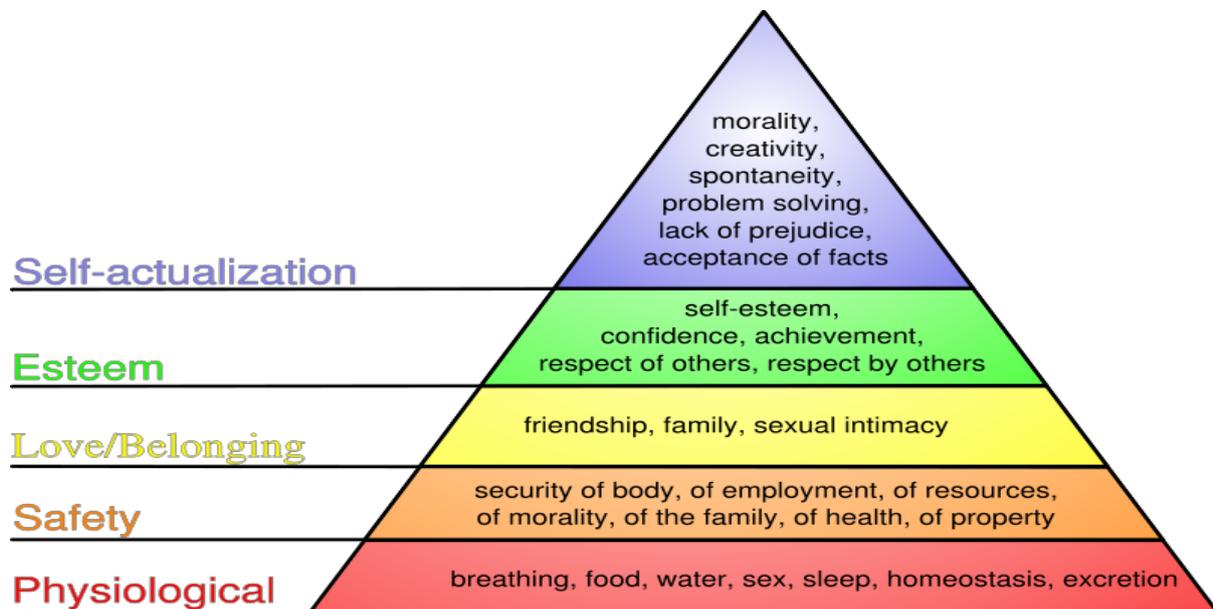


Figure 3.3: Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Source: Adapted from Maslow (1943)

The figure above will be discussed in detail below.

3.3.1.1 *Physiological needs*

Basic physiological needs include the need for oxygen, food, water, elimination, to be active and to rest, to avoid pain and to have sex (Hergenhahn, 1994; Boeree, 1998). As Maslow (1954) pointed out that:

"The person's whole existence revolves around obtaining food. Composing poetry or music would be secondary to this. Even his or her vision of the future would be affected, so that freedom, love, public spirit, respect and philosophy would be lightly valued" (Meyer et al., 1997:440).

In this way, Maslow (1954) contended that physiological needs are fundamental to existence, and will dominate all other needs.

3.3.1.2 Safety needs

After physiological needs are met on a regular basis, safety and security needs come to the fore. These needs include structure, order, limits, security, consistency, predictability and freedom from fear. Children especially have a need for structure in order to feel safe as they are helpless, defenseless and dependent on others (Meyer *et al.*, 1997:440). Boeree (2004) points out that deficit at this stage will result in the child becoming concerned with fears and anxieties (Boeree, 2004).

3.3.1.3 Belongingness and love needs

If a child is reasonably sure that his or her physiological and safety needs will be met on a fairly continuous basis, then the need for affiliation becomes more salient (Meyer *et al.*, 1997:441). This need is to be found within the immediate family environment in which healthy family relationships contribute to healthy development as the child experiences a loving and warm environment in the home. The child will then be able to respond in a loving way to others within the home and this love and caring is then extended to the outer circle of friends, one's culture, community and religious environment. As a result, the child will have a sense of identity and of self worth. Deficiency in this need would increase susceptibility to feelings of loneliness and social isolation (Van Staden, 1985).

3.3.1.4 Self-esteem needs

Self-esteem implies the extent or degree to which an individual values him or herself positively. If the first three needs have been adequately satisfied, then the need for self-esteem will begin to dominate the individual (Hergenhahn, 1994). Self-esteem needs are based on two factors: personal achievement and the esteem one receives from other people (Hergenhahn, 1994). Personal achievement is seen as a higher esteem need in which the individual has the need for self-respect (Boeree, 1994).

This in turn encourages feelings of competency, achievement, self-confidence, personal strength and independence (Hergenhahn, 1994). Esteem needs that the individual receives from others is seen as a lower esteem need, and involves the individual seeking respect, recognition from other people, status and reputation. This will result in feelings of acceptance, status, honour, dignity and appreciation (Boeree,

1994). Deficiency in these needs result in the individual having a low self-esteem, a sense of inferiority, discouragement, and feelings of weakness and helplessness (Meyer *et al.*, 1997:442). Genuine self-esteem is essentially supported by an individual's actual experiences, and does not only depend on judgement of others. In other words, it is one's own judgement of self-respect that is emphasised.

3.3.1.5 Self-actualising need

Once the lower needs have been sufficiently satisfied, then the need for self-actualisation will become more dominant. Self-actualisation is seen as reaching one's full potential through one's abilities and talents (Meyer *et al.*, 1997:443). This need seeks self fulfillment as the individual becomes aware of the development of his or her true potential, capacities and talents. Maslow (1954) refers to these needs as the Being needs (B needs) or meta-needs. They include the need for meaningfulness, truth, goodness, beauty, unity, justice and transcendence of opposites. In addition, meta-needs encompass the need for wholeness, simplicity and perfection (Boeree, 2004). These needs can be manifest in creative expression, recreation and leisure time (Hergenhahn, 1994). If there is a deficiency in these needs, an individual will respond with meta-pathologies, namely, alienation, despair, depression, cynicism and disgust. Maslow (1954) believed that only a very few people actually achieve this need.

3.3.1.6 Maslow's theory: A critique

It is important to note that Maslow (1954) has been criticised in a number of ways. Firstly, it is argued that his research was based on a small sample of people that he himself thought were self-actualised. Secondly, he has also been criticised for limiting self actualisation to only about two percent of humans and that self-actualisation can only happen considerably late in life. Thirdly, and his greatest criticism, has been that he argues that basic needs must be met before higher forms of needs can be actualised.

However, it has been pointed out that many artists, poets, authors and musicians who, despite experiencing the first stage of the hierarchy including hunger, isolation, poverty or depression, have achieved self-actualisation, freedom, beauty, love and philosophy (Boeree, 2004).

Burns (2004) has also argued that there is a continual dynamic shift and movement between the stages in the hierarchy, and although there may be individuals who believe that they are self-actualised, their basic needs will interfere at some point or another. In other words, while one's needs may be fulfilled at one point in time, this does not guarantee that this need will be met right throughout one's life (Burns, 2004).

Moreover, while Maslow (1954) defined needs according to lower and higher levels, Burns (2004) has pointed out that behaviour can be combined at several levels simultaneously as well. For example, eating can fulfil both physiological and social and aesthetic needs (Burns, 2004). This has relevance because it suggests that Maslow's theory need not be seen to exist alone, but can be explained in terms of how needs are influenced by the situation and the culture in general, and consequently, Maslow's (1954) hierarchical theory can be used as a broad base for the explanation of the development of street youths within a cross-cultural perspective.

3.4 ERIKSON'S THEORY OF DEVELOPMENT

Erikson (1963) is a stage theorist who puts forward an explanation of personality development that proposes that psychosocial development occurs over the lifespan. He believed that this occurs gradually, shaping the individual until a stable sense of identity emerges, in which the individual deals with relationships, tasks, challenges and the demands in life (Burns, 1994).

Erikson (1963) categorised development into eight stages, which is based on the 'epigenetic principle'. This means that development is genetically determined and therefore individuals are forced through development by means of biological maturation, occurring at more or less the same age for everyone.

Each stage is defined on a continuum by a pair of opposing possibilities, with each possibility having the potential to be either healthy or unhealthy. Each stage builds on the previous one as personality characteristics build on previous already established characteristics.

Thus, at each stage, an individual is involved in the process of constantly making choices between different developmental possibilities as he or she interacts with the social pressures and demands of the environment. The individual remains in *crisis* until solutions to these possibilities are found. Once this is done, then successful resolution of a stage occurs (Meyer *et al.*, 1997). Healthy resolution of each stage must be seen as reaching a balance between the opposing possibilities in which the ego can develop aspects of hope, will power, trustworthiness and the ability to love and care.

In the context of this study, only the first five stages from infancy to adolescence, highlighted in the table below, will be focussed on.

Table 3.1: Erikson's epigenetic chart

Approximate Age	Virtues	Psychosocial crisis	Significant relationship	Existential question	Examples
Infancy 0-2 years	Hope	Basic trust vs. mistrust	Mother	Can I trust the world?	Feeding, abandonment
Early childhood 2-4 years	Will	Autonomy vs. shame and doubt	Parents	Is it okay to be me?	Toilet training, clothing themselves
Preschool age 4-5 years	Purpose	Initiative vs. guilt	Family	Is it okay for me to do, move, and act?	Exploring, using tools or making art
School age 5-12 years	Competence	Industry vs. inferiority	Neighbors, school	Can I make it in the world of people and things?	School, sports
Adolescence 13-19 years	Fidelity	Identity vs. role confusion	Peers, role model	Who am I? Who can I be?	Social relationships
Early adulthood 20-39 years	Love	Intimacy vs. isolation	Friends, partners	Can I love?	Romantic relationships
Adulthood 40-64 years	Care	Generativity vs. stagnation	Household, workmates	Can I make my life count?	Work, parenthood

Approximate Age	Virtues	Psychosocial crisis	Significant relationship	Existential question	Examples
Maturity 65-death	Wisdom	Ego integrity vs. despair	Mankind, my kind	Is it okay to have been me?	Reflection on life

Source: wikipedia.org

According to Table 3.1, the first stage of Erikson's (1963) theory is *infancy (0 to 24 months)*. In infancy, the major challenge of the child is of trust versus mistrust (Matsumoto, 1996). Erikson asserted that the quality of the relationship between a mother and a child will determine the extent to which the child learns to trust its' environment. If there is successful resolution of this stage, the child will have trust and faith that its need for food, love and attention will be met. This sense of trust will later form the basis for the child's sense of identity and combine with a sense of overall personal trustworthiness within self and within a social framework (Meyer *et al.*, 1997). If balance is not achieved in this stage, then a persistent sense of mistrust results. Healthy trust based on a certain degree of distrust is however, necessary as this leads to caution and prudence needed in certain aspects of living. Erikson referred to this part of the ego as *hope* (Bee, 2000). Unsuccessful resolution results in *fear* (Laubscher & Klinger, 1997).

Erikson's (1963) second stage is *early childhood (two to three years)*.

It is during this stage that the child emerges from almost total dependence on their caregivers to self-determining and self-reliant behaviour (Sprinthall & Sprinthall, 1990). It is at this stage that the child's energies are directed towards development of a variety of skills such as walking, climbing, pushing, pulling and talking (Bee, 2000) as well as developing the two psychosocial modalities of 'holding on' (retention) and 'letting go' (excretion) (Meyer *et al.*, 1997:217). Erikson (1963) asserted that it is this muscle control that provides the child with the ability that will lead either to autonomy (successful mastery of a task) or shame and doubt about the child's ability (unsuccessful mastery of a task). Too many failures at performing tasks will result in shame, doubt, and feelings of inadequacy.

Practically, this means that it is important that parents are tolerant of a child's behaviour in a socially acceptable way without injuring the child's sense of self-control or autonomy (Hergenhahn, 1994). Erikson (1963) saw the resolution of this stage as very important as he comments:

"This stage, therefore, becomes decisive for the ration of love and hate, cooperation and wilfulness, freedom of self-expression and its' suppression. From a sense of self-control without loss of self-esteem comes a lasting sense of goodwill and pride; from a sense of loss of self-control and of foreign over-control comes a lasting propensity for doubt and shame" (Erikson, 1963:254 in Meyer *et al.*, 1997:217).

The ego quality of *willpower* will emerge if there is successful resolution of this stage in which the child will be able to make independent, self-reliant and self-determining decisions and choices. Willpower supports maturation both of free choice and of self-restraint (Sprinthall *et al.*, 1990). Unsuccessful resolution of this stage results in *doubt* (Laubscher *et al.*, 1997).

The third stage is termed the *play age (four to six years)*. During this stage of development, a child is involved in the discovery of what kind of a person he or she is. They become curious about sexual differences, in particular the eroticisation of the genitals. At this stage, the child learns that he or she can act on own initiative, learning to move away from limitations towards future possibilities (Hergenhahn, 1994). If a parent punishes, ridicules or shows sarcasm towards a child for his/her own initiative then the child will be left with strong feelings of insignificance concerning his or her identity as well as feelings of guilt for having expressed inner feelings of the type of person the child hopes to be (Santrock, 1991:357).

At this stage the child is especially interested in identifying with the appropriate adult and copying their behaviour. Psychologically they become rudimentary parents or 'pseudo adults', in which they wish to adopt and apply rules. As a result, this stage is especially important in the development of the conscience. Meyer *et al.* (1997:217) points out that there is the danger that the child's conscience will develop too strictly or in a too moralistic way. If there is successful resolution of this stage by finding a balance between the child's initiative and his/her tendency towards being too strict in self-judgement, the trait of *purpose* will result (Bee, 2000). Unsuccessful resolution of this stage will result in feelings of *unworthiness* (Laubscher *et al.*, 1997).

Erikson's (1963) fourth stage is termed the *school age (six to twelve years)*.

During this stage personal and emotional development turns outward and the child learns and develops skills that are necessary for economic survival that will help it become an eager participant as a productive member in his or her culture. In this way, the child develops a sense of industry preparing the child for future opportunities in society. This stage is met by society who provides the means for learning basic skills such as reading, writing and arithmetic (Meyer *et al.*, 1997:218).

If the child does not develop a sense of industry by learning the skills necessary for survival, then feelings of inferiority develop and a negative identity will result. In contrast, if there is an imbalance in industry, the individual may overvalue his position in the workplace, equating worth-whileness with work. To this extent, the individual may become blinded to other important facets of life (Bee, 2000).

Resolution of this stage will result in *competency*, in which the child's sense of industry is greater than their sense of inferiority, allowing them to collaborate and contribute productively to society and their own well-being (Meyer *et al.*, 1997; Sprinthall *et al.*, 1990). Unsuccessful resolution of this stage will result in feelings of *incompetency* (Laubscher *et al.*, 1997).

The fifth stage is termed *adolescence (thirteen to eighteen years)*. This is the time period between childhood and adulthood in which the adolescent is striving for his or her own identity (sometimes called ego-identity). During this time the adolescent experiences many physical changes associated with puberty and sexual maturity, as well as becoming aware of the expectations from society (Sprinthall *et al.*, 1990).

Cognitive development in this period provides the adolescent with the ability to think and understand things differently. The physical, psychological and cognitive changes that occur at this stage are the most substantial shift that will occur in their lives. The adolescent begins to see things in relativistic terms, they are able to differentiate feelings and emotions in themselves and in others. They also develop the ability to distinguish between objectivity and subjectivity and they can adopt the perspective of another person.

They begin to understand the difference between symbolic meaning and literal meaning and role-play 'as-if' situations as well (Santrock, 1991:357).

At this stage, the adolescent will have to now deal with questions of how they feel about the changes taking place in their body. What do they think of society? What does society think of them? Where are they going? Who are they exactly? They are now able to meditate on and assimilate information about themselves and society, which will help them decide on what kind of future they would like to lead. Much of these questions will relate to their choice in occupation, gender roles, political beliefs, and religious and moral values. It is during this period that the adolescent is able to make meaning from, and sense of, their own experience especially in relation to their own identity and self-concept (Hergenhahn, 1994).

Successful resolution at this stage results in ego strength which is manifest in having a certainty and acceptance of their choice of identity in relation to other identity choices they could have made (Santrock, 1991:357). Gaining this personal identity results in the virtue of reliability or *fidelity* as they will have the capacity for loyalty towards the social role they have chosen (Hergenhahn, 1994). From this point, it is a matter of acting out their own identity because they now have knowledge of who they are. Unsuccessful resolution of this stage may mean that the adolescent leaves this stage with *role confusion* or a sense of *uncertainty* (Laubscher *et al.*, 1997). If this is the case, they will have the inability to choose a role in life and their self-image will be flawed. They will lack a sense of continuity, experiencing incongruence between their self-image and the expectations of society (Santrock, 1991:357).

3.4.1 Erikson's theory: A critique

There has been much debate over Erikson's (1963) theoretical approach towards the development of the individual. Firstly, some have argued that much of Erikson's (1963) theory was based on North American White professional and middle-class males and thus its universality across cultures has been questioned. For example, it is uncertain if a child who herds cattle in the country experiences the same developmental crises and challenges as a white child that lives in the city (Diaz-Guerrero & Diaz-Loving, 1994). In this regard, however, Ferrante (1992) has argued that Erikson's (1963) theory is *by no means unicultural* as he himself was brought up

in Europe and was exposed to a variety of cultures, including European, American and Native American. Although this fact may not ensure a multicultural focus, it does at the very least provide a background and foundation from which comparison and experience can be drawn on and applied to other contexts and cultures (Ferrante, 1992).

Secondly, Dannefer (1984) argues that developmental stages are not biologically based but are actually *age-based expectations* dependent on the norms of society. These expectations often vary within cultures, and what is expected from an individual in a Western society at a particular age, may be very different from the cultural expectations of a non-Western society. For example, expectations may vary as to what is age appropriate for leaving home, marriage, having children, attending school or the age an individual is initiated into adulthood. This is evidenced in the fact that a variety of cultures have different initiation ceremonies at different ages and stages (Dannefer, 1984). If stages are age-based expectations dependent on the norms of society, then one could argue that biologically based development can be taken into consideration *alongside* cultural-based expectations. This reinforces Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1993) that argues that the individual cannot be seen in isolation of the environment.

