

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS STREETISM IN ACCRA**



**A dissertation in the Department of Social Studies Education,  
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## DECLARATION

### Student's Declaration

I, Eunice Ayensu, hereby declare that this dissertation is my own handiwork towards the Master of Philosophy Degree in Social Studies and hereby certify that it has not been submitted in whole or in part to any institution for any degree elsewhere

**Signature:** .....

**Date:** .....

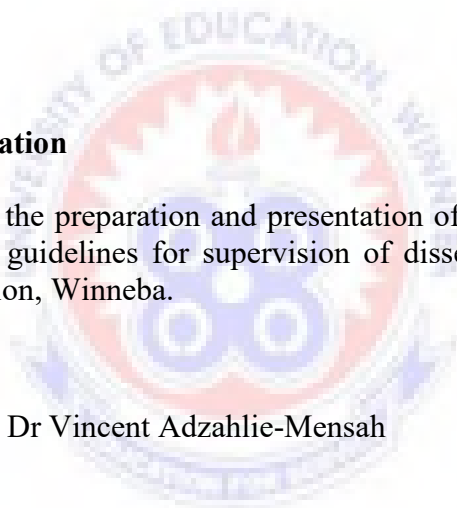
### Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of dissertation as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

**Name of Supervisor** Dr Vincent Adzahlie-Mensah

**Signature:** .....

**Date:** .....



## **DEDICATION**

To my youngest child



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

May God's Name be praised! I give praise and honor to God for bringing me this far of the academic journey. If I have lived through some of the most difficult times in my life and survived, then it is by the grace of God.

My family has been a great help. My husband and children sacrificed much for me to get this far. May God keep us.

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My special thanks go to all research participants.



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CHRAJ	Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice
CPTs	Child Protection Teams
CRC	Convention on the rights of the child
FCUBE	Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
LEAP	The livelihood Empowerment against Poverty
MOWAC	Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SADA	The Savannah Accelerated Development Authority
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Social and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund

## ABSTRACT

This study is a sociological analysis of streetism in Accra. It examined the factors that push children into the streets, their encounters and effects of the experiences in the streets, and the social protection mechanisms available to support street children. The main theoretical resource employed was the resilience approach. Interviews and observations were used to collect primary data from a cell of five street children and people in four child protection agencies. The data collected were analysed through template and thematic analysis. Unlike traditional studies where street children are viewed as delinquents, the discussions showed that street children are very resilient individuals who survive the harsh realities of street life. The risk of violence in the streets, and life-threatening experiences there means that children being in the streets needs to be understood in the context of life's adversities, injustice and vulnerabilities that children have to endure in making that final decision to be in the streets. In terms of the reasons for the intractability of streetism, it was found that children come to the street because of perplexing familial and micro as well as macro level social and economic issues such as loss of parents, family poverty and gaps in child protection. Street children find solace on the streets because life has become very difficult and unsustainable for them in the places where they originated. In the streets they work pottering, hawking, as driver mates or security for shop owners and other vulnerable people. They suffer several things including health problems, lack of shelter and exposure to all kinds of vulnerable situations. While some occasionally join gangs or engage in activities that are untoward, the majority remain chaste in the hope of a better future. In terms of effects, streetism affects children in several ways: 1) it denies the children their childhood and forces them to be responsible for their own lives; 2) children become prey and vulnerable to many harsh social conditions in the streets; 3) the children depended on peer groups to provide them with security and protection; 4) some become victims of unsafe sexual practices and drug abuse; 5) they are denied basic needs such as security and shelter. Although there are children protection mechanisms to support street children, they are directed to help regular children in schools and communities. As such, street children remain on the margins. Therefore, it is recommended that the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection should develop specific protection mechanisms targeted at securing alternative livelihoods and safety nests for street children.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

Streetism and its consequences have been a matter of international and local concern in Ghana. Streetism is a growing phenomenon of serious concern to various stakeholders, children rights activists, civil society and well-meaning people. Foundationally, children living in the streets is a matter of concern because, it is very important aspect of the moral values and beliefs of every culture or society that a man (husband) and a woman (wife) who produced a child would recognize the obligation to take care of the child. Also, international human rights law has provided for the protection of children to ensure that national efforts are invested in securing the best interest of the child. The Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child requires all children have right to family. Article 22 of the CRC requires that every child (anyone under 18) has the right to be protected from work that threaten his or her health, education or development. As such states are required to do all that is necessary to bring him/her up through education and other forms of nurture.