3.5 KOHLBERG'S THEORY OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Kohlberg (1976) focuses on moral thinking as it is central to moral behaviour. He argues that, the same act may be moral or immoral depending on the reasoning behind it (Davidoff, 1987:387). He believes that three levels of moral development exist, each of which is characterised by two stages. The three levels are *pre-moral level*, *conventional level* and *principled level* (Davidoff, 1987:399). The levels are highlighted in the table below (table 3.2).

A key concept in understanding moral development is internalisation, the developmental change of behaviour that is externally controlled to behaviour that is controlled internal standards and principles (Santrock, 1991:357). According to Kohlberg (1976), young children function at the pre-moral or pre-conventional level, behaving well to avoid punishment or to obtain rewards. Older youngsters and adults

reason at the conventional level, trying to please others or fulfill social obligations (Davidoff, 1987:398).

Table 3.3: Kohlberg's stages moral development

Level and stage	What is considered right
Pre-moral level	
Stage 1: Obedience and punishment orientation	To avoid breaking rules, backed by punishment; obedience for its own sake; avoiding physical damage to persons and property.
Stage 2: Instrumental purpose and exchange	Following rules only when it is to someone's immediate personal interest; acting to meet one's own needs and letting others do the same; right is an equal exchange, a good deal.
Conventional level	
Stage 3: Interpersonal accord and conformity	Living up to what is expected by close people or what people generally expect of people in your role; being good is important.
Stage 4: Social accord and system maintenance	Fulfilling the actual duties to which you agreed; laws are always to be upheld except when they conflict with other fixed social duties; right is also contributing to society, group or institution.
Principled level	
Stage 5: Social contract, utility and individual rights	Being aware that people hold a variety of values and opinions, and that most values and rules are relative to your group but should be upheld because they are the social contract: some nonrelative values and rights such as life and liberty, however, must be upheld in any society, regardless of majority of opinion.
Stage 6: Universal ethical principles	Following self chosen ethical principles; particular laws or social agreements are usually valid because they rest on such principles; principles universal principles of justice; the equality of human rights and respect for dignity of human beings as individual persons; the reason for doing right is the belief in the validity of universal moral principles and sense of commitment to them.

Source: Kohlberg (1981a) in Davidoff (1987:399)

3.6 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

This chapter has discussed Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs in order to explain the motivation of the satisfaction of needs of individuals. These needs include physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs and the need for self-actualisation.

Erikson's (1963) stage theory of psychosocial development across the lifespan has also been discussed. His theory proposes that development results from the interaction of biological instincts and drives and the social demands of the environment. Viewing the child as a 'being' with a variety of needs, potentials and possibilities is therefore highlighted.

Kohlberg's (1976) stage theory of morality strives to explain how individuals make moral decisions.

Thus, the importance of understanding the conflicts the child experiences as he or she progresses through these various stages of development, can be used as a framework in understanding street youths.

Chapter 4

LIFE ON THE STREET

4.1 INTRODUCTION

As citizens, children have rights that entitle them to the resources required to protect and promote their development. Street children, however, are socially excluded, an exclusion that begins with lack of access to birth certificates and registration documents, lack of stability of residence, proper education, and health care. This group of children is deprived of citizenship rights. While this phenomenon of street children is by no means new, globalization and economic liberalization have in some instances aggravated the vulnerability of children (Ferrara & Ferrara, 2005:2). According to UNICEF (1987:7), children on the street face the unhappy reality of increasing separation from their natural families and become at risk for losing their limited access to basic facilities, such as health, education, and recreation.

A careful analysis of the street children phenomenon reflects a number of immediate, underlying and basic causes. Available literature on street children from academic presentations, journal articles, books by researchers and situational analysis and survey reports, show a plethora of causal factors and effects to the street children problem.

4.2 NEEDS OF STREET CHILDREN

Maslow (1954) asserted that a person's behaviour is motivated by need. He noted that people need to eat before they can achieve higher needs like safety and love and belongingness (Santrock, 1991:450). In line with Maslow's (1954) assertions, the primary purpose of street youths is to find food and shelter. When food cannot be purchased, children eat what they can find in the trash. Observations revealed that street children often eat food very fast, almost swallowing food whole, and in large quantities. This might be a reflection of the type of lifestyle they experience which entails quick actions and movements.

Most street children prefer to get left over food from bakeries and restaurants. When food is scarce they will drink large amounts of water to lessen their hunger. As a result of the unhealthy eating habits of these youths, malnutrition is also very prevalent among them (Swart, 1988b). Life on the street implies a public disclosure of personal destitution. One's poverty is made so visible that there is no escape from confronting its existence for the external observer as well as the victim.

Children living in the streets might not have permanent shelter and live a nomadic lifestyle. They are often found sleeping in drainpipes, alleyways, vacant lots, parks, abandoned cars, shop entrances, stairways, and makeshift shelters or under cardboard boxes and newspaper covers. Sometimes, they go to places of safety at night or during the winter months to sleep and eat, while they work and beg on the streets during the day (Swart, 1988b; Gebers, 1990; Le Roux, 1995). However, those who come from home to work retire to their homes during night-time.

Ignorant about health, hygiene, and nutrition and deprived of services to protect them, street children are a malnourished sub-population subsisting on an inadequate diet (Aptekar, 2003). Lack of access to medical services due to the type of life they lead means that skin diseases, lacerations from fights, intestinal illnesses, and infections go untreated. Extreme living conditions on the streets result in street youths being exposed to many illnesses that under normal circumstances could be treated. They tend to have severely cracked lips, sore eyes, sore throats, nasal problems and burns from the cold. Headaches, nausea, excessive thirst and rapid weight loss are also common (Gebers, 1990; Schurink, 1993). Many experience dehydration, malaria, pneumonia and other contractible diseases associated with malnutrition and sexual behaviour (Campbell & Ntsabane, 1996).

Under or non-immunisation was also found to place street youths at a higher risk to disease and infection, and a lack of vitamins, particularly vitamin C and B, result in a lower immune system often resulting in anaemia, a poor rate of healing and other diseases (Molnar *et al.*, 1990). Similarly, Schurink (1993:5) found in his study that long-term effects of illness can include damage to the central nervous system, the brain and the major organs of the body. These include the heart, liver, kidneys and the vital blood producing function of the bone marrow. As a result of these health risks these youths are at a higher risk of death as well (Schurink, 1993:5).

It is believed that street children are more susceptible to diseases due to their personal unhealthy habits while being on the streets, which include eating exposed and dirty foods, lack of personal hygiene due to sleeping on the streets, working in various unhealthy environments, and washing in rivers and fountains in public squares (UNODCCP, 1999). In a study by UNODCCP in Cairo and Alexandria, street children described their health statuses as “fine and better than their peers”. Street children viewed the types of illnesses or diseases they experienced as “minor or normal” as long as they could move, work, and run. Sickness to them means “inability to move or work”. Most of the sample of street children complained of the following health problems, which are often viewed by them as “minor health problems”:

- Headaches,
- Heart pain,
- Chest pain,
- Abdominal colic,
- Renal colic,
- Back pain,
- Blood in the urine,
- Shortening breath on running,
- Cough,
- Wounds and bruises,
- Diarrhoea,
- Dental problems,
- Fever, and
- Discharge from the ear (UNODCCP, 1999).

Furthermore, the UNODCCP report stated that the most common health problems recorded in NGOs were, skin diseases (scabies and tinea), anaemia, intestinal parasitic infections, skin abscesses and septic wounds, tonsillitis and hair lice. Children living on the streets tended to avoid seeking medical help when they were ill and tried to sleep off their illnesses (Ennew, 2003).

Children's needs are however, not only material, but also social and emotional. It is usual for young children, in particular, to spend much of their time in the company of adults who ensure their physical safety, help them learn, and provide emotional comfort (Ansell & Van Blerk, 2004:685). The need for love, as well as for security, is a powerful motivator of behaviour. Alienated youths, experiencing harsh social conditions, may seek alternative ways to fulfill these needs, including running away.

Donald and Swart-Kruger (1994:170) have noted that, in terms of emotional health, the lack or loss of an adequate relationship with an adult caregiver poses the greatest problem for most street children. They cited the work of Bowlby (1988), whose theory of attachment and its effects on the development of emotional security and trust, as well as its role in psychological nurturance and the identification process, has profound implications for street children. Ironically, it is the lack of such a caring relationship that usually precipitates the choice, or forced acceptance, of street life.

The need for safety results in groups of homeless young people clustering together and forming loose associations in order to diminish victimisation and provide emotional support to one another (Bender *et al.*, 2007 in Thompson, Rew, Baczyk, McCoy & Mi-Sedhi, 2009:919-920). A lack of hope and motivation concerning leaving the streets also leads them to form ties with similarly situated others and develop loose connections aimed at improving their survival strategies (Raleigh-Duroff, in Epstein, 1996:290). They construct quasi-families that provide emotional and financial support, as well as safety. Although mutually supportive, these "family units" further entrench these youngsters in the street economy and culture.

Once on the street, children adopt one another, and other street people, as models. Through this arrangement, cognitive and affective needs are met (Richter, 1988a).

Pringle (1974) cited in Swart and Kruger (1994:170) grouped the psychosocial needs of children into four main areas: the need for love and security; the need for new experiences; the need for praise and recognition; and the need for responsibility. If these needs are not met or are thwarted, children may be at risk for emotional and behavioural problems. However, in most Southern African households, there might

be an assumption that, unlike material needs which demand a certain level of finance, anyone can fulfil non-material needs (Ansell & Van Blerk, 2004:686).

In a study by UNODCCP (1999) in Egypt, street children expressed the following as main needs from the society at large:

- Care and protection
- Help when needed
- Good treatment and understanding
- Advice

However, young people also desire autonomy. For many street children, freedom from adult control is the most important attribute of their adopted way of life (Scharf *et al.*, 1986 cited in Donald & Swart-Kruger, 1994:170). Erikson (1963), noted that adolescence bring forth questions of identity. Adolescents '*try one face after another*', and want to free themselves of the shackles of adults and make their own choices (Santrock, 1991:357).

In summary, adolescence is a difficult phase, riddled with social, mental and physical changes. Amongst street children, phase is made more difficult because of circumstances of poverty, lack of support, exposure to violence and crime and resulting mental health issues (Nyamathi, Hudson, Greengold, Slagle, Marfisee, Khalilifard & Leake, 2010:214). Basically, they have to fend for themselves, with little or no adult supervision, guidance or assistance.

The following section will look at the stressors children face whilst living on the streets.

4.3 DAY-TO-DAY STRESSORS ON THE STREET

Life on the street implies a public disclosure of personal destitution. One's poverty is made so visible that there is no escape from confronting its existence for the external observer as well as the victim. Street life demands ceding one's entitlement to private and personal space, and when one's ability to gain protection is challenged, all sense of permanence with respect to personal and social relations is thrown into

question (Epstein, 1996:290). Life on the streets can thus be stressful on the youngsters.

One possible source of developmental stress for these young ones is *having to work* from an early age. Child labour has been eradicated in many countries because it interferes with schooling and can be physically and emotionally injurious. Africa has a higher proportion of child labour than any other region, with 41% of children below the age of 14 in the labour force. This equates to over 80 million children, almost twice the Asian rate. This more often reflects the adverse economic situation facing families in Africa. A disproportionate number of street children are first-born, also reflecting the severe economic pressures impoverished families confront (Aptekar, 1994 in Epstein, 1996:295). Similarly, in Brazil, is the fifth largest country in the world (population 150 million) and one of the richest nations in Latin America, many youngsters work to help support their families. Estimates of the number of working street children in Brazil range from seven to seventeen million (Campos *et al.*, 1994:320).

In families, parents or guardians assign work and responsibility compatible with a child's age, gender and developmental level. At the workplace, however, children are exploited as the employers are more concerned about profits.

Working youth cope with *developmental tasks* such as schooling while contributing to the wellbeing of their impoverished families. Furthermore, once they attend school, they may be developmentally delayed or school phobic and they express fear of parental abandonment. Homeless children confront psychosocial frustrations as well. Emotionally, parents are often unavailable to assist their children with schoolwork and the chore of completing homework is often unrealistic, given the lack of private space available to the children (Epstein, 1996:292). They feel ashamed of where they reside, they are often teased by peers and they feel misunderstood by parents. Adjustments to new school environments are difficult, they often have nowhere to do their homework and when they do suffer from developmental delay, and their feelings of failure are enhanced. Social exclusion is also reflected in the risk of educational failure and poor cognitive performance, although street life can offer opportunities for nonstandard education (Donald & Swart-Kruger, 1994 in Panter-Brick, 2002:162).

Another potential source of stress for working youth is *exposure to the risks and temptations of the street*. Going to the street does appear to be linked to earlier onset of sexual activity compared to the general population (Pathfinder International, 1991). Street children live in a world of decreased adult presence, increased importance of the peer group, drug and alcohol abuse, and early on-set of sexual activity. Because condoms are rarely used and sexual activity begins early, there is a high rate of pregnancy and STDs amongst street youth (Sondheimer, 1992) and having an STD increases vulnerability to HIV infection. Some attempt has been made to test street children for HIV infection and the results indicated that seroprevalence rates tended to be higher than those for adolescents in general, ranging from 2 percent to 10 percent of street children in both industrialized and developing countries (Athey, 1991; Childhope International, 1989; Knaul & Barker, 1990).

Parental absence has been identified as one of the most significant sources of childhood stress (Arnold, 1990 in Epstein, 1996:292). Many street-based youth do not have adults to turn to in times of trouble, relying instead on peers, institutions, or strangers. Donald and Swart-Kruger (1994) have noted that, in terms of emotional health, the lack or loss of an adequate relationship with an adult caregiver poses the greatest problem for most street children. They cited the work of Bowlby (1988), whose theory of attachment and its effects on the development of emotional security and trust, as well as its role in psychological nurturance and the identification process, has profound implications for street children. Ironically, it is the lack of such a caring relationship that usually precipitates the choice, or forced acceptance, of street life (Donald & Swart-Kruger, 1994:170).

In addition to lacking stable adult figures, street youth are exposed to a variety of major life events (for example, leaving home, arrest, violence) and minor hassles during their daily struggle to survive (Epstein, 1994:327). Many decide to reject the norms and values of the mainstream society which may in turn be detrimental to their mental health. High rates of sexual abuse have been found amongst street children. Street children in South Africa are widely exposed to sexual harassment and rape on the streets and in detention (Scharf 1986; Swart 1988; Swart 1990 cited in Kruger &

Richter, 2003). Street girls in Cape Town have listed the fear of rape and sexual abuse as two of the main dangers of street life (Kruger & Richter, 2003).

There is also evidence that many street children leave their homes to escape abusive family situations which include sexual abuse (Whitbeck & Simons, 1993; Whitbeck & Hoyt, 2002). It is thus not surprising that adolescents who experience child sexual abuse suffer from short and long term negative effects such as depression, low self esteem, substance abuse, inappropriate sexual behaviour, poor social relationships and self destructive behaviour. In their study, Whitbeck and Hoyt (2002:46) noted that street children engaged in early and risky sexual behaviour. The majority had experienced sex between the age of thirteen and sixteen, with the median age being fourteen years.

Most street children indicated that they were forced to escape or leave their homes and reside in the street because of the maltreatment, abuse and exploitation they witnessed from both parents, fathers, step fathers or mothers, older brothers, or relatives, and while working informally in shops and workshops. Abuse, in most cases, took the form of severe beating and insults for trivial mistakes. However, victimisation at home is replaced by victimisation on the streets. It follows that individuals who live in high-crime areas are more likely to have contact with offenders, which increases their risk for victimization. Because many homeless children are without a stable residence to which they can return, they spend more time on the street, increasing their proximity to potential offenders and thus their chances for physical and/or sexual victimization. Studies confirm that the more time adolescents spend on the street, the greater the likelihood of engaging in dangerous activities (Tyler & Beal, 2010:103).

In many countries, it has been reported that street youths are exposed to numerous dangers on a daily basis on the streets. Physical assault is reported to be very common and younger boys are often beaten by older boys or by gang members. There also seems to be a lot of danger from adults on the streets. Street youths report being beaten by other homeless adults, security guards and police officials (Motala & Smith, 2003).

Reports from Kenya indicate that street youths are often harassed, beaten, kicked, slapped and hit with rifle butts by police for no reason other than that they are street youths. They are frequently arrested and detained for vague offences such as loitering, vagrancy or petty theft and are often exposed to rape, threats on their lives, torture and killings. Many street girls are also raped, have their sexuality exploited and are often coerced into giving sexual favours to the police for fear of being arrested (Human Rights Watch, 1997). The United States reports that about 85% of street youths are sexually exploited, with 85% to 100% held in detention where they receive severe beatings from the police and other prison in-mates.

Brazil is reported to have the highest rate of brutality against street youths. As they fear both the police and that nothing will be done about the violence against them, street youths often do not report these incidents (Swart, 1988b). In a study into how South African street youths handle the violence inflicted on them in general, it was found that 25% passively accepted this type of treatment, 12.5% reported seeking police protection, 50% retaliated and 12.5% of the street youths reported attempting to avoid street violence altogether (Le Roux, 1995).

Finally, street youth are at *risk of injury and death* (Childhope, 1991; Dimenstein, 1990 in Epstein, 1996:328). In Northeast Brazil, Hecht (1998) reported that prison, insanity, or death were the common expectations of life for street children, while also in Brazil, Raffaelli (1999) cited in Panter-Brick (2002:165), thus summarized the stark prospects for street girls: They “disappear. They are arrested or they die. They die from venereal diseases, they are sent to mental institutions, they die from abortion, or in childbirth, or they kill themselves.”

Research, however, supports the notion that young people are resilient and that their psychological wounds will heal if given the opportunity. According to Garmezy (1983:73), “if there is any lesson to be derived from recent studies, it lies in the reaffirmation of the resilience potential that exists in children under stress”. This does not mean that they are unaffected by their experiences, but that they have the capacity to resist being overwhelmed by them. Nevertheless, the notion of childhood as a time of emotional vulnerability implies that traumatic events scar the psyche, which carries over to adulthood. Straker (1989) has pointed out that there are many mediating variables; for example, the developmental age at which a specific trauma

occurs. Cognitive limitations often mean that children cannot fully understand the implications of unpleasant events, and this moderates their impact. Wachs (1992), however, has found that the greater the exposure to stressful events, the greater the probability of deviant behaviour when children are faced with later stresses (Donald & Swart-Kruger, 1994:170).

It is recognized that all individuals do not experience adverse circumstances as equally stressful. The level of stress is dependent on the individual's assessment of the seriousness of a particular situation, as well as available coping resources (Donald & Swart-Kruger, 1994:170). However, how individuals interpret a potentially stressful event determines their reaction to it. If an event is interpreted positively, it can contribute to a sense of mastery and competence (Trad & Greenblatt, 1990 in Campos *et al.*, 1994:327). Prior research suggests that, for poor children in developing countries, starting to work at an early age may not be completely negative. Working makes poor children feel useful and productive (de Moya, 1989) and enables them to contribute to the family economy (Barker & Knaul, 1991), and opting to work rather than attend school does not have deleterious effects on future earning potential (Rizzini & Rizzini, 1991 cited in Campos *et al.*, 1994:327).

In a study on depression and stress in street youths in Canada, it was revealed that depression can be linked to homelessness and the stressors inherent in street life, including lack of shelter, food and basic needs, abuse, emotional abuse, pregnancy, HIV, lack of social support, family stress and ineffective coping methods (Ayerst, 1999). This was further confirmed in a study conducted by Holford (1998) who found that there are many psychological disturbances in street youths including high levels of stress, and anxiety and tension which result in adrenal imbalances, mood swings, aggression, irritability, restlessness, depression and hyperactivity (Holford, 1998 in Geldenhuys, 2001). Moreover, Geldenhuys' (2001) study indicated that street youths may also experience feelings of hopelessness, inferiority, despondency, rebellion, feelings of uncertainty about life in general and rage, rejection and desertion as a result of their circumstances (Geldenhuys, 2001).

Klain (1999) has also found that many street youths are more likely to have personality disorders due to their need to create different identities in order to survive

on the streets. As a result, they use distancing and dissociative behaviours (Klain, 1999).

One of the more surprising contrasts between perceptions of street children living in the developed as opposed to the developing world is a difference in the perception of the mental health of the respective groups. Numerous observers have noted the resiliency of street children in the developing world along with their comparatively infrequent use of drugs. Their psychological attributes conflict with the generic ascriptions of dependency that are so prevalent in the West (Felsman, 1984, 1989). To be sure, there are examples of groups giving their members tag names, pejorative, ridiculing terms that serve as identifiers and are based upon a person's physical or personal characteristics. However, the labels of depression, suicidal tendencies, developmental delay, parentifying, that have been attached to homeless children and youth in the USA, for example, are absent in descriptions of the behaviours of the children in the developing world (Epstein, 1996:296).

The psychological consequences of continual vulnerability to physical harm, exhaustion, poor nutrition, and the stress of living in public places serve to create psychological distress or exacerbate existing-psychological problems (Simons & Whitbeck, 1989:135).

In summation, it can be noted that researchers have been fascinated by both positive and negative aspects of street children's lives and personalities. Street youth display much strength as they struggle to survive. However, they also show hallmarks of psychological and physical risk (Childhope, 1990 in Epstein, 1996:327). Continued exposure to multiple life stressors has been linked to negative long-term outcomes. What happens to street youth when they grow up is largely unknown but thought to be grim (Epstein, 1996:327). It has been noted, however, that street life is often able to offer payoffs in the short-term, while compromising individuals in the long run (Richter, 1991 cited in Panter-Brick, 2002:165). Of importance is how key developmental stressors "combine to produce actual, not just putative, developmental vulnerability" (Donald & Swart-Kruger, 1994:173). According to Panter-Brick (2002:165), it is the combination of multiple stressors rather than the experiences of any single factor that defines an individual's vulnerability.

The following section will highlight strategies employed by street children in order to cope with their harsh environment.

4.4 SURVIVAL STRATEGIES ON THE STREET

Barker and Knaul (1991) cited in Panter-Brick (2002: 165) describe street children as “needy and bold, exploited but street-smart entrepreneurs.” They tend to hang out on the streets and participate in a variety of activities often as a means of survival. Survival on the street necessitates the abandonment of a futuristic time orientation. Survival becomes a moment to moment preoccupation and, for those in such a situation, the ability to divide and order time so as to contemplate let alone plan for a future is an unfamiliar luxury. The term 'survival' does not imply such actions are invariably successful or carry no costs; and the term 'strategy' does not imply the implementation of a carefully prepared plan. Rather, these terms are used in recognition of the fact that people do take actions in response to crises (Ansell & Van Blerk, 2004:674). Gilligan (1982), in her study, noted that adolescents have *preconventional morality*, which reflects a concern for self and survival.

A major task of adapting to street life is gaining protection. Furthermore, many adolescents engage in survival strategies to secure basic necessities (Hagan & McCarthy, 1997). Homeless youth must expend substantial energy to secure basic necessities such as food and shelter and maintain personal safety (Crawford *et al.*, 2009:953). Developing street smarts necessary to locate resources and adapt to the street economy are skills needed to survive (Thompson *et al.*, 2009:908). Children usually teach one another how to earn a living, where to go for a living, and what to do in case they face problems, which is a clear manifestation of their “subculture”. This subculture emerges as a result of their existence together on the street over an extended period of time and daily exposure to similar threats and circumstances (Whitbeck & Simons, 1993:136).

The circumstances, for example, of a child who lives, works and sleeps on the street are markedly different from those of one who sells fruit on the street for an hour before school each morning, which in turn are very different to those of a child who has been abandoned by his/her parents or of a child who is required to beg on the streets by day as part of a household income maximisation strategy (Baker, 1999).

Likewise, they adopt different survival strategies to suit their circumstances. They rarely save money since they have no safe place to keep their money and because it is too dangerous to walk or sleep on the street with money in their pockets that could easily be stolen, especially at night when they sleep. Separate street cultures may exist side by side, with little intermingling, and profoundly different survival experiences.

Below is a description of some of the survival strategies they employ to cope with the harsh environment they live in.

4.4.1 Delinquent activities

Many street children engage in delinquent activities in order to survive, given their limited resources and lack of opportunities (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999 in Tyler & Johnson, 2006:208). The deviant survival strategies include stealing, conning, robbing, trading sex for commodities such as food, shelter and drugs (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999 in Tyler & Johnson, 2006:208).

According to Campos *et al.* (1994:325), youth engaging in illegal activities had been on the street significantly longer than those not involved in illegal activities, and adolescent boys were more likely to use deviant subsistence strategies than adolescent females. Street children's participation in specific kinds of deviant survival strategies was noted by Nyamathi *et al.* (2010:215) to be gender related. Boys were more likely to sell drugs, shoplift, and commit burglary and theft than were girls, though adolescent females were more apt to report using prostitution to support themselves. Adolescent males were three times more likely than females to engage in non sexual deviant survival strategies (Nyamathi *et al.*, 2010:215). One potential source of adolescent resiliency is continued ties to home and positive support from others. Such social support decreases participation in deviant behaviours (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999 in Crawford *et al.*, 2009:1179). Deviance has been described as part of the lived experience of homeless youth.

4.4.1.1 Trade sex

As young people, street children have much in common with other adolescents, but some of their risk behaviours are more extreme. Not only do they have the

adolescent's sense of personal invulnerability, but they tend to become sexually active sooner (on average at about 12.5 years of age), and to have more sexual partners than home-based adolescents (Crawford *et al.*, 2009:952). Many street children are raped; the sexual abuse of street girls abroad is 20 times higher than that of women in general (Sondheimer, 1992).

Throughout the world the sexual activity of homeless youth falls into three categories: rape, survival sex (trade sex) and love relationships, and includes anal, vaginal and oral sex (Ennew, 1990). This was found to be true for the street children in the South African study as well. It is not perhaps sufficiently recognized that adolescent girls, including street girls (Ennew, 1990) engage in anal sex, frequently as a contraceptive measure.

Trading sex is however the last resort and is a survival strategy that is infrequently used by street children compared to other delinquent activities like stealing and conning (Tyler & Johnson, 2006:208). Tyler and Johnson's (2006) contention is that a few street children willingly trade sex, but do so because they are desperate and lack alternatives. Street children distinguish clearly between sex in a love relationship and survival sex; as one street youth in California explained, survival sex is "sex you gotta do," and sex with chosen partners is "sex you wanna do" (Pennbridge, 1992 cited in Crawford *et al.*, 2009:952).

Additionally, the authors believe the children are often coerced, pressured and manipulated into doing so, and as such, their decision is not entirely voluntary. Although rates of trade sex vary, many studies of homeless adolescents have found prevalence rates for trading sex to be less than twenty percent (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 1999; Beech, Meyers & Beech, 2002; Van Leeuwen *et al.*, 2004).

Some youth voluntarily trade sex, whilst others are coerced. Coercion may be from the 'recipient' of trade sex or from a third party. According to Hagan and McCarthy (1997:48), youths are often exploited by adults who provided care and later demand for 'payment' through sex. Others are persuaded or coerced by a friend, boyfriend/girlfriend or pimp (Hagan & McCarthy, in Tyler & Johnson, 2006:209). Little research has however focused on trading sex and the extent to which it is either

voluntary or coerced. Tyler and Johnson (2006:209) defined trading sex as exchanging sex or sexual acts for items such as food, shelter, money or drugs.

The dangers inherent in survival sex make it among the most damaging repercussions of homelessness among youths. The health implications of survival sex are underscored by the strong associations between survival sex and other high risk behaviours and characteristics: substance use, suicide attempts, STDs, and HIV/AIDS. Street children are commonly forced to engage in survival sex and find that their clients often prefer, and pay more for, penetrative sex without condoms (Kruger & Richter, 2003). In South Africa, a report by the Child Protection Unit estimated that 28 000 youths were involved in child prostitution in Johannesburg at an alarming rate (Leslie, 2002).

About 60 percent of the children in the South African study admitted to having sex while under the influence of glue, dagga, or alcohol, and many said that they were more interested in sex and less likely to think of using condoms when "high". Frequently, pimps supply street girls with drugs so that they will co-operate more easily. This ties up with other studies which have found that substance abuse leads to higher levels of high-risk sexual and other behaviours (Strunin & Hingson, 1992 cited in Crawford *et al.*, 2009:953).

4.4.1.2 Alcohol and drug use

Although society view alcohol and drug use as a hindrance to street children's successful transition off the streets, they however view it as a valuable coping strategy. As Auerswald and Eyre (2002) has shown, being acculturated to the street economy, drug use and homeless lifestyle all contribute to survival in the harsh environment (Thompson, Rew, Baczyk, McCoy & Mi-Sedhi, 2009:920).

Homeless lifestyle is highly associated with other behaviours common to street living like alcohol and drug abuse. Abusing alcohol then becomes a common and normative daily activity which does not only provide respite from daily stress of living on the streets, but an activity around which socially and emotionally supportive interactions occur (Thompson *et al.*, 2009:920).

An important characteristic of street youths is substance abuse, especially those who are classified as youths 'of' the streets (Lerner & Ferrando, 1995). Research indicates that 95 % of street youths in South Africa are addicted to some form of chemical substance. They generally smoke glue, sniff petrol, benzene, paint thinners, nail varnish, gasoline, lighter fluids and other noxious substances. They sometimes use mandrax, smoke dagga, alcohol and 'crack' cocaine, although inhalants are the most common (Le Roux, 1995). In parts of Latin America, street children are extensively involved in drug networks and there is an added danger of their becoming HIV infected through the use of contaminated and shared injection needles (Kruger & Richter, 2003). A study in the USA by Merscham, Van Leeuwen and McGuire (2009:95) revealed high rates of substance use and abuse amongst adolescent street children. Marijuana is the most commonly used drug in the USA, with cocaine and amphetamine use also noted to be high (Thompson *et al.*, 2009:906).

Drug use is a common and useful approach to numbing the daily experiences of life on the streets. Using drugs is perceived as a strategy to alleviate the stress of the street life and negative emotional effects of traumatic experiences (Thompson *et al.*, 2006:906).

With housing that often includes sleeping in public places, street children report using drugs and alcohol to keep warm and suppress hunger (Ayerst, 1999). Some drugs are used to help them stay awake for extended periods in an effort to lessen the chances of victimisation (Ayerst, 1999). Drugs also provides an escape from physical and emotional pain associated with estrangement from social norms and resources (Zlotnick, Tam, Tam, Tam & Robertson, 2003 cited in Thompson *et al.*, 2006:906).

In terms of gender, regardless of race or other determinants, males are more likely than females to use alcohol and other drugs (Adams & Berzonsky, 2005 in Nyamathi, Hudson, Greengold, Slagle Marfisee, Khalilifard & Leake, 2010:215).

Substance use at once may reduce inhibition of violent tendencies or make the adolescent more vulnerable to violent victimization. Survival strategies such as drug dealing may be aggressive or may involve the use of aggression for protection of self

and product (Crawford *et al.*, 2009:952). Violent behaviours that result from survival strategies such as protecting one's self as a drug dealer may become necessary to maintain the survival strategy, for instance, intimidating others to avoid attacks (Crawford *et al.*, 2009:952). This constant exposure to violence may desensitize homeless adolescents toward its use in survival strategies.

4.4.2 Street families

They often provide a sense of direction for the group determining how domestic resources and sharing of provisions is done in order to maintain some sort of structure. However, while the street families serve as a source of emotional and economic support, offering a degree of identity, friendship and loyalty, this is not without a certain degree of fear, suspicion and distrust and often animosity is dealt with by moving between groups (Le Roux *et al.*, 1998c).

The group plays a predominant and important role in the lives of street youths and there is often an inclination towards gangsterism (Le Roux, 1995).

4.4.3 Gangs

Peers are important socializing agents in most cultures and in most cases their influence is balanced by that of parents. However, on the streets, there is little or no parental supervision. Gangs often become an important survival mechanism. In the process of daily survival, homeless adolescents must learn to protect themselves by carrying a weapon or by connecting with peers who can look after them (Whitbeck & Hoyt, 2003).

Gangs set up a strict code of loyalty and honour, punishing norm breakers harshly and allowing no recourse to a higher authority (Epstein, 1996:327). Some join gangs of burglars, their small bodies being particularly useful in passing through narrow windows at night, or pick the pockets of passengers on buses (Miles & Okamoto, 2010:542). Gangs fight for power, in part to prove their manhood by bullying and dominating younger and weaker members, and in particular, by sexually and physically abusing the girls (Swart, 1988b). Even runaway adolescents without a propensity for criminality may affiliate with deviant peers on the street. This association with criminal behaviour can create its own momentum and may lead to

serious criminal behaviours such as drug dealing and survival sex that ultimately increase exposure to violence (Crawford, Whitbeck & Hoyt, 2009). In her study, Swart (1988b) found that there are four features that distinguish street groups from street gangs:

- Gang members tend to have a 'group identity' based on complete loyalty and a high degree of control and domination, whereas street groups are based on mutual cooperation.
- Gangs are concerned with the accumulation of money, goods and power, whereas street groups focus on more immediate consumption.
- Street gangs tend to exploit their families for food and shelter, whereas street groups are more inclined to collaborate to supplement family income.
- Gangs tend to emphasise a 'macho' image which is aggressive and confrontational, whereas street groups tend to avoid conflict (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Characteristics of street gangs and street groups

Street gangs	Street groups
'Group identity' based on loyalty, control and domination	Mutual co-operation
Emphasis on accumulation of money, goods and power	Emphasis on immediate consumption
Exploit families for food and shelter	Collaborate to supplement family income
Emphasis on 'macho' image, aggressive and confrontational	Evades conflict

Source: Swart (1988b)

Molo Songololo (2000) describes some of the reasons for girls joining gangs. While it may be that girls are forced into gangs through fear or coercion, many of these girls enjoy the prestige associated with being the girlfriend of a gang member. Their association with gangs may also provide a gateway to luxury items. Thus it is argued that these girls should not necessarily be seen as victims but rather that their decision to join gangs should be seen as a survival strategy in order to fulfil their basic needs which are taken care of by the gang structure. Their association with

gangs also gives them the experience of a sense of belonging (Molo Songololo, 2000).

4.4.4 Panhandling

Other daily survival strategies such as panhandling, which is the practice of asking commuters for money in public areas (Gaetz & O'Grady, 2002), or hanging out in public places is also a survival strategy of street youth.

This can also increase a young person's chances of physical and/or sexual victimization due to their prolonged exposure. Finally, associating with deviant peers (those who steal or rob) also exposes homeless youth to potential offenders and has been found to increase their risk for victimization (Tyler *et al.*, 2001a).

4.4.5 Begging

Street children adopt different skills, abilities or special talents to draw the attention of sympathizers. Some of them are engaged in singing a song either individually or in groups. Some of them narrate nicely as to why they are on the street and express their immediate problems such as hunger. Some children act as if they are handicapped.

Young street kids are more engaged in begging than older ones. They have better chance to get sympathy because their needs are emotional which provokes immediate sympathy than the older ones. Hetch (1998) rightly stated that age and success at begging are, unsurprisingly, inversely related. In the developing world, street children are young, aged five years and above, and it is believed that their earning value declines as they mature (Epstein, 1996:296). There is high competition among beggars to occupy better location which often, are accompanied by fight or quarrel. However, they negotiate within the group or among groups in order to reduce conflicts.