Whereas that obligation to protect children is natural, it is also moral as well as legal, for it is imposed by the moral values and beliefs of the society and by its laws. Thus, it is expected that responsible parenting and efforts of state agencies responsible for the protection of children can secure safe and healthy living conditions for children away from the streets. Nevertheless, streetism in which children are the major participants have become a rampant phenomenon across the world, especially in the developing world.

In Ghana, Otu (2012) disclosed that about 61, 492 children in Accra are victims of –streetism” that calls for a redoubling of effort to fight the menace. He further attributed the increase in streetism to poverty, peer pressure, false perception of city life and irresponsible parenting, stressing that research findings in the book should be a make-up call to agencies entrusted the responsibility to advocate against large family size and promote family planning. The Ghana National Commission on children established a Child Law Reform Advisory committee in 1995 review, revise and update the laws on child rights, justice and the welfare of the children. This culminated in the adoption of the Children’s Act 1998 which, highlighted the child’s right to protection from abuse, neglect and sexual contact with adults. Also, Article 28 (1) of 1992 Ghanaian constitution spells out the conditions under which the Ghanaian child should and should not be raised so that the child’s development is not thwarted.

Aside from the legal provisions, the government of Ghana established the Ministry of women and Children’s Affairs which is now the Gender, Children and Social Protection (MOWAC) in 2001 to ensure issues of children are appropriately dealt with. Also, Ghana has introduced fee free compulsory Basic Education since 2007. In 2017, the Ghanaian Government introduced free Senior High School programmes to ensure children can enrol and stay through education. These have been response to arguments to the effect that majority of Ghanaian children on the streets have either dropped out of school or have never been to school as a result of barriers (especially financial barriers) to access to schooling. Such programmes including the establishment of MOWAC was to address the situations of children from backgrounds that do not offer them convenient places to study or do not have anyone to support them in providing their educational and social needs.

Nevertheless, it is common knowledge and there is documented evidence that there are children on the streets of major cities engaged in activities such as chop bar attendants, hawking, mates to commercial vehicles, head pottering, truck pushers etc. (Obeng, 2011). Despite laws, policy initiatives and other interventions to protect children, it seems the phenomenon of streetism involving children is becoming rampant across all major cities in Ghana. Some have argued that children remain in the streets and engage in menial jobs that will give them some source of income for their livelihood. According to Obeng, a number of these children are without homes to turn in during the night. They sleep in front of stores and in abandoned motor vehicles. Some sleep on discarded cardboard, old mat and old bed sheets among others.

In terms of children being on the streets, arguments and research knowledge exists that the causes of streetism include household poverty, single parenting, influence of friends, large size family, lack of parental care during childhood migration and perceived job opportunities (Arthur, 2012; Gyekye 2010). What is concerning is that the phenomenon exists despite the presence of several child rights non-Governmental Organisations, laws and policies, and the Ministry responsible for the protection of children. The knowledge on streetism also seems to project that the children in the streets live under difficult circumstances; street living infringes upon children's rights to life, survival and the development as well as the child's right to live in a family environment. It is known from elsewhere that streetism affects children's access to health, right to education, right to rest and appropriate leisure, and protection from economic and sexual exploitation, illicit use of narcotic drugs, participation and access to information (Mashicolo, 2016; Zarezadeh, 2013; Charma, 2008; Orme & Seipel, 2007).