Street children know who to beg, where to beg and how to beg to be efficient in their 'mission'. Strategy of begging differs in terms of time, place and contexts. They, for example, prefer to beg foreigners than natives; drivers than pedestrians; and couples than single individuals. The first two groups are assumed to be rich whereas the last

one with an assumption that gentleman gives alms when they are together with their girlfriends or wives to be labelled as kind or caring. This shows street children are aware of and use the mainstream culture for their own purpose of raising money. They wear torn and tattered clothing as they assume that wearing better clothes would not result in success when they beg. To earn a living, they act upon the sympathies, empathies, disdain, and envy of their audiences (Aptekar, 1991:342).

4.4.6 Scavenging

Street children usually search abandoned food from garbage bins. However, searching from garbage bins is not the primary source of food for most street children. The garbage bins are an important source for old clothes, shoes, plastics and other equipment. If they get some scraps, they will sell them back for their customers. Notably, street boys mostly scavenge early in the morning in order to be the first to search through the night's rubbish.

4.4.7 Luggage carriers

Street children are also involved in carrying passengers' luggages around taxi parks and the bus and railway stations. Most passengers, however, perceive street children as thieves and as a result opt to handle their belongings on their own. This minimizes the already limited work opportunity for street children. In fact, small children are often preferred to old children and adults in the informal labour market because they are cheaper, less threatening and easier to manipulate.

4.4.8 Unskilled jobs

On the streets, street children may be found working a variety of jobs: they clean train compartments, shoe shiners, dishwashers, or porters for hotels and local businesses. Other common ways of earning money on the street include selling cigarettes, guiding cars into parking areas, caring for and washing cars, and selling newspapers, fruit and flowers. Street children work at unskilled jobs to earn money legally. Children *on the streets* were more likely to be street vendors and children *in the streets* to engage in work requiring no capital, such as washing cars or collecting paper to sell. Girls are more likely to work in domestic settings than boys (Campos *et al.*, 1994:325). Many have worked in mechanics' shops, barbershops, small factories

and workshops, in vegetable and fruit markets, or in other businesses informally. Compensation varies greatly by age and occupation.

4.4.9 Places of residence

In order for street children to survive, they need to reside in areas with a special supportive environment and characteristics that do not conflict with their lifestyle, nor pose threats against their existence (UNODCCP, 1999). Unlike the assumption that street children are always moving or “on the run”, research and data collected from NGOs (indirectly and on the basis of discussing rates and frequency of attendance of street children from particular districts to the drop-in centers) indicated that street children tend to “settle down” in areas where they feel secure, protected from violence, and with the possibility of earning a living and having fun. These areas are characterized by:

- Popular districts where their existence does not upset the local inhabitants, nor draws their attention to the street children,
- Popular areas full of shops and workshops where they can informally work and earn a living in doing minor jobs such as cleaning and carrying things,
- Areas where children can easily find their basic needs for cheap food, and shelter,
- Markets and commercial areas,
- Free public gardens.

Areas with special socio-cultural characteristics where they can beg people for money,

- Under bridges and on the flyovers where they sleep and/or beg,
- The cemetery and waste lands where they can sleep and hide, and
- Near train stations, metro stops and bus terminals where they can both travel and beg (UNODCCP, 1999).

Mobility of street children in most cases is greatly affected by weather conditions.

4.5 A COMPARISON OF TRENDS

In a study by Campos *et al.* (1994:320), they discovered that most children *of the street* (street-based youth), engaged in illegal survival activities like stealing and exchanging sex for money. They are drawn into illegal activities because of the low and unpredictable income generated by street jobs and because they learn from more experienced street youth. They also noted that youth engaging in illegal activities had been on the street significantly longer than those not involved in illegal activities (Campos *et al.*, 1994:320).

Problem behaviours such as use of alcohol, injecting drugs, and seven common "street drugs" (inhalants like paint thinner and shoemaker's glue; marijuana; lolo, a mixture of ether and perfume; cough syrup; amphetamines; cocaine; and hallucinogenic teas) was assessed. They noted that children *of the street* were more likely than children *on the street* (home-based youth) to report lifetime and current use of alcohol and drugs (Campos *et al.*, 1994:324).

Fewer street- than home-based youth had someone to give them a place to sleep, protection, or help in case of injury or illness. Additionally, street-based youth were more likely to seek help from nonrelatives and tended to depend heavily on peers. As a result, most of the street-based youth in the study belonged to a gang (Campos *et al.*, 1994:324).

According to Campos *et al.* (1994:324), more home- than street-based youth were likely to attend school and worked at unskilled jobs to earn money legally. This was a notable trend in the developed world and Lusk *et al.* (1989) even suggested that street children in Latin America, a developing continent, primarily be viewed as 'workers'. Home-based youth were more likely to be street vendors and street-based youth to engage in work requiring no capital, such as washing cars or collecting paper to sell.

Furthermore, it is clear that for children and youth living in the developing world, exposure to street life is more systematic, of a longer duration and more closely tied to direct economic deprivation than that typically experienced by children and youth in the developed world (Epstein, 1996:295). It has also been noted that the causes and characteristics of homelessness in the developing world appear to be more

systemic, of longer duration and more permanent than those that appear in the developed world (Epstein, 1996:297).

There is a distinct gender reversal in comparison with the developed world, as a majority of street children in the developing world are male. Girls are more likely to stay at home and work. The responses of voluntary organizations and NGOs differ as well.

4.6 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

Living on the streets is a dramatic severance of adult control and pro-social options. Legitimate means of self support are limited, increasing the livelihood of deviant survival strategies (Crawford, Whitbeck & Hoyt, 2009:1179). In some ways, street children are the embodiment of the process cumulative negative outcomes. Important sources of support have been severed, antisocial options have begun to outnumber pro-social ones (Crawford *et al.*, 2009:1179). However, Le Roux (1995) pointed out that only in exceptional cases will a small percentage of street youths collaborate in criminal activities in order to survive. Similarly, Swart (1988b) asserts that the belief that streets are 'schools of crime' is a myth and that treating street youths as if they were criminals may only result in them becoming criminals. Thompson *et al.* (2009:908) however noted that, with 'streetism', status offenses like dropping out of school may lead to more serious offenses of violent crime and theft as a means of survival.

It is important that we not lose sight of the extensive evidence indicating that homeless and runaway adolescents are not at great risk for violent victimization, nor do we want to give the impression that all runaway and homeless adolescents are violent predators. Rather, violence takes place in a context of high-risk survival strategies.

This section shows how street children function on the street and the various challenges they have to face on a daily basis. Examining factors such as food and shelter, income generation, their social structure, gangsterism, violence and abuse, substance abuse, sexual behaviour and the contact they have with their families provides better insight into their challenging lives. However, to present street children

as helpless victims of social discrimination does little to recognize their remarkable initiative and ingenuity in coping with difficult circumstances (Ennew, 1994; Panter-Brick, 2001a).

Chapter 5

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to do meaningful, professional research, it was vital to follow certain consecutive steps. De Vos *et al.* (2005) identified the following steps.

The first step is to identify a researchable topic. Step 2 is that of assessing the suitability of the research problem. The formulation of the problem is the third step and the fourth step is the writing of the research proposal. Literature review is covered in step 5. Step 6 is all about the research design, and step 7 about information collection. Step 8 entails the sampling method and in step 9 the aspect of the pilot study is addressed. The last two steps, steps 10 and 11 address data analysis and interpretation and the writing of the research proposal.

These steps will be discussed below.

5.2 STEP 1 - SELECTION OF A RESEARCHABLE TOPIC

This step can be described as the starting point of the research. As was discussed in Chapter 1, it is important to identify a research problem and make sure it is researchable. The research problem can also be described as the need for this topic to be studied (Fouché & De Vos, 2005:90). The researcher was at one time employed as a Social Worker for the program working with children living in and on the streets of Mzuzu. After seeing the magnitude of the problem and the realization that in Malawi, the street child phenomenon was growing, the researcher was interested in that area of study and permission was granted to use the children accessing services at St John of God Community Services, which is the sole organization working with street youths the Northern region of Malawi. According to Creswell (2003:4), for a topic to be deemed researchable, there should be an adequate degree of personal interest for the researcher. Furthermore, considerable time should be given to study the field in question and resources and data should be available. The field of street child phenomenon has been written off since the early

19th century when the problem first got recognition. Creswell (2003:4) also highlighted that the results of the study should be of interest to others. The aforementioned organization indicated that they would be interested in the findings of the study.

5.3 STEP 2 - ASSESS THE SUITABILITY OF THE RESEARCH APPROACH

As was discussed in Chapter 1, a qualitative approach was chosen. Qualitative research is a broad umbrella term for research methodologies that explore, describe and explain persons' experience, behaviours, interactions and social contexts without the use of statistical procedures or quantification. As an exploratory study, emphasis was on how the youths respond and interact with their environment as a result of circumstances implicit in street life. It was thought that by using the exploratory methods, greater insight into the psychological and emotional status of adolescent street children could be gained. Primarily the focus is to understand the individuals' own accounts of their perceptions, views and experiences (Whittaker, 2009:9). Qualitative research tends to explain the meaning of social phenomena such as the street child phenomenon through exploring ways in which individuals understand their social worlds.

5.4 STEP 3 - PROBLEM FORMULATION

Mouton (2006:50) suggests that one has to read much about the research idea, also referred to as the preliminary literature review. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 explored the adolescent life phase, psycho social needs, stressors and survival the ecological perspective and the provision of support from multiple levels. This literature study formed a foundation of knowledge to understand adolescent street children's experiences. Furthermore, Mouton (2006:50) postulated that one has to be clear about what is to be researched, and in this study, adolescent street children, between the ages of 13 and fifteen were the unit of analysis (Chapter 1). Goals and objectives of the research also have to be clear. In this study, the goal was to gain a better understanding of the needs, stressors and survival strategies of street children in Mzuzu, Malawi. Objectives were formulated to achieve this goal (Chapter 1).

5.5 STEP 4 - WRITING THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

A research proposal is a document that outlines how the research project will be conducted. A good research proposal is an excellent working document that can be used to refine and finalize the first chapter of a thesis (Fouché, 2005:111-120). This research proposal was approved by the end of 2011. This research proposal was refined with minor changes and is formulated in Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

5.6 STEP 5 - LITERATURE REVIEW

Whittaker (2009:19) states that a literature review is an ongoing process that will start in the early stages of a study and will continue throughout the life of the study. It is important that literature is reviewed on a regular basis as new material becomes available. The researcher thus needs to study the literature extensively before data collection or the research field is entered. It is also vital to have a literature control after the data have been collected. An extensive literature review was done on street children worldwide. A great need was identified for research in the social work field as little research has been done on street children specifically in Malawi.

5.7 STEP 6 - RESEARCH DESIGN

This study, as declared in Chapter 1 is a qualitative study with an explorative approach. According to Bless *et al.* (2006:47), exploratory research explores phenomena with the goal of understanding a situation, phenomena, a community or an individual. This is complemented by a descriptive research design, which focuses on collecting accurate information about a phenomenon and providing an in-depth description of a social phenomenon, group interaction or individual (Mouton & Marais, 1988:43-44). As little relevant or recent literature could be found, the exploratory design was chosen in order to gain insights and to gather information regarding the topic of interest (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:106; Mouton & Marais, 1988:43). The intention of this study was to explore the psycho social needs, stressors and survival strategies of adolescent street children in Mzuzu, Malawi.

5.8 STEP 7 - INFORMATION COLLECTION

According to Greef (2005:287), interviewing is the predominant mode of information collection as in the process of interviewing, people's stories are told. Stories play an important part in identity formation. In this study, a semi structured interview guide was used as a tool for data collection. The aim of the interviews was to gather information on how participants experienced their situation and a chance for them to tell their own stories what their stories were (See Addendum A for the interview schedule).

5.9 STEP 8 - SAMPLING

Purposive sampling was used in this study. This is the procedure where the researcher chooses the participants. It is a sampling technique according to which the probability of including each element of the population in the sample is not known (Bless *et al.*, 2006:184). Purposive sampling is based entirely on the judgment of the researcher. The sample is composed of elements that contain the most characteristic and representative attributes of the population (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:201). Therefore, selection of participants is based mainly upon their knowledge, experience and role of the phenomenon that will be researched.

The following parameters were set out in this study of the population, as was also discussed in Chapter 1:

- Participants must be adolescents aged between 13 and 15.
- They must have lived in and/or worked in the streets for a period not less a year.
- They must access services at the St John of God drop in centre for a period not less than three months.

5.10 STEP 9 - PILOT STUDY

According to De Vos *et al.* (2005:206-211), a pilot study is a small study that is conducted prior to the main research to determine whether the methodology, sampling instruments and analysis are adequate. The pilot study highlights the feasibility of the project and brings possible deficiencies to the attention of the

researcher. This is of particular importance, as it allows the researcher to make adjustments to the research instrument in order to make it more effective in gathering the required data (Bless *et al.*, 2006:184). Four participants were used in the pilot study in order to see the appropriateness and effectiveness of the research tool in gathering information. Slight adjustments were made to the questionnaire to improve the clarity of the questions. Furthermore, the researcher noted that translating the questionnaire from English to Tumbuka, the local language, during interviews took time hence made the interviews lengthy. The researcher therefore decided to translate the questionnaire into Tumbuka.

5.11 STEP 10 - DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

According to De Vos *et al.* (2005:333), data analysis is the process of bringing meaning and structure to the data that is collected. Analysis enables the researcher to detect consistent patterns within the data (Bless *et al.*, 2006:163). In this study, data collected by means of the questionnaire was coded and represented by means of graphs and figures. This allowed for the data to be interpreted and for trends to be identified in the findings (Bless *et al.*, 2006:163; De Vos *et al.*, 2005:337). The data was then summarized and interpreted in the research report and compared to the existing data in the literature study.

5.12 STEP 11-WRITING THE RESEARCH DOCUMENT

A qualitative report is less structured, more intertwined with the total research process and usually longer and more descriptive than the quantitative report (Delpont & Fouché, 2005:351). Ethical considerations and limitations of the study were discussed in Chapter 1.

5.13 CONCLUSION

The chapter discussed the steps taken in carrying out a meaningful and professional research. This chapter has described the methodology used in this exploratory study, including a description of the participants, descriptions of instrumentation, data collection techniques, interpretation and presentation of the data.

The following chapter will highlight and discuss the findings of the empirical study.

CHAPTER 6

SITUATION ANALYSIS OF PSYCHO-SOCIAL NEEDS, STRESSORS AND SURVIVAL STRATEGIES OF ADOLESCENT STREET CHILDREN IN MZUZU, MALAWI

6.1 INTRODUCTION

It is well known that adolescence is a unique time in which the individual goes through many personal and social changes. When the adolescent also has to deal with life in the streets, new challenges and difficulties are introduced into a life stage that is already challenging (Trad, 1999:221) and that they are not developmentally prepared to deal with them.

In the light of the above-mentioned facts, the gaps in literature on the situation of street children in Malawi provided a basis for the empirical study. The findings of the empirical study can be verified against regional and international literature on streetism.

In this chapter the results of the empirical study will be presented and discussed. Where relevant, the data will be presented in tabular, figure or narrative form in order to best capture the findings of the study. The aim of this chapter is to analyze, interpret and verify the findings of the study with literature.

6.2 DELIMITATION OF THE INVESTIGATION

The participants for the study came from within Mzuzu and its environs. The participants access services at the St John of God (UMOZA) drop in centre. The population consisted of adolescents aged between thirteen and fifteen living in/and or working in the streets of Mzuzu. The sample was selected by means of a purposive sampling method. This ensured that participants were selected who met the criteria for inclusion and hence could fulfill the purpose of the study (De Vos *et al.*, 2005:201).

6.3 RESULTS OF THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

The findings of the empirical study and the interpretation of the data in comparison to the literature review will be presented below.

6.3.1 Identifying details

The participants were asked to give details about their age, race, period they lived/and or worked in the streets, number of children in household. These identifying details, along with the criteria of inclusion allow for a profile of the participants to be created. The identifying details are summarised in Table 6.1. Each aspect will then be discussed separately.

Table 6.1: Identifying details of participants

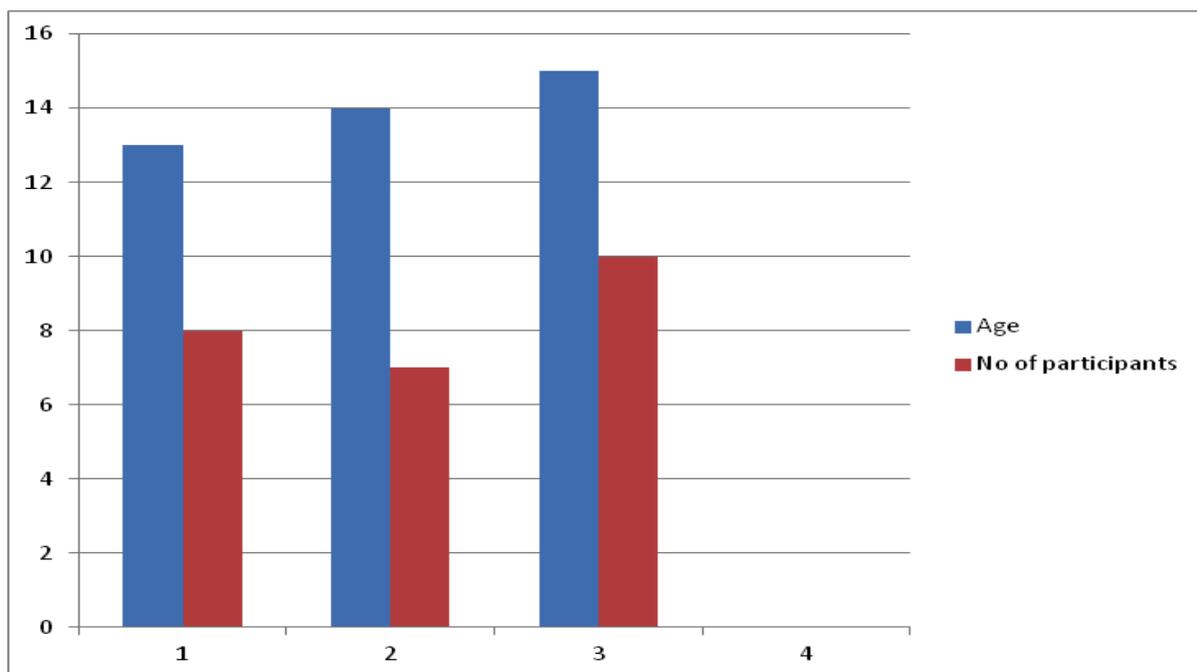
	Age	Sex	Household head	Number of children in household	Size of dwelling (rooms)
1	15	M	Mother	5	2
2	15	M	Mother	6	2
3	15	M	Mother	5	3
4	15	F	Grandmother	5	2
5	15	F	Mother	6	3
6	15	M	Both parents	4	2
7	13	M	Both parents	4	1
8	13	F	Both parents	6	2
9	13	M	Mother	6	2
10	15	M	Grandmother	3	3
11	13	M	Both parents	5	4
12	15	F	Mother	6	3
13	14	F	Both parents	6	3
14	15	F	Mother	4	2
15	13	M	Mother	4	2
16	14	M	Both parents	6	2
17	14	F	Both parents	6	2

	Age	Sex	Household head	Number of children in household	Size of dwelling (rooms)
18	14	M	Both parents	10	3
19	13	M	Both parents	5	2
20	13	M	Mother	2	1
21	15	F	Mother	5	2
22	14	M	Mother	6	1
23	14	M	Mother	5	3
24	14	F	Mother	5	2
25	13	F	Both parents	6	2

N=25

6.3.2 Age

The participants were asked to indicate their age. This had to be determined in order to ensure that they qualified to take part in the study as the study focuses on adolescent street children between the ages of 13 and 15 years. Figure 6.1 below shows age against the number of participants who took part in the study.



N=25

Figure 6.1: Age of participants

Figure 6.1 indicates that all 25 (100%) of the participants were between 13 and 15 years old and therefore qualified for the study. Eight (32%) of the participants were 13 years old, seven (28%) were 14 years old and ten (40%) were 15 years old. The participants can all be categorized into the early adolescent life phase. This stage is defined by Wait *et al.* (2005:19) as the sixth life stage, when the individual is between the ages of 12 and 18 years.

6.3.3 Race

The participants (N=25) were asked to indicate what community and race group they came from. Twenty-five (100%) were Black, with fifteen (60%) indicating they were of Ngoni origin (North of Malawi) and ten (40%) of Chewa origin (South of Malawi).

6.3.4 Family structure

The participants were asked to indicate who they currently were living with. This gives an indication of their family structure. Figure 6.2 below shows graphically the family structure of participants.

As indicated by Figure 6.2, ten (40%) of the participants, lived with both parents (mother and father). Thirteen (52%) of the participants indicated that they come from single-parent households, and all of these indicated that the mother was the parent who was present. One (4%) lived with a maternal grandmother and one other participant (4%) lived with a paternal grandmother.

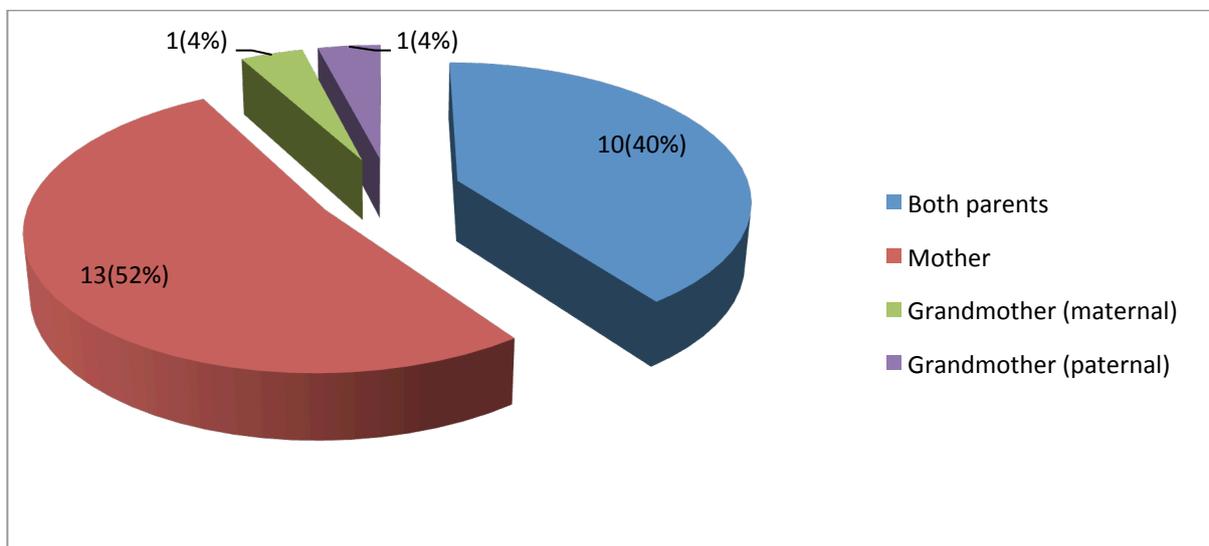


Figure 6.2: Living arrangements of participants

As noted in the study, the highest percentage of participants came from single parent headed households, with the mother as the present parent. This correlates with literature that growing up in single-parent households, or without any parents, places the adolescent at higher risk of adopting a street life (UNICEF, 2006:40). Grandparents also become the primary care givers of their grandchildren, rather than merely advisers and supporters as they were in the past as here stated by Ansell and van Blerk (2003:675) in their study. As Hockaday *et al.* (2000:434) suggested, family structure play a vital role in adolescent behavior and the study showed how it influences street migration.

6.3.5 Caregiver's employment status

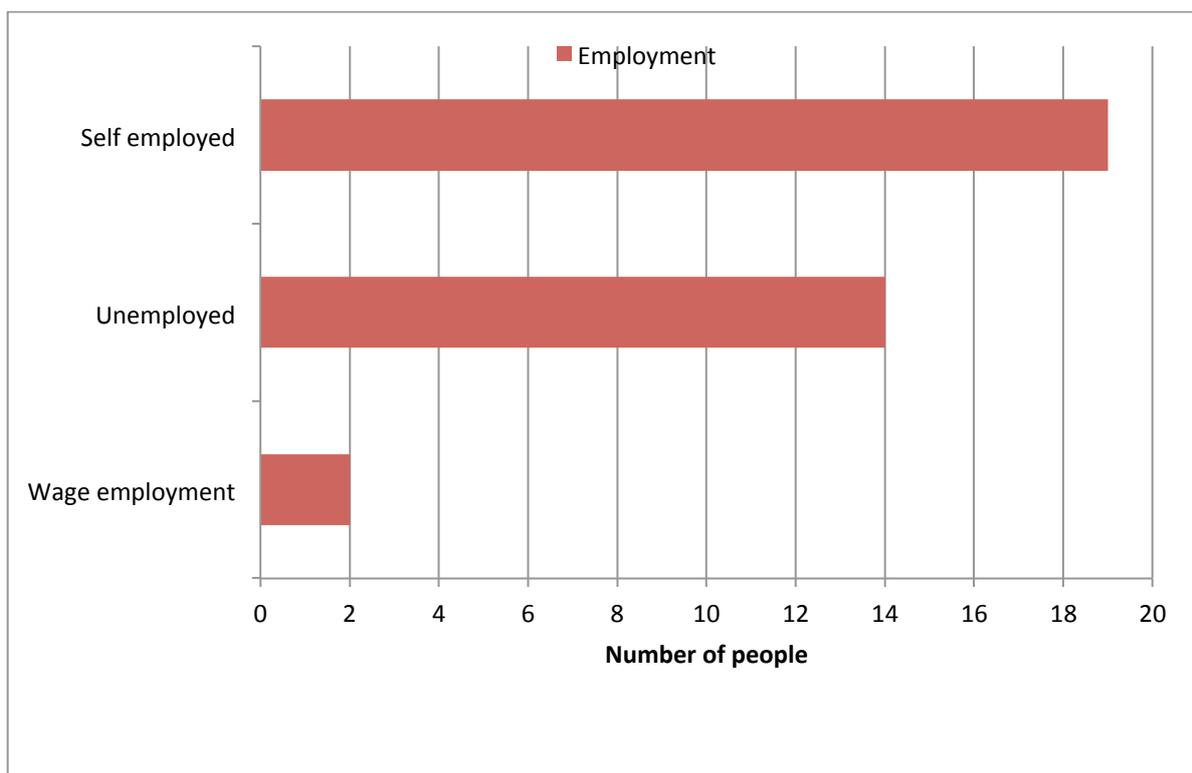


Figure 6.3: Employment status of caregivers

Figure 6.3 shows the employment status of the participants' caregivers. In the study, participants were asked their caregivers' source of income. Nineteen (54%) of the participants' caregivers were self-employed and participated in low income earning activities. Caregivers relied on selling vegetables and farm produce like sweet potatoes, cassava and maize on a small scale, or selling charcoal in small plastic bags. These are basically small scale ventures which do not earn them much ("My

mother sells small packs of charcoal. On a good day she earns MK200 (USD0.50). It's not enough for her to care for us all").

Two (6%) are formally employed and have a wage. However, they are in low-income earning jobs bracket (one is a security guard and the other, a general hand). Fourteen (40%) of the caregivers are unemployed and rely on piecework.

The findings are supported by studies done by Young (2004) in Uganda and Dybiczyk (2005:795) which indicated that a large percentage of street children were from low income earning households and factors leading to street life were rooted in poverty. Poverty is rampant in Malawi with 52% of its population living below US\$1 per day, while 22% are classified as ultra-poor (NSO, 2005). The findings of the study correspond with the literature, in that 'children on the street' were from low-income communities, poverty stricken households with low socio-economic statuses.

6.3.6 Nature of street life

On the question of where they called home and where they slept, all 25 participants (100%) indicated that they spent most hours of the day in the streets and sleep at home or at friends' homes at night ("*Every day, I come to town to look for piecework. I return home at night to sleep*"). Consequently, they fall within the UNICEF categorization of 'children on the streets' and as such can be regarded as street children. The participants in the study denotes those who "spend most of their time on the streets yet who maintain some regular contact with a family" (UNESCO, 1995:117). According to Foster (2003:73), the family support base for these children has generally become weakened ("*My mother relies on piecework, she doesn't get enough money to care for us ...*") and so children share the responsibility for family survival by working on city streets ("*I only come to town to work ... my home is in Salisbury line*"). Hence, in the study, the term 'street child' means a child who spends at least part of his/her daily life on the streets, working in the urban informal sector.

6.3.7 Age of entry into the streets

When asked when they started going into the streets, participants cited different ages for onset of street life. Figure 6.4 below highlights different ages of entry in streets.

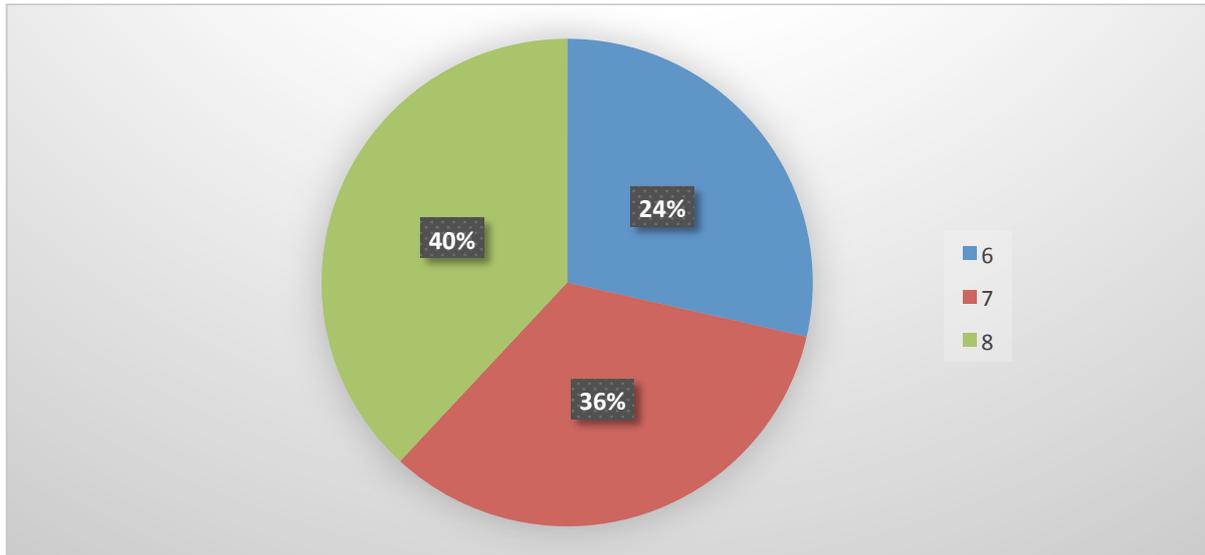


Figure 6.4: Age of entry into the streets

The study showed that six (24%) first went to the streets at the age of six, nine (36%) entered the streets at the age of seven and ten (40%) at the age of eight. Sexton (2005) highlighted that in the developing world, children as young as five are found in the streets. Study findings however show that in Mzuzu, Malawi, the earliest age of entry into the streets is six with the majority entering the streets at the age of eight probably because the nature of streetism has a direct link with one's ability to work.

6.4 NEEDS OF ADOLESCENT STREET CHILDREN

This section will look at needs that 'push' or 'pull' a child into street life. It will highlight the reasons why the participants in the study ended up on the streets of Mzuzu.

Table 6.2 below demonstrates the reasons expressed by the participants as their unmet needs resulting in their adopting life in the streets.

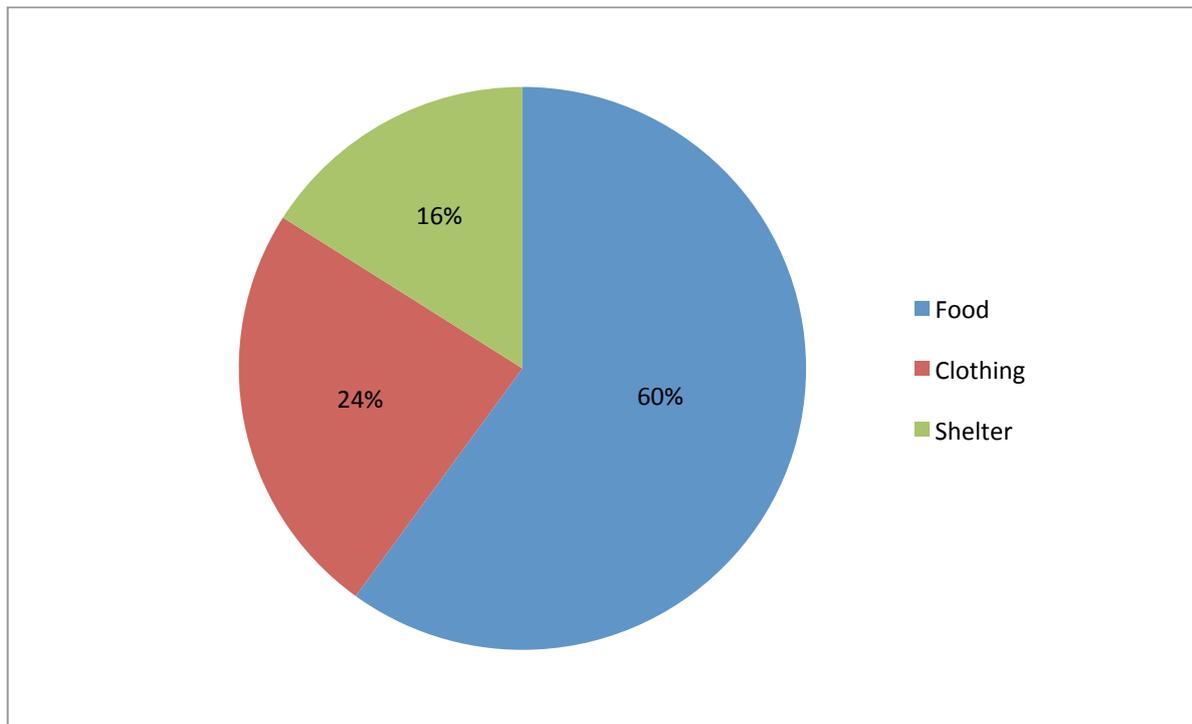
Table 6.2: Needs of adolescent street children

Theme: Needs of adolescent street children		
Subtheme	Category	Narratives
Physiological needs	Food	<p><i>"We are poor, we don't have <u>food</u> ... In the streets, some good hearted people just give me!"</i></p> <p><i>"We are six in my family, <u>food</u> is never enough!"</i></p> <p><i>"It was either I go out (the streets) or look for <u>food</u> or die of hunger!"</i></p> <p><i>"At my house, there is <u>hunger</u> ..."</i></p> <p><i>"<u>Food</u> is important for one to survive".</i></p> <p><i>"Everyone needs <u>food</u> ..."</i></p>
	Clothing	<p><i>Most of my clothes are <u>tattered and torn</u>".</i></p> <p><i>"If I look good, I will feel good about myself".</i></p> <p><i>"I don't have <u>clothes</u>, not even second hand clothes!"</i></p> <p><i>"... and my shorts show a map of Africa (<u>torn</u>)!"</i></p>
	Shelter	<p><i>"I need a good <u>sleeping place</u>".</i></p> <p><i>"Our house is <u>not safe</u>. It can fall anytime so we need a new one".</i></p> <p><i>"Our house is so small we cannot all fit so I would rather spend my time in town. There is just <u>no space</u>!"</i></p>

Table 6.2 will be discussed below.