In Ghana, it is common to see children in streets during school hours, and other times hawking, pottering or begging for arms. A report by Betty (2014) indicated that some of these children meet other children with the same fate and engage in menial jobs such as selling ice water as a means of livelihood. The report also indicated that street children constitute what may be described as child labour on the streets, some of whose efforts have become a necessary supplement to family income. A common assumption has been that such children are delinquent, have irresponsible parents or are people suffering all kinds of abuse from their places of origin. Whatever the assumptions, the streets of Accra are littered with children who seem to have found solace on the street. Commonly held views about these children include that street children are helpless individuals that need rescuing from the streets. Evidence suggests that these views are based on what adults said about street children and not what street children said. It is therefore important for researchers to find out more about the life-worlds of street children. However, the present study chose to focus on exploring streetism from the perspective of the children and on the assumption that street children tend to demonstrate resilience despite the risks that they are exposed to (Malindi, 2009; Malindi & Theron, 2010; Theron & Malindi, 2010). Therefore, while this study explores the causes and effects of streetism in the city of Accra, its central thesis addresses the resilience that the children developed to survive within the realities of street life.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

A common concern from the analysis of emerging studies on streetism is the intractability of streetism, despite the view that street children are exposed to very dangerous and risky life, and that they are psychosocially vulnerable group of children who are not coping resiliently (Mashicolo, 2016). This concern has triggered

numerous studies into various aspects of streetism and its implications for child welfare and wellbeing. Studies provide useful information about the phenomenon of streetism; many have confirmed that streetism is a growing contemporary problem worldwide (Vogel, 2001); whereas others have attempted to define a street child, describe streetism, outline the causal factors of streetism, suggest interventions for preventing streetism, and deal with children who were affected by it.

Despite the many studies that have been conducted on street children and the phenomenon of streetism, the phenomenon remains intractable and street children remain a least understood group of at-risk children (Mashicolo, 2016). Much of the studies have not focused on how children living in the streets understood streetism. Numerous studies on streetism in Ghana cast street children in negative light and much of the policy approach positions them as a problem than people who are surviving the perils of street life. Much of the previous research focused on understanding of what street life entails and how street children are vulnerable to becoming involved in criminal activities.

Also, despite numerous studies that have focused on exploring children's views of life in the streets, their voices regarding how they developed resilience to live and navigate the harsh realities in the streets are absent from the literature. Whereas arguments exist that it is important to explore the perspectives of street children themselves, much of what has been done focused on understanding their views about streetism and not their resilience and the dynamics in the support that they need to leave the streets. It is in this area that this research sought to conduct a more sociologically grounded analysis of streetism from the points of view of the street children and people in protection agencies. The main strands of work have been to

examine the reasons behind the intractability of streetism, the effects of streetism as an intractable activity and the social protection mechanisms for children living in the streets in Accra.

### **1.3 The Purpose of the Study**

The study examined the reasons accounting for the intractability of streetism in Accra, the encounters children have in the streets and the effects of their experiences in the streets, and the social protection mechanisms available to support street children.

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

1. Explore why the reasons behind the intractability of streetism in Accra.
2. Analyze what children do on the street in Accra.
3. Examine the effect of children living on the street in Accra.
4. Examine the social protection mechanisms for children living on the street in Accra

### **1.5 Research Questions**

The study attempted answering the following questions

1. What are the reasons explaining the intractability of streetism in Accra?
2. What do children do in the streets at Accra?
3. How does streetism affect the lives of children living on the street in Accra?
4. What are the social protection mechanisms for children living on the street in Accra?

### **1.6 Delimitation**

The study was restricted to sample of five street children, four representatives of child protection agencies in the Accra Metropolis.



### **1.7 Organization of the Study**

The study is organized in five chapters. The first chapter focused on the introduction which includes background of the study, the statement of the problem, the objectives of the problem, the objectives of the study, research questions, and significance of the study, definition of concepts and terms and organization of the study. Chapter two dealt with the literature review. Chapter three captured the research methods, and the study design which consists of the target population, the study population, sample frame and the sample design and method of data collection. Chapter four is where the data is presented and analysed. Chapter five presents the summary of findings, the conclusions and recommendations. It also presents the suggestions for further research.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the extant literature relating to the topic under study. It sets out the theoretical framework and explores the concept of streetism. It reviewed literature on factors promoting streetism, what children do on the street, where they live on the street, their friendship patterns and the negative effects on the child in the child. It then explores the social protection mechanisms for children living on the street.

#### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

Early studies of street children dating to the 1950s, classified them as having a mental disorder, a perception that focuses on a child's deficits as opposed to strengths (Demoskoff & Lauzer, 1994). Although this classification is no longer used, the idea is still prevalent that the behavior of a child that results in his or her presence on the street must be maladaptive. The media, police, courts, social workers, and the public perpetuate this sensationalist image of deviance globally (Aptekar, 2000; Le Roux, 1998; Scheper-Hughes & Hoffman, 1998). However, those who work with these children have a different story to tell. Since the early 1980s, a number of studies have examined the lives of street children from a strengths perspective (Aptekar, 1994; Ennew, 2003).

A major proposition that has been used recently and which this research adopts is the theory of resilience (Theron, Adam & Malindi, 2013). Resilience refers to an individual's capability to navigate and negotiate pathways towards health-enhancing resources and the ability of the individual's culture, family, and community and to

provide health-promoting resources in culturally significant ways (Theron, Lienberg & Malindi, 2014; Ungar, 2005:55). Resilience develops through the interactions of children with their peers, schools, families, and neighbourhoods (Brooks, 2006:71). Recent studies show that street children are resilient and therefore the focus must be more on promoting resilience among them (Theron & Malindi, 2010; Ataöv & Haider, 2006; Panter-Brick, 2004).

Within the theory of resilience, the livelihood approach is an important actor-oriented perspective, which strongly influenced development-oriented research and development practice (Theron et al., 2013; Theron et al., 2014; Malindi, 2009). It understands and explores streetism in terms of livelihood strategies that can effectively contribute to livelihood enhancement (Malindi, 2014). It views streetism as a survival issue, and the street child as a resilient child that had to endure several socio-political difficulties for the purposes of survival that otherwise would not have been possible in the absence of protective resources operating to prevent those at risk from the effects of risk factors (Tusaie & Dyer, 2004). These protective resources are found within ecologies, and they include families, communities and cultures (Theron & Malindi, 2010).

Thus, the resilience theory considers street children from a vulnerability perspective where vulnerability is understood as the inherent physical factors or processes, ecological factors that include socio-economic and political processes as well as exposure community-related risk and adversity (Mashicolo, 2016; Malindi & Theron, 2010; Manyena, 2006). These processes increase the likelihood of poor developmental outcomes in children such as pathological behavior (Malindi & Theron, 2010).

In that context, the livelihood approach considers a livelihood differently. A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living (Chambers and Conway, 1992). Therefore, a livelihood is sustainable which can cope with or recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contribute to net benefits to other livelihood at the local and global levels and in the short and long term (Mashicolo, 2016).

Within livelihood approach, poor people stood at the centre and were seen to build their livelihood strategies on a set of vital resources called capitals. Usually the explanation of livelihood started with human capital, i.e., first and foremost labour but also skills, experience, knowledge and creativity. Then followed: Natural capital, i.e., resources such as land, water, forests and pastures, but also minerals; physical capital, i.e., houses, tools and machinery, food stocks or livestock, jewellery and farm equipment; financial capital, i.e., money in a savings account or in an old sock, a loan or credit; and finally social capital, which pointed at the quality of relations among people, for example, whether one can count on support from one's family or (mutual) assistance from neighbours. Natural capital was considered very important in rural areas, while in urban areas it was considered less relevant as compared to shelter and wage labour. Moreover, in urban livelihood studies, basic infrastructure like transport, water and energy was mostly included in physical capital together with shelter and production equipment (de Haan, 2000).

In this way, the livelihood approach focused very much on how people organised their lives, more on opportunities and more on agency, rather than concentrating on their impoverishment as in the 1980s household and survival studies used to do. One could simply think that in its optimism, the livelihood approach was an expression of the *Zeitgeist*. However, it was also strongly motivated by the need to develop more effective poverty alleviation policies. And more effectiveness was expected to come from bottom-up and participatory methods, i.e., putting emphasis on poor people's lives and daily needs, rather than from the top-down interventionist methods practiced so widely up to then. In that respect, the livelihood approach was much indebted to the work and inspiration of Sen (1981) on entitlements and of Robert Chambers (1983), who – hardly accidentally – also co-authored the first paper on Sustainable Livelihoods (see Chambers et al., 1989). This paper, including its definition of livelihood, is frequently referred to as the Sustainable Livelihoods foundation paper.