6.4.1 Sub theme 1- Physiological needs

The findings showed that in terms of needs ranking, fifteen participants (60%) cited food as need, six (24%) indicated clothing and four (16%) cited shelter. The findings are presented in Figure 6.5 below.



N=25

Figure 6.5: Physiological needs

a) Category: Food

The needs of the children push and pull them into the streets with the most common need identified as food ("*Food is important for one to survive*").

Food was ranked highly on the needs expressed by the children. Fifteen (60%) of the participants cited food as a need. The children basically come from food poor households and food is regarded as a basic necessity. Some participant stated poignantly that:

"How can I stay there, what will I eat ...?"

"If I don't go to town, who will feed me?"

When asked, "Why did you start living or working on the streets?" fifteen (60%) of the children cited the need to find food out of home as a push factor. Of the fifteen (60%) participants, six were girls. One participant cited that,

"... we are six children in my family, we never have enough food at home so I have to go work in the market in exchange for food".

Another participants said:

“We are poor, we don’t have food ...!. In the streets, some good hearted people just give me!” “... there is no food at home so I have to do something ...”

These narratives of participants echoed the dire circumstances faced by many of them at home. Additionally, findings showed that the children felt they had no options left other than going to the street hence were forced by circumstances to go into the streets (*“It was either I go out (the streets) or look for food or die of hunger”*.)

According to Meyer *et al.* (1997:440), *“The person’s whole existence revolves around obtaining food. Composing poetry or music would be secondary to this. Even his or her vision of the future would be affected, so that freedom, love, public spirit, respect and philosophy would be lightly valued”*. The study findings correlate to this assertion.

b) Category: Clothing

Six (24%) of the participants cited clothes as a need. Statements below illustrate their need for clothes:

“Most of my clothes are tattered and torn, I really need clothes”.

“I don’t have clothes, not even second hand clothes!”

“... and my shorts show a map of Africa (torn)!”

Literature shows that when faced with extreme poverty, households are unable to provide food and clothing for their children (Young, 2004:472).

The findings of the study however showed that for the adolescent participants, the need for clothing was closely linked with the need to feel good about oneself. It is not necessarily a survival issue.

c) Category: Shelter

Four (16%) of the participants cited shelter as a need. The study findings magnified the fact that for the children, when faced with dysfunctionality, the home ceases to be the centre of play, culture and daily life and the streets become central in their existence (Foster, 2003:73). The study highlighted that on average, families where

the participants came from used two (2) rooms with an average household of five (5) (See Table 6.1).

Literature shows that the most common form of provision is shelter, which may fulfill children's need in part but in fact may more fulfill adult perceptions of children's needs including adult feelings about the importance of a home or not wanting children to 'sleep rough' (Chowdhury, n.d:24).

All twenty-five (100%) of the participants live in densely populated, slum like dwellings around Mzuzu. Seventeen (68%) of the participants live in Salisbury line, one locality with slum like dwellings, poor structures, overcrowded and unsanitary conditions. Four (16%) live in Mchengautuba, another three (12%) are from Chibavi and one (4%) lives in Katoto.

Housing structures in these areas are small, providing cramped living conditions (*"Our house is so small we cannot all fit so I would rather spend my time in town. There is just no space!"*).

Some children echoed sentiments like, *"I need a good sleeping place"*, indicating that home was a place to go to at night.

Others stated the deplorable conditions of their houses (*"Our house is not safe. It can fall anytime so we need a new one"*) hence their need for decent accommodation. The findings above are supported by Schurink (1993) and Swart-Kruger *et al.* (1997) who in their studies contended that shelter was amongst the most salient physical needs of street youth. Lucchini (1997:15) also noted that as children reach adolescents, they are no longer able to live in cramped conditions and opt for the streets.

In general, the findings about physiological needs of participants ultimately are in line with Maslow's contention cited in Meyer *et al.* (1997:440) that physiological needs are fundamental to existence of all human beings and will dominate all other needs.

6.4.2 Psycho-social needs

Children's needs are not only physiological but also have psycho-social needs affect the emotional and psychological wellbeing, and consequently one's view the world.

Table 6.3 below presents the psycho-social needs of the participants identified in the empirical study.

Table 6.3: Psychosocial needs of adolescent street children

Theme: Psycho-social needs		
Sub theme	Category	Narratives
Psycho social needs	Self esteem	<p><i>I'm the eldest, I have to go out (streets) and earn some money to <u>help my mother</u></i>”.</p> <p><i>“My mother sells small packs of charcoal. On a good day she earns MK200 (USD 1.00). It's not enough for her to care for us all so I have to <u>play my part</u> ...”.</i></p> <p><i>“My grandmother is old, she can't do much so I have to work to <u>support her and my siblings</u>”.</i></p> <p><i>“My cousin is <u>doing so well</u>, bringing food home everyday ... I can also do it ...”</i></p> <p><i>“... he is so <u>cool</u>, he always has money ...”</i></p>
	Education	<p><i>“I <u>left school</u> long back, my mother couldn't afford to feed me and the other kids and also pay school fees ...!”</i></p> <p><i>“My parents couldn't <u>afford school</u>, so what could I do?”</i></p> <p><i>“If only I could get an <u>opportunity to learn</u> so that I can get a good job.”</i></p> <p><i>“<u>Education</u> is important ...”</i></p>
	Love	<p><i>“It would be nice if my mum showed that she <u>loved</u> us. I think she is too tired to love ...!”</i></p> <p><i>“My parents just <u>do not care</u> ...”</i></p>
	Recreation	<p><i>“I need time to play ...”</i></p> <p><i>“There is <u>no rest</u> at home ... Chisomo this Chisomo that ...”</i></p> <p><i>“I like video <u>games</u>. In Salisbury line there are none so I have to go to town.”</i></p>

a) Category: Self esteem

The findings from the study showed that sixteen (64%) of the participants expressed that they had to contribute to the family income (*“I'm the eldest, I have to go out*

(streets) and earn some money to help my mother”). This was a common response amongst the older children.

The study findings on how earnings were used magnified the role played by the children and their need to be relevant players in the household. In the study thirteen (52%) the participants’ earnings, in form of food or cash would directly be of benefit to the family.

“My grandmother is old, she can’t do much so I have to work to support her and my siblings ...”

“My mother sells small packs of charcoal. On a good day she earns MK500 (USD 1). It’s not enough for her to care for us all so I have to play my part ...”

The research findings correlate with literature (Bourdillon, 1994; Swart, 1990a; Lusk, 1989) which indicate that children are actors within the household and not simply recipients of adult care. The children feel a need to generate or supplement family income and this means that some children become family breadwinners increasing their exposure to street life.

Furthermore, the findings of the study showed that the presence of a friend or family member in the street was identified as a pull factor in that this stimulated the need to compete and be held in high esteem by peers. Ten (40%) of the participants explained that some of their kin were also on the streets:

“My cousin is doing so well, bringing food home everyday ... I can also do it ...”

“He is so cool, he always has money ...”

The study findings showed that younger siblings were pulled into the streets after realizing that their brother or sister or any relative or friend was ‘*doing well*’. This is in tandem with literature as some studies have noted that many children have been affected by the existence of other older brothers or sisters on the street, who act as “role models” for them to follow (Foster, 2003:74). Consequently, the ability to work and ‘make money’ is closely linked to the adolescent’s need to be held in high esteem.

b) Category: Education

Education is highly valued in Southern Africa (Ansell & Van Blerk, 2002). However, in this study, five participants (20%) ranked, "... *a chance to go to school*", as one of their needs.

From a sample of twenty-five participants, eight (32%) stated that they had dropped out of school due to financial reasons and ten (40%) attended school irregularly. Only seven participants (28%) had a regular school attendance.

One participant stated that:

"I left school long back, my mother couldn't afford to feed me and the other kid, pay rent and also pay school fees! Instead of just sitting at home I then decided to go to town to find work and earn some money".

Another participant indicated irregularity of school attendance by stating that,

"... I go to school whenever I have a chance. What can one learn on an empty stomach?"

This finding also speaks of prioritizations within families ("*... mother couldn't feed me ... pay rent ... pay school fees*") with food and shelter (rent) sometimes taking priority over school. Physiological needs taking precedence over all others (Meyer *et al.*, 1997). The inability of parents to pay for school fees, uniform or other things that help children to feel included at school is poverty related (Young, 2004:473). A number of studies document that many street children report an inability to attend school because their parents were unable to pay fees or to buy uniforms (Scharf *et al.*, 1986; Richter, 1991; Swart-Kruger *et al.*, 1994 cited in Ansell & Van Blerk, 2002:673).

The finding also indicated the children's perception on the link between education and prosperity ("*If I become educated, I will get a good job and become rich!*"). In many African countries, people see a correlation between education and prosperity and this was noted to be in line with some of the children's echoed sentiments (Bourdillon, 1994; Young, 2004).

c) Category: Recreation

Four (16%) of the participants explained that they go to the street to seek entertainment:

"I need time to play ..."

"... there is no rest at home ... Chisomo this, Chisomo that ..."

These findings indicate that the attitudes of the participants are similar to their counterparts in 'normal' families with regard to favoring recreation and play (*"I like video games. In Salisbury line there are none so I have to go to town"*).

In this study, one participant explained that, *"the street is better than home. You can move freely and play games. It is not that bad ..."* indicating that they enjoy a certain amount of freedom; away from routine jobs or life they had to cope with while staying with their families. Young (2004) in his study in Uganda noted that children in resource constrained environments often felt over worked and not accorded their right to play. Literature from other studies revealed that street children identified recreation as a need and the perceived freedom of a street lifestyle (Scharf *et al.*, 1986; Richter, 1991; Baker, 1999). This correlates with the findings of this study.

d) Category: Love

Four (16%) of the participants identified love as a need. One participant stated,

"It would be nice if my mum showed that she loved us. I think she is too tired to love ...!"

The number of participants who identified love as a need is low, probably because there is preoccupation with survival needs, which supports Maslow's contention that physiological needs are primary to one's existence and when not fulfilled, *"... love ... would be lightly valued"* (Meyer *et al.*, 1997:440).

6.5 SURVIVAL STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY ADOLESCENT STREET CHILDREN IN MZUZU

The child's resourcefulness (the ability to solve problems quickly and efficiently with available resources), and resilience (the ability to recover from shock, depression,

and other difficult circumstances) determine his/ her survival (Richter, 1988; Chowdhury, n.d:144). Resourcefulness and resilience would depend upon the child's creativity, hard work, intelligence and concern for one another. Table 6.4 below present the different activities children are involved in.

Table 6.4: Survival activities of street children

Theme: Survival activities			
Subtheme	Category	Narratives	f (%)
Income earning activities	Selling of plastic bags	<i>"I make money from selling jumbos(plastic bags). Everyday, I get at least MK 500 (USD 1,00)".</i>	15 (60%)
	Carrying luggage	<i>"Carrying luggage is for strong boys like me!"</i>	12 (40%)
	Working in market restaurants	<i>"I help cook and wash dishes".</i>	15 (60%)
Scavenging	Picking of grains	<i>"I pick rice and beans from Vigwagwa market every morning ..."</i> <i>"... though hard work, picking maize grains and rice ... sometimes I get vegetables too".</i>	18 (72%)
	Food from trash bins	<i>"When things are tight, I collect from trash bins outside restaurants".</i>	5 (20%)
	Deviant subsistence strategies	Begging	<i>"Some good hearted people give me food".</i> <i>"I beg ... money is a problem for everyone so I don't get much, just some tambala (small coins)".</i>
Stealing		<i>"When vendors open new bales of clothing, so many people go to the market and it's easy to pull out one or two items...".</i> <i>"I know stealing is bad ... sometimes I can't help it".</i>	1(4%)
Social support	Peer group	<i>"I have a group of friends I move around with ... we are four".</i>	12 (48%)

Theme: Survival activities			
Subtheme	Category	Narratives	f (%)
		<i>"We are neighbours in Salisbury line so we usually go to town together and sometimes share food".</i>	

* Percentages are more than 100% because participants expressed more than one activity and indicated that they work between 4 and 12 hours a day

N=25

The findings of the study indicate that street children's activities for survival follow gender roles in a particular community. Table 6.5 shows survival strategies and the participants involved disaggregated by sex.

Table 6.5: Gender influence on survival activities

Activity	Number of participants disaggregated by sex	
	Male	Female
Selling of plastic bags	15	0
Luggage carrying	12	0
Work in restaurants	5	10
Picking of grains	6	12
Food from trash bins	5	0
Begging	7	0
Stealing	3	0
Peer group	10	2

N=25

The findings presented in the table will be used in the discussion below.

6.5.1 Income earning activities

a) Category: Selling of plastic bags

In the study, the prevalent income earning activity of 13-15 year old adolescent children on the streets was selling plastic bags, commonly known as *jumbos* in Malawi (*"I make money from selling jumbos (plastic bags). Everyday, I get at least MK 500 (USD 1,00)"*). Fifteen (60%) participants earn their income through this activity. Findings of the study showed that it is a male dominated activity with all male participants taking part in this venture. The children roam around Mzuzu, favoring shopping areas and market places in order to sell their wares. Each plastic bag costs MK 50 (USD 0.01) and on average the children sell twenty plastic bags a day.

b) Category: Carrying luggage

Twelve (48%) of the participants offered their services in carrying luggage for people going to or from bus ranks and market places. Depending on the size of the load and distance to be covered, the youths charge around MK 200 (USD 0,50). It was noted that this was a trade highly favored by the males in the fourteen (14) and fifteen (15) year age group. Luggage carrying was noted in the study to be predominantly male dominated mainly because they require agility, physical strength (*"Carrying luggage is for strong boys like me!"*) and development of an aggressive personality as the children haggle for 'customers'.

This finding correlates with literature that adolescent street children are cheap labour and through bargaining, they can perform a service for less (Wakatama, 2007). In fact, small children are often preferred to adults in the informal labour market because they are cheaper, less threatening and easier to manipulate.

c) Category: Work in market restaurants

Fifteen (60%) of the participants worked in market restaurants, performing a variety of tasks which include washing dishes, ferrying water for use in restaurants and running errands for the restaurant owners. Of the fifteen, 40% (ten) of the participants are female.

The findings of the study noted that gender roles are followed with females mainly involved in washing dishes, general cleanup and cooking (*"I help cook and wash dishes ..."*). The males in contrast, would run errands and carry buckets of water for use in restaurants (*"I carry water ... and do small jobs like buying airtime for the boss lady"*).

This is a popular exploit as the children are fed and also given food to carry home thereby assisting in meeting their physiological needs (*"I eat here (restaurant) in the afternoon and I collect leftover food to take home with me"*).

Work in restaurants was thus noted to meet the adolescent's physiological needs (food) and those of family members. Payment is mainly in form of food (leftovers) and money.

6.5.2 Scavenging

a) Category: Picking of grains in the market

Eighteen participants (72%) were involved in picking grains like rice, maize and beans from the market place ground. Furthermore, findings noted that this activity was favored by the female children. As some female participants stated:

"I pick rice and beans from Vigwagwa market every morning".

"... though hard work, picking maize grains and rice ... sometimes I get vegetables too".

The study noted that farmers come from different regions of the country to sell grains in two big market places in Mzuzu. As the bags of grains are offloaded and packed, there is a large amount of spillage of grains. It was stated that children get as much as two kilograms of rice and a gallon of maize (*"If I go to the market around five in the morning, I get at least two kilograms of rice ..."*). Participants stated that this is a strenuous activity which requires one to bend or kneel for long periods. Statements below demonstrate the strain involved in the activity:

"... my back aches from bending ..."

"... you only raise your head after you finishing picking grains (laughing)".

“... though hard work, picking maize grains and rice ... sometimes I get vegetables too”.

Participants indicated that this was a morning activity after which some went to school and others started working in other exploits. Participants explained that the collected grains are washed and cooked for family consumption.

b) Category: Collecting food from trash bins

Only five (20%) of the participants admitted to sometimes picking food from trash when they have low earnings (*“When things are tight, I collect food from trash bins outside restaurants”*).

In tandem with this finding, in South Africa, Swart found out that not many children eat from rubbish bins (Swart, 1990a). However, Wakatama’s study in Zimbabwe highlighted that almost all street children at some stage, have had to scavenge for food from the litter-bins (Wakatama, 2007:151).

6.5.3 Deviant subsistence strategies

a) Category: Begging

Seven participants (28%) indicated that they sometimes beg on the streets to survive:

“Some good hearted people give me food when I ask ...”

“I beg ... money is a problem for everyone so I don’t get much, just some tambala (small coins)”.

Of the seven participants who engage in begging, five (20%) are thirteen years old and two (8%) are aged fourteen. This suggests that begging is adopted by younger children and as Aptekar (1989) pointed out, young children are considered cute, which contributes to their success when begging for alms. As they grow older, their public image change and they are perceived as thugs and treated accordingly. The general response from participants showed that begging is a shunned activity by older children (*“Begging is useless. People just see you in town and think Ah! He is doing nothing. They think you are lazy and stupid, especially if you big older boy”*).

The participants indicated that they target “*people with cars*” and “*vazungu*” (*people of White race*) especially tourists. Studies by of street children in Zimbabwe by Wakatama also showed that motorists were targeted by street children as they frequented road intersections for their begging but showed that begging was indiscriminate venture with no particular focus on a certain race (Wakatama, 2007:172).

b) Category: Stealing

Only three participants (12%) indicated that they sometimes resorted to stealing. All three indicated they sometimes stole clothing items from the second hand market (“*when vendors open new bales of clothing, so many people go to the market and it’s easy to pull out one or two items ...*”). Felsman (1981) and Lallor (1999) there is an increasing involvement of street children in theft as they progress through adolescence.

One participant said, “*I know stealing is bad ... sometimes I can’t help it*”. The participants indicated expressed fear of being caught indicating that vendors were “*ruthless*”. It can therefore be concluded that only a small number of street children adopt stealing as a survival strategy out of fear of reprisals criminal activities such as petty theft form a very small proportion of the children’s strategies for survival (Wakatama, 2007:192).

6.5.4 Social support

a) Category: The peer group

The male participants (fifteen/100%) in the study indicated that they had peer groups they belonged to. Two (8%) female participants indicated they had a peer group. On answering the question of what benefits they derived from the association, the general response was friendship:

“I have a group of friends I move around with ... we are four”.

“We are neighbours in Salisbury line so we usually go to town together and sometimes share food”.

The findings also showed that within the peer groups there was sharing of food (8 /53%), clothing (4 /27%) and information (3 /20%). The study findings are in line with Chowdhury's study which showed that groups often determine the process of change, socialization and development among street children by providing emotional and material support (Chowdhury, n.d:96). Other authors noted that the group is a source of friendship, companionship and support or solidarity (Baker, 1993; Connolly, 1990).

6.6 RISKS AND VULNERABILITIES THAT AFFECT STREET CHILDREN IN MZUZU

Living on the street, with no supervision, protection or guidance often makes street children vulnerable to a wide range of problems or hazards.

Table 6.6 below shows the types of problems street children referred to through the interviews as direct and immediate problems they face and which affect their existence whilst on the street.

Table 6.6: Risks and vulnerabilities of street life

Theme: Risks and vulnerabilities of street life			
Subtheme	Category	Narratives	f (%)
Stigma	Community disapproval	<i>"We are regarded as <u>problem children</u>".</i> <i>"Some people call us names like 'retard' or 'thief'."</i>	12 (48%)
	Violence	<i>"They <u>beat us</u> ... a lot of times for no reason at all!"</i>	20 (80%)
Theft	Theft of earnings	<i>"I have to be extra careful with my money. There are <u>thieves amongst us!</u>"</i>	12 (44%)
Health	Health problems	<i>"My stomach is a <u>problem</u>. I think it's the food I sometimes eat".</i>	11 (44%)
Developmental challenges	Too-old-for-grade	<i>"I'm the <u>oldest</u> in my class ... when I make a mistake they</i>	11(44%)

Theme: Risks and vulnerabilities of street life			
Subtheme	Category	Narratives	f (%)
		<i>laugh at me</i>	
	Parentifying	<i>If I don't go (to the streets), we won't have anything to eat</i> .	15 (60%)
	Absence of one or both parents	<i>"My parents were sick for a long time and <u>died</u> when I was about four years old. My grandmother then took me and my brothers to stay with her".</i> <i>"I don't know my father: I was told he <u>died</u> when I was very young".</i>	13 (52%)
	Neglect	<i>("When I tell her (my mum) that there is no food in the house, she always <u>shouts</u> at me, asking me if I'm disabled and can't work to buy my own food!").</i>	16 (64%)

* Percentages are more than 100% because respondents expressed more than one problem.

N=25

6.6.1 Sub theme: Stigma

a) Category: Community disapproval

Twelve (48%) of the participants considered community disapproval as a major problem they face on the street. Statements made by the children with regard to how they are viewed on the street included:

"It's difficult, we are regarded as problem children ..."

"Some people call us names like 'retard' or 'thief' for no reason at all ..."

"We are called 'children who loiter' and 'street children' ... does the street have children?"

Community disapproval is thus shown through labelling and use of derogatory language. The general antipathy towards them, as Ennew (1995:202) has as argued, is largely because “the phenomenon of street children offends the status of childhood”, as they violate society’s expectations that children should be well-fed, healthy looking and garbed, at school or at home, and not on the streets.

As such, this finding is supported by literature which indicates that street children are not totally welcomed in specific areas or communities, based on their general appearance and perceived behavior (Baker, 1999; Bourdillon, 1994:2-3).

b) Category: Violence

Most of the participants stressed that violence in the form of beatings represents a major feature in their everyday life (“*They beat us ... a lot of times for no reason at all ...*”). When asked if had ever experienced violence on the streets; the very question seemed absurd (“*Is there any one amongst us who hasn’t?*”)

Twenty (80%) of the participants indicated the beatings as a problem on the streets. They indicated that, these beatings normally take place through three main channels:

- Violence either by peers or by older street children (“*... big boys sometimes beat us and take our money ... some charge us for working in their ‘area’ ...*”),
- Violence from vendors (“*Vendors shout obscenities at us ... when they see us close to their wares, they chase us away ... they are ruthless*”),
- Violence from police (“*I was hit with a brick by a vendor. I reported the matter to the police and one policeman kicked me and told me to go away ... policemen don’t like us ...*”).

It was noted that during the interviews, most of the participants tended to normalise violence. This is in tandem with Wakatama’s study of street children in Zimbabwe who viewed the types of abuses that they experienced are part and parcel of everyday life, something to be expected rather than bemoaned (Wakatama, 2007:187). Widespread impunity and the slowness of law enforcement bodies to

investigate and prosecute cases of abuses against street children allow violence against street children to continue unchecked (Human Rights Watch, 2002).

6.6.2 Sub theme 2: Theft

a) Category: Theft of earnings

Twelve (48%) of the participants indicated that the risk of having their earnings stolen was high. They explained that thefts are usually perpetrated by their peers (*"I have to be extra careful with my money. There are thieves amongst us!"*), and in other instances by vendors who employ them in market places (*"One time I put my money in my bag ... when I came back it had gone ... my boss was the only person in the restaurant!"*).

The risk of having their earnings stolen was echoed through statements like:

"It is not safe to keep money in the pocket ... I leave all my money home".

"After getting paid, I buy food for home ... I don't keep money on me ..."

These findings are in tandem with literature that insecurity puts pressure on children to immediately spend their daily earnings, whether on food, clothing or entertainment and also exposes street children to violence since many exploiters think that children save the money in their pockets or under their clothes (Foster, 2003:74).

6.6.3 Sub theme 3: Health

a) Category: Health problems

Fourteen (44%) of the participants mentioned health problems as a result of their street lifestyle. The most common health complaints included diarrhoea, headaches, skin rashes and ringworm. Headaches were ranked highest with all fourteen participants citing this health problem, with ten participants (40%) citing diarrhoea and three (12%) citing skin diseases like rashes. It should be noted that some participants cited more than one health problem.

"I get headaches many times ... Mzuzu is hot!"

"My stomach is a problem. I think it's the food I sometimes eat".

“I sometimes develop a rash on my face and hands ...”

The findings correlate with literature that sometimes children on the streets eat whatever they find from trash and this poses a health hazard for them (Foster, 2003:74; Chowdhury, n.d:121). Prolonged exposure to weather conditions and unsanitary environments also has a negative impact on their health (Gebbers, 1990; Schurink, 1993; Chowdhury, n.d:107-108).

6.6.4 Sub theme 4: Developmental challenges

a) Category: Parentifying

Seven of the ten female participants indicated that their exodus into the streets was ‘encouraged’ by their caregivers as they would bring back their full earnings home. Whilst eight out of the fifteen boys they were ‘sent’ by caregivers to go and earn a living as a family coping strategy (*“My mum sent me to go look for work ...”*).

The average number of children in the households of the participants is five. Many families actually encourage their children to ‘work’ on the street in order to supplement the family income (Maphatane, 1994:22) and the child has no option but to comply. Some authors (Bourdillon, 1994; Hecht, 1998) noted that this puts a strain on the children as they change their role and perform nurturing duties meant for adults (*“If I don’t go (to the streets), we won’t have anything to eat”*), resulting in a concept Epstein describes as ‘parentifying’ (Epstein, 1994). Simply put, the children will now be taking care of caregivers and siblings.

b) Category: Too-old-for-grade

Eleven (44%) of the participants emphasized that there had been disruptions in their schooling resulting in problems of them being too old for the classes they would invariably be placed in (*“I’m the oldest and biggest in my class ...”*!).

The participants indicated that they are uncomfortable in the school environment as they are regarded as too old or troublesome and subject to ridicule (*“... when I make a mistake, the young ones laugh at me”*!).

Whilst many of these participants are not more than one or two years older than would be expected for their grade, they stressed the influence of long period of

disrupted schooling prior to taking to the streets (*"There was no school fees for me ... I went to the streets"*). This is in tandem with literature in that reintegration into mainstream schooling is not straightforward and children who are old-for-grade are likely to face greater difficulties (both educationally and socially) in returning to mainstream schooling, giving rise to 'educational alienation' (Williams, 1993:839).

c) Category: Absence of both or one parent

Thirteen (52%) of the participants said that they come from single-parent households, and all of these participants indicated that the mother was the parent who was present. One participant (4%) lived with a maternal grandmother and one other participant (4%) lived with a paternal grandmother (*"My parents were sick for a long time and died when I was about four years old. My grandmother then took me and my brothers to stay with her"*).

Four (16%) of the participants indicated that their fathers were deceased and that they were under the care of their mothers (*"I don't know my father: I was told he died when I was very young"*).

Nine (36%) of the participants came from broken families, with the common response being that their parents had divorced or their father just upped and left (*"My parents used to fight and one day my father, he just 'disappeared'. No one knows where he is. Maybe he went back to his rural home in the South"*).

Literature shows that marital strife leads to the weakening, disintegration and breakdown of family life, in which parents, particularly fathers, tend to leave or totally abandon their families and may result in children taking to the streets (Dallape, 1996; Connolly, 1990; Matchinda, 1999 cited in Ansell & Van Blerk, 2004:675). In Malawi 17.5% of children under fifteen are estimated to have lost one or both parents, about half of these to HIV/AIDS (Young, 2004:479). Parental death was noted to increase poverty for some children resulting in their having to drop out of school hence movement to the streets.

d) Category: Neglect

Sixteen participants (64%), explained that neglect led them to have direct daily contact with street life due to reasons such as parents' constant work and lack of supervision, and parents' attitudes to them as burdens due to large family size (*"When I tell her (my mum) that there is no food in the house, she always shouts at me, asking me if I'm disabled and can't work to buy my own food!"*).

This finding correlates with literature as it was noted that the costs of poverty are disproportionately absorbed by children who, when livelihoods fail, give up school, are neglected in nutritional terms and take up paid and unpaid labour. According to Harper and Marcus (2000:4), children also absorb the social and psychological costs of poverty within the household and society, such as abuse and neglect from parents as a result of poverty induced frustrations. The participants cited that their parents *"... just do not care ..."* about them.

In some cases it is observed that even when children are aware that they are being abused, they will go along to ensure peace in the family (Chowdhury, n.d:96).

Similar to the study findings, there were indications of parental neglect and lack of nurturing as children were forced by home circumstances to fend for themselves and siblings which infringed on their *right to be children*.

6.7 ACCESS TO AND BENEFIT OF SERVICES TO STREET CHILDREN IN MZUZU

Table 6.7: Policies and services offered by government and NGOs

Theme: Policies and service provision by government and NGOs		
Sub theme	Category	Narratives
Government services	Knowledge of policy provisions and services	<p><i>"Laws? Ah! I don't know of any children's laws here ...!"</i></p> <p><i>"That department is closed ... there is nothing they can you help with!"</i></p> <p><i>"They ask too many questions and don't give you anything afterwards ... a waste of time".</i></p>

Theme: Policies and service provision by government and NGOs		
Sub theme	Category	Narratives
NGO services	Knowledge of services provided	<p><i>“At Umoza drop-in centre) we take <u>baths, eat and play.</u>”</i></p> <p><i>“One day I was sick, auntie (social worker) took me to the <u>clinic.</u>”</i></p>
	Suitability of support services	<p><i>“I like it at the centre ... they (centre caregivers) take <u>good care</u> of us”.</i></p> <p><i>“I am <u>happy</u> and free ... we bath, eat and we get nice clothes.</i></p> <p><i>“If not for Umoza, I would not be in <u>school</u> ... my mother had failed ...”</i></p> <p><i>“Auntie gave me some books and pens for <u>school</u> ... now I can also write with others at school.”</i></p> <p><i>“I go to Mr Gondwe’s school (<u>remedial class</u>) ... now I can write my name!”</i></p>
	Suggestions for improvement	<p><i>“It would be better if my mother is given some <u>money</u> to start a <u>business</u> ... then she can take care of us all”.</i></p> <p><i>“If St John of God can help us <u>fix our house</u> ... or better still, <u>build a bigger house</u> for us ...”</i></p> <p><i>“I want us to go to the lake every month or <u>visit</u> Mulanje mountains in Blantyre so that we also see Malawi ... they have the money at this centre.”</i></p> <p><i>“mmm, I <u>don’t know</u>”</i></p>

* Some respondents gave more than one response

6.7.1 Sub theme 1: Government services

a) Category: Knowledge of policy provisions

When asked about laws that protect children in their country, all participants (100%) were unable to cite any Act or Bill of law governing the protection of children (“Laws? Ah! I don’t know of any children’s laws here ...!”). Some participants showed scepticism over the presence of legislation that is supposed to protect them (“Are they there (laws) in this country?”) clearly showing a gap in government enforcement.

Participants indicated lack of confidence with the services provided by the Department of Social Welfare with one participant saying:

“That department is closed ... there is nothing they can you help with!”

“They ask too many questions and don’t give you anything afterwards ... a waste of time”.

Malawi is a party to both the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACWRC), having ratified both policies on 2 January 1991 and 10 September 1999 respectively. There is also legislation to promote and protect the rights and welfare of children, for instance, the Child Bill of 2006. However, studies have noted that implementation and enforcement of policies in Malawi is problematic due to resource scarcity and lack of political will (Phiri & Ross, 2002:9).

6.7.2 Sub theme 2: Non Governmental Organizations: UMOZA Drop in Centre

a) Category: Introduction to service

Fourteen (56%) of the participants who access services at the Umoza drop-in centre on a regular basis first learned about the services provided by the organization through other peers on the street, and eleven (44%) through people and community dwellers. However, all twenty-five (100%) participants were identified by outreach workers during street outreach patrols in the city.

Fifteen of the participants (60%) indicated that they were attracted to the drop in centre by their feeding programme, eight participants (32%) were drawn by the provision of clothing and two of the participants (8%) were impressed by the recreational programmes offered at the centre. Table 6.7 below shows services provided by the St John of god Hospitaller Services.

b) Category: Suitability of support

When children’s opinions were asked about the services provided at the drop in centre, twenty one participants (84%) stated that the services were sufficient and useful (*“The centre is good ... I have been helped ... I can now read and write”*). All female participants in the study (10 or 40%) indicated that the centre was helpful and

relevant (*"I like it at the centre ... they (centre caregivers) take good care of us"*). Whereas four (16%) stated that the services were not enough and asked for more (*"ah! There are a lot of things in the stores but they don't give us ... isn't it everything is meant for us?"*)

When children were asked to identify the best programs they receive through the drop in centre, fifteen 60% stated that school support was the best program and suitable in meeting their educational needs:

"If not for Umoza, I would not be in school ... my mother had failed ...",

"Auntie gave me some books and pens for school ... now I can also write with others at school."

"I go to Mr Gondwe's school (remedial class) ... now I can write my name!"

Four (16%) cited the provision of food a beneficial program (*"Now I don't have to eat rotten food ... I know the feeding timetable here and I make sure I get here on time"*), another four (16%) stated traditional music and dance (*"We do traditional dances like Beni, Kamchoma and Mapenenga ... it is nice"*) and two (8%) cited sports (*"We play soccer with real balls and shooters ... no more plastic balls!"*). This correlates with literature on the needs of street children (Foster, 2003:73) and study findings on needs street children use drop-in centres for fulfillment of their needs (Wakatama, 2007).

c) Category: Suggestions for improvement

When asked on how to improve or develop new services and programs, some street children ten (40%) identified provision of financial aid to their families (*"It would be better if my mother is given some money to start a business ... then she can take care of us all"*). Four (16%) participants suggested rebuilding of their houses (*"If St John of God can help us fix our house ... or better still, build a bigger house for us ..."*) and seven (28%) suggested more trips and recreation (*"I want us to go to the lake every month or visit Mulanje mountains in Blantyre so that we also see Malawi ... they have the money at this centre (laughing)"*). Four (16%) could not identify any additionally support needed and *"i don't know"* was the response from the group.

6.8 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER

This chapter gave the results of the empirical study.

First, a general profile of the participants' ages, race, living arrangements and the nature of street life of the participants were explored.

The needs of adolescent street children in Mzuzu, the problems they face as a result of the street lifestyle and the survival strategies they adopt on the street were presented.

In the chapter, the children's knowledge of government intervention in terms of policy and practice was presented and services offered by a non-governmental organization, St John of God Hospitaller Services, their suitability and suggested improvements were noted.

The following chapter will present the conclusions and recommendations for support for adolescent street children.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to explore the psychosocial needs, stressors and survival strategies of adolescent street children in Mzuzu, Malawi. The conclusions and recommendations are presented in a similar format to that Chapter 6, the empirical study, hence following the sequence of the questionnaire.

In addition, the recommendations will be presented according to the levels of service in social work practice which include prevention, assessment, intervention and advocacy. Specific tasks that social workers should carry out when dealing with adolescents in the practice setting are related primarily to assessment and intervention functions. The conclusions and recommendations will also be discussed in relation to practice and policy.

7.2 IDENTIFYING DETAILS

All the participants in the study were between the ages of thirteen (13) and fifteen (15) years, thus are classified as being in the early adolescent life phase. All participants came from low-income Black communities. No White participants were identified, and no participants from middle- or high-income communities were identified.

The participants had varied family structures. The majority of the participants lived with a single parent (mother) and ten of the participants lived with both parents. Only two lived with grandmothers (paternal and maternal).

From these findings it can be concluded that the general profile of adolescent street children varies between age and family structure. Hence there is not one specific characteristic that stands out above the others. What was however a common factor was the low-income status of the participants' families and their residence in slum dwellings.