In adopting the livelihood approach, this research takes the view that livelihood encompasses a set of –complex, contextual, diverse and dynamic strategies developed by households to meet their needs” (Gaillardet al., 2009). The motivation for choosing the approach is that livelihood approach addresses the wider context in which the poor organised their livelihood strategies. The approach acknowledged that these strategies are embedded in structures and governed by institutions: Rainfall is bounded by climate, land is placed in property systems and wages and prices are ruled by supply and demand in markets and government regulations. This wider context was considered fundamental because an important part of the poverty alleviation policies and interventions was meant to aim at opportunities and constraints in these structures that would either enable or prevent the poor from organising effective livelihood

strategies. If these policies and interventions could become more effective, it would bring the poor less vulnerability, more well-being and more sustainability.

Therefore, notions like claims and access were considered key in the livelihood approach. These notions point at the possibility to call upon moral and practical assistance and to effectively use the resource in practice. For example, the real opportunity to gather firewood in the forest; to use water for irrigation from the village well; to obtain food from the compound's granary; or to obtain information about prices for cattle or the possibilities for temporary wage labour elsewhere in the region (de Haan, 2000). Capitals or assets can be held in private or as common property, rented, borrowed, grabbed, stolen or conquered. What matters is that the poor have access to them when needed, i.e., are able to use them in practice. –Access is the process that brings stakeholders from endowment to entitlement” (Geiser, Bottazzi, Epprecht, Fakou, Fritschi, Ramakumar, Shahbaz, Steimann, & Strasser, 2011).

Also, wider context – or structure – was not only regarded as a potential constraint to the livelihood strategies of the poor. The approach also wanted to stress the potential of livelihood strategies to influence and even to change structures. This attention for poor people's agency, as their capacity to integrate experiences into their livelihood strategies and to look for outlets of aspirations, ambition and solutions to problems, is prominent in the livelihood approach. –Human agency enables man to reshape social conditions ... Agency is embodied in the individual but embedded in social relations, through which it can become effective” (de Haan, 2000: 349).

A more or less coherent livelihood approach was created by the British Department for International Development (DfID). The department financed a number of research projects, applied the approach in development interventions on its own account, and financed interventions of international developmental NGOs that were interested in applying it. Several organisations adopted the concept of sustainable livelihoods, as did the Society for International Development (SID) (de Haan and Zoomers, 2005). Therefore, streetism was examined in this research using the sustainable livelihood context. Thus, streetism was considered detrimental to the sustainable development of the children who are victims of the phenomenon. Streetism was considered a survival livelihood strategy for children from poor family backgrounds. So the research examined what children do on the street and the implications that have for their survival. The children's stories were considered as what has been called "Voices of the Poor" (Narayan, 2000; de Haan, 2008). The next section examines the concept of streetism and laid a foundation for the rest of the literature review.

## **2.2 The Concept of Street Children**

There are several arguments discussing the phenomenon of street children. For some, 'Streetism' is a term that refers to the life situations of street children who usually live in difficult circumstances (Kefey, 2016). There are arguments that, the word "streetism," was first used in Ethiopia, was intended to avoid using the terms 'children on the streets' and 'children of the streets' when referring to street children (Mashicolo, 2016; Ennew, 2003). In that sense it was to indicate "the way of life of the children who consider the street in its widest sense, with its own esoteric rules, customs and vocabulary, as their work place" (Heinonen, 2011:1). Thus, the street children were conceptualised as "children who for various reasons work and/or live in the street" (Arthur, 2012:12; Heinonen, 2011:1).

In West Africa, Civil Society Forum Report (2003) explains streetism as the condition where children live in the streets and engage in menial activities. For Arthur (2012), “streetism” refers to the manner of life of homeless or unmonitored youth on the streets.