The empirical study showed that the nature of streetism in Mzuzu is “children on the streets”. All participants were ‘children on the streets’ in that they were engaged in various exploits on the streets in the daytime but returned home at night. All twenty-five participants had traceable backgrounds and homes where they returned to at night. From the findings, it can be concluded that in Mzuzu, children on the streets are predominantly from Black communities and slum dwellings near the city.

It is recommended that, with regard to services aimed at prevention:

- Community awareness raising and sensitization programmes should be offered in schools, community centres and areas of business to prevent streetism and its consequences on the development of children. Sensitization should highlight that all children irregardless of age or family structure are at risk.
- Social mobilization involving strong political commitment and dedicated participation of law enforcement agencies is needed.

It is recommended that with regards to practice:

- Street educators, or outreach work by social workers should be one of the ways of making contact with street children and assessing their needs and this can help inform intervention practices.

7.3 NEEDS OF ADOLESCENT STREET CHILDREN

Findings of the study emphasized that the participants’ needs are physiological and psychosocial. The majority of participants ventured into street life as a way of earning a living and fulfilling their physiological needs. The economic status of the participants’ families has a direct impact on their ability to fulfill these needs. The majority of the participants’ caregivers are involved mainly in vending which brings them low monetary gains. Caregivers in formal employment are of a menial nature with low wages. The nature of streetism is directly linked to the low socio-economic status of their families.

It could be concluded from the findings that participants are from financially constrained and food poor households.

7.3.1 Physiological needs

The findings indicated that the children's decision of venturing into street life was rooted in the need to provide for themselves and/or supplement the family income. Food ranked highly on their physiological needs, followed by clothing and the need for decent accommodation. All participants are from slum dwellings and are from large families which average five (5) children per household and room size of two.

It can be concluded that the need to fulfill physiological needs drive the children from their homes into the streets. As caregivers fail to meet their need for food, clothing and shelter, adolescent children, driven by familial circumstances, opt to work in the streets and adopt coping strategies to meet their needs.

It is recommended that, with regard to services aimed at intervention:

- Service providers should work towards reducing the influence of factors that 'push' and 'pull' a child into street life hence interventions by government and NGOs should be heavily empowerment-based.
- Introduction of income generating and livelihood strengthening programmes targeted at food poor should be offered by NGOs so as to strengthen the socio- economic status of caregivers and improve their capacity to provide for their children and to address the root causes of the problem of street children.
- Social workers should facilitate the introduction of micro-credit schemes like internal savings and lending (ISALs), whereby caregivers form groups and pool their money together on a weekly or monthly basis and rotationally issue it out to group members. This will help to boost their capital base and for others be a source of startup capital. Such a scheme can strengthen and improve household incomes and ultimately improve caregivers' capacities to provide for their children.
- Food distribution programmes should be offered by both government and NGOs to households as a short term measure of assistance.

It is recommended that, with regards to strategies aimed at advocacy:

- Social workers should lobby city authorities for the creation of community projects such as community gardens whereby a specific area is demarcated for community gardens and members from food poor households are given portions of land for gardening and cultivation of vegetables for resale. Proceeds from the sale of vegetables will boost family income and the vegetables will be a nutritional source for the families. These strategies will also improve community cohesion and act as a social support for constrained families. Such community projects require the buy-in of community authorities and support hence the need for advocacy.
- Social workers should lobby government for the provision of social protection cash transfers to the food poor households as a safety net because safety nets as such are not available in Malawi at the moment.
- Social workers should advocate for improving the infrastructure of the slum areas where these children live. This will include creating public utilities (drinkable water, sewage treatment), constructing and improving buildings.
- More drop-in centres should and places of safety should be established by both government and NGOs to serve the function of providing food, basic amenities and shelter. Drop-in shelters serve the function of providing food, shelter, and a place of safety. This intervention also serves as an avenue for education on risk issues.

7.3.2 Psycho-social needs

Findings also highlighted that participants felt neglected and unloved by their caregivers and felt pressured by the familial circumstances to take up adult role of fending for the family. Love, education and recreation were cited as needs. Issues surrounding poor parenting and parenting style were noted to impact negatively on caregivers' ability to provide for the children's psycho-social needs.

It can be concluded that psycho-social needs, though not tangible, are viewed as important by the children and failure to fulfill them results in developmental challenges as the children's right to be children is infringed upon.

It is recommended that with regards to assessment:

- There should be individualized attention offered by service providers as every street child has his or her own needs, medical and family history, skills, and aspirations. Each child is in the street as a result of a complex and unique combination of factors, and the situation he or she would face upon returning home is similarly unique.
- Service providers should develop an integrated service package for each child. Street children should be offered flexible alternatives that combine their own perceptions with professional assessment of their needs.

It is recommended that with regards to services aimed at intervention:

- Social workers should facilitate the creation of family clubs whose main aim is to provide a platform for caregivers to share experiences and provide psycho social support to families with children living and working on the streets.
- Family clubs should provide a forum for social workers to impart knowledge on positive parenting skills and social services available to families and children on the streets.
- More resources should be directed towards the empowerment and the needs of women. Empirical research has found that the promotion of the well-being of women has got a direct positive impact on the welfare of the household, including children.

It is recommended that with regards to practice:

- There should be mainstreaming of street children issues in child protection programmes by NGOs.
- Children should participate in designing, implementing, and evaluating of projects aimed at helping them. Children's participation should be a factor considered to ensure positive and lasting outcomes. As with other aspects of social work it is important to work with people rather than for them.

It is recommended that with regards to services aimed at advocacy:

- Social workers should advocate for creation of community recreational centres for the children in slum dwellings. Recreational centres at community

level can help meet the recreational needs of the children and avail entertainment within the local community.

7.4 SURVIVAL STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY ADOLESCENT STREET CHILDREN

Study findings showed that the participants are involved in various exploits in a bid to earn an income and fulfill their physiological and psychosocial needs. The most popular income earning strategy noted was selling of plastic bags (*jumbos*). Some participants were also involved in carrying luggage and working in market restaurants. The study emphasized that participants were not limited to one way of survival but adopted multiple strategies in order to earn an income. It was also noted that some children were involved in scavenging for food in trash bins and collected grains from market ground. A few resorted to begging and stealing. Study findings showed that activities undertaken by the children were in line with socially prescribed roles of females and males. As such, female adolescent children were mainly involved in what could be termed feminine tasks whilst male children gravitated towards masculine roles which required physical strength. It can be concluded that, in Mzuzu, survival strategies used by the children are not highly deviant due to their fear of reprisals and the contact with family also acted as a buffer.

It is recommended that with regards to services aimed and intervention:

- Micro-enterprise development should be established by NGOs for the children aimed at increasing the child's ability to secure legal income on the street. Rather than focusing on rescuing children from the street, it should acknowledge their needs for income and to respect their economic independence. The children will have learnt life skills which should be used to help them attain their hopes and plans for the future.
- Reintegration of street children in the community through non-formal education with a timetable and curriculum relevant to their work and life experience should be offered by NGOs. Care should be taken to ensure that the right type of education is available for the individual child, taking account of their particular needs and learning preferences.

- Social workers should consider engaging peer educators and child to child contact where young people themselves deliver positive messages about tackling use of deviant survival strategies that can be a powerful influence for change.

It is recommended that with regards to practice:

- Introduction of street children as a vulnerable group, into the curricula of training institutions for Social Workers.

It is recommended that with regards to interventions aimed at advocacy:

- Social workers should advocate for schools to form part of an “earn and learn” programme which provides non-formal education to street children whilst allowing the children to earn their living. The programme will be highly suited to the characteristics of street children as it provides them with skills to sustain themselves once they move through the programme to adulthood. This kind of programme has proved useful in Brazil, South Africa and Sri Lanka.

7.5 RISKS AND VULNERABILITIES OF STREET CHILDREN

Study findings showed that participants face a number of vulnerabilities whilst working on the streets. There is violence perpetrated on them by police, vendors and the adult community at large which disapproves of their presence. This has also resulted in labeling and use of derisive language towards them. Their earnings are not safe and some have had their money stolen. The findings also showed that there were some developmental challenges faced by participants as some over the role of parents of providing for the family and having to deal with stresses related to such being too old for the school classes. This put pressure on them and affected their self-esteem.

It can be concluded that the street is an unsafe place for children as they are exposed to a variety of dangers or results in developmental lags in the area of schooling.

It is recommended that, with regards to services aimed at intervention:

- Social workers should be sensitizing adult communities with direct contact with street children as well as the wider community on developmental challenges faced by street children to help reduce child exploitation as well as creating a positive environment for street children.
- Awareness programmes regarding the social and rehabilitative services available to adolescent street children rendered by government departments and civil society towards caring for and meeting the needs of vulnerable children.
- Social workers should facilitate the creation of support groups for children working on the streets. Building on the bonds that have evolved between street children and form a 'family' group that can be used to provide a positive way forward for the children.
- Social workers should offer professional counseling and emotional support to children.
- Social workers should offer outreach programs to educate street children on health and risk issues on the streets. Children should be offered health education for improving hygiene and nutrition and for protection from accidents.
- Social workers should involve other children be involved in outreach activities as peer educators, advocates, health educators, and facilitators.
- Social workers should train and sensitize school staff to overcome stereotypes, accept and integrate street children, and pay attention to their specific skills and needs.
- Programmes by NGOs should focus on family tracing and re-unification since this is a best practice. Street children, as well as other children in difficult circumstances, need to be cared for within the context of their families and culture. Strategies for intervention need to consider ways of strengthening families' responsibility for their families. Children should be placed in institutions only when there is no reasonable alternative, and that children are never detained with adults.

It is recommended that with regards to services aimed at advocacy:

- Social workers should advocate for the ending of unfair treatment of street children by the police, local authorities, shops owners and vendors. Advocacy should be geared towards enforcement of law thus the apprehension and prosecution of abusers.
- The police should thoroughly and promptly investigate instances of violence against street children and take appropriate action against those responsible. Criminal charges should be brought against perpetrators.
- The government should adopt or amend legislation as necessary to abolish all forms of violence against street children and to ensure the effective enforcement of such legislation.
- Social workers should advocate for inclusion in formal education systems for capable street children and vocational training combined with literacy, numeracy and life skills.

7.6 ACCESS TO AND BENEFIT OF SERVICES TO STREET CHILDREN IN MZUZU

The study findings stressed a lack of knowledge on the part of children about legislation for their protection or services available for them. Findings showed that children had knowledge of services availed by the only available drop-in centre in the city. It was also noted that, though the drop-in centre had a positive impact in the children's lives, but there was need for coordination with other partner organizations and government.

It can be concluded that, there is need for education on legislation and enforcement so that all children enjoy their rights.

It is recommended for interventions aimed at advocacy:

- Social workers should advocate for political consciousness-raising to stimulate calls for social justice that can play an important role in shifting focus away from responsibilities and rehabilitation of the individual towards rights to be demanded from the government. This approach should frame issues in terms of rights (to food, safety, education).

- Social workers should advocate for child friendly laws and policies on education, social work, social protection, health, child labor, juvenile crime and other factors directly affect opportunities for street children.
- Social workers should advocate for a child friendly budget and a participatory formulation process. Participation provides the space for stakeholders to influence the course of actions that affect the fulfillment of their rights to development. A participatory approach will engender ownership of the budget.
- Community level programs should focus on local governance, basic services, job creation, education, and advocacy among relevant stakeholders, improving schools and other basic services, as well as strengthening social capital.
- At local and national levels children should be increasingly involved in decision-making and policy formation, particularly in areas that have direct impact on their lives.
- Adoption of a national case management system with clear referral protocols and areas of services provision by government. Flexible provision of various services will require cooperation between stakeholder agencies and government as one solution will not fit all children, and no agency can provide all services. Therefore, networking with local government, as well as with other civil society service providers at the local level should help NGOs overcome their isolation, avoid duplication and competition, and increase their impact.
- Integration of the street children issue should not concentrate on stand-alone projects to meet the immediate needs of children already on the street, but focus within communities on preventing children at risk from becoming street children.
- Emphasis should be given on strategically positioned drop-in-centres where children will have access to services like health care, legal support, awareness raising programs and counseling services.
- A major capacity building exercise should be instituted in the government ministries responsible for children's welfare so that they are not found wanting

during budgetary submissions. In particular, the Department of Social welfare should be allocated more financial resources for training its personnel on child welfare activities.

7.7 FURTHER RESEARCH

There is no one answer to the problem of street children but there are some clear messages on what could be driving the phenomenon.

Although most researchers now recognize that children's families must provide an important key to the phenomena of street children, there are no studies that specifically examine the families of street children. It would be misleading to say that all poor or broken families produce the phenomenon of street children. It could be argued that environmental circumstances comprise a necessary condition but not sufficient to explain the phenomenon of street children. There is also need to dispel the myth that street children choose their lifestyle because of the attractiveness of the freedom and adventure it offers can be an area of study.

Studies in the area of street girls, young street mothers and their babies is also lacking. There is therefore a need for further research to be carried out in these areas. Such research could be better informed by street children and their legitimate representatives and provide suggestions on how to protect the rights of street children and alleviate their plight.

Focus should also be on identifying the existing services available for the street children, and assess the gaps between the needs and available services provided by NGOs in Malawi.

Despite this dismal picture and their desperate circumstances, these children have an irrepressible spirit and rare courage. They remain plucky, spirited and exhibit great resourcefulness, ambition and above all, independence. They do not meekly submit themselves to their fate, but are full of the determination, to not just survive, but struggle for a better life.

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Appendix A

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Stellenbosch University

Department of Social Work

Psycho-social needs, stressors and survival strategies of adolescent street children in Mzuzu, Malawi: A human development approach.

All the information recorded based on the interview will be regarded as confidential.

1. Demographic information

1.1 Gender of respondent [fieldworker observation]

Male	1
Female	2

1.2 How old are you? (i.e. at your last birthday)

13 years	1
14 years	2
15 years	3
16 years	4
17 years	5
18 years	6

1.3 Race of respondent [fieldworker observation]

Black African	1
Coloured	2
Indian/Asian	3
White	4
Other	5

1.4 Who is the head of your family?(type of household)

Both parents	1
Single parent headed (mother)	2
Single parent headed (father)	3
Elderly headed (grandparent)	4
Child headed	5

1.5 How many children are there in your family?

1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5
6	6
Other (Specify)	7

2. Employment of parent/caregiver

2.1 Are your parent(s) /caregivers employed?

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

2.2 If yes, what is the employment status of your parent(s) /caregiver?

Wage employment	1
Unemployed	2
Self employed	3

2.3 Would you please state the nature of work/or employment done by your parent(s) /guardian?

.....

3. Nature of street life

3.1 What time do you spend on the street?

.....

3.2 At what age did you start to live in/on the streets?

.....

4. Needs of adolescent street children

4.1 What would you say are your needs that were not fulfilled at home?

4.1.1 Physiological

.....
.....

4.1.2 Psychosocial

.....
.....

5. Survival strategies employed by adolescent street children

5.1 Everyone needs things to live (food, clothes etc.). Either you receive gifts or earn money. What do you do to obtain the things you need?

.....
.....

6. Deviant subsistence strategies

6.1 What kind of deviant subsistence strategies do you sometimes need to resort to?

.....
.....

6.1.1 Begging

.....
.....

6.1.2 Stealing

.....
.....

7. Social support

7.1 Where do you get your social support from?

.....
.....

8. Risks and vulnerabilities affecting street children

8.1 What kind of challenges do you experience living and/or working in the streets?

.....
.....

8.1.1 Stigma

.....
.....

8.1.2 Theft of earnings

.....
.....

8.1.3 Health problems

.....
.....

8.1.4 Developmental challenges

.....
.....

8.1.5 Absence of one or both parents

.....
.....

8.1.6 Neglect

.....
.....

9. Access to and benefit of welfare services

9.1 Which government policies, legislation and services that protect children do you know about?

.....
.....

9.2 What kind of non-governmental services do you know about and use?

.....
.....

9.3 How suitable are the NGO services?

.....
.....

9.4 What new services or programmes to suit your needs should be developed or how can existing services be improved?

.....
.....

Thank you for your cooperation and participation in the study.

Appendix B

CONSENT FORM



UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvenoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

PSYCHOSOCIAL NEEDS, STRESSORS AND SURVIVAL STRATEGIES OF ADOLESCENT STREET CHILDREN IN MZUZU, MALAWI: A HUMAN DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Angela Ncube, a Master's student from the Social Work Department at the University of Stellenbosch. The results of this study will become part of a research report. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are an adolescent street child in Mzuzu, Malawi.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to gain a better understanding of the needs, stressors and survival strategies of street children in Mzuzu, Malawi.

In order to meet this aim, the following objectives were formulated:

- To explain adolescent development within the context of a human development approach.
- To discuss the phenomenon of street children, their needs and related stressors.
- To describe the survival strategies used by children on the streets.

- To investigate the needs, stressors and survival strategies of adolescent street children in Mzuzu.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following:

A semi-structured interview will be utilized to gather information confidentially. You need not indicate your name or any particulars on the interview schedule. The schedule will be completed during an interview conducted by a student-researcher.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

Any uncertainties on any of the aspects of the schedule you may experience during the interview can be discussed and clarified at any time.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND / OR TO SOCIETY

The results of this study will inform welfare organizations working with street children. This information could be used by welfare organisations for further planning in service delivery.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

No payment in any form will be received for participating in this study.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of coding where each questionnaire is numbered. All questionnaires will be managed, analysed and processed by the researcher and will be kept in a safe place.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the

study. The researcher may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so, eg should you influence other participants in the completion of their questionnaires.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENT-RESEARCHER

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

Sulina Green (Supervisor), Department of Social Work, University of Stellenbosch,

Tel. 021-808 2070, E-Mail: sgreen@sun.ac.za

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE
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The information above was described to me the participant by _____ in English and the participant is in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to him / her. The participant was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to his / her satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study.

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [name of subject/participant]. [He / She] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English and no translator was used.

Signature of Investigator

Date