Streetism is a severe societal, social and individual problem that is a rapidly growing aspect of the developing countries due to some specific complicated social and family related problems such as poverty, domestic violence, physical and sexual abuse, and HIV/AIDS (Savenstedt & Haggstrom, 2004). As a result of such complicated reasons, street children in developing countries live in difficult situations that are contradictory to those child right conventions that expect the societies to establish the minimum conditions to secure for favorable child development (Penn, 2005; Hyder, 2005). Some scholars present street children as the most vulnerable groups of urban poor. They face difficulties while living on the streets, and they also develop their own ways to overcome such difficulties (Kefey, 2016; Penn, 2005; Hyder, 2005).

Among development agencies and academic scholars, a street child is term for children experiencing homelessness who are living on the street of a city, town or village (Arthur, 2012; Gedamu & Pearson, 2012). The definition of street children is contested, but many practitioners and policy makers use UNICEF’s concept of boys and girls, aged under eighteen years, for whom “the street” (including unoccupied dwellings and wasteland) has become home or source of livelihood, and inadequately protected or supervised (UNICEF, 2012).

Earlier usages of the term street child in the early 19th century was in reference to urban centres in Europe (West, 2003). Several studies (Kefey, 2016; Mashicolo, 2016; Arthur, 2012; West, 2003; Panter-Brick, 2002;) show there are many debates about



the usage of the expression, “street children”, and these debates started in the 1980s. In twenty-first century the usage and definition of the “street child” term is still problematic (Panter-Brick, 2002). There are different expressions that were used in different countries to refer to street children (Barrette, 1995).

Ennew (2003) defines street children as “those for whom the street more than their family has become their real home, a situation in which there is no protection, supervision or direction from responsible adults.” This implies that street children usually do not have a permanent place to sleep. Many of them sleep in the street or on pavement near shops and malls, while others prefer sleeping at bus terminals, railways, and platforms those youth who spend the majority of their time on the street but return to their family/home on regular intervals. The youth that are of the street live, work, and sleep on the street.

Others, like Heinonen (2011) dispute the fact that street youth comprise a population for whom there is no stable state of life and, as such, is in a constant state of destitution and criminality. However, the idea is that street children face difficulties in providing themselves with good source of food, clean drinking water, health care service, toilets and bath facilities, and adequate shelter (Kefey, 2016). They also suffer from absence of parental protection and security due to the missing connection with their families. In addition, there is a lack of any kind of moral and emotional support (Lugalla and Mbwambo, 1998).

In Europe, Balachova et al. (2009) noted that street children were those who remained in contact with their families of origin and shelter-staff, while some continued to live on their own (for example children of the street). They specify that 50% of street children start working at the age of 10- 11, and they are engaged in activities such as

collecting empty bottles, washing cars, begging for food and money, cleaning, carrying goods and within market places. These are within UNESCO understandings that the average age at which street children start living on the street is between 9 and 12 years old, and they keep living on the street until they reach the age of 15 to 16. Within UNESCO understanding, a “street child” is defined as a girl or boy which is below the age of 18, who regard the street as home and a source of livelihood and since they are inappropriately supervised and protected by a competent adult (UNESCO, 2006). When they become older they start to look for stable jobs with better wages (Rizzini et al, 1998) as for culture morals and traditions, street children usually are not concerned about culture and morals, owing to being away from their family since childhood. Lugalla and Mbwambo (1999) describe street children as “not only homeless or roofless, but they are also culturally rootless”. Regarding their health conditions, street children are subject to sexually transmitted diseases like HIV due to unprotected sexual relationships.

In terms of social networks, the works of le Roux and Smith (1988) and Lugalla and Mbwambo (1998) explained that children who do not have ties with their families form peer groups. These peer groups play the role of family and a source of solidarity, economic and emotional support for their members.

International studies show street children undertake legal economic activities such as parking, car washing, baggage loadings and others (Luggala and Mbwambo, 1999). However, many of them also are subject to dangerous to illegal activities such as drug dealing, crime, theft and gang activities (UNCHS, 2000). In terms of where they sleep, Ishmael (2013) street children sleep in the open space. Ado (2013) indicates that most of the street children sleep at night in kiosks, abandoned vehicles in front of

school building exposing them to all kinds of diseases and thieves. These children sleep on the street even when it rains. According as Ghana report said street boy live and work alone or with a friend in the streets of Accra. Street girls live and work in groups. This is because of the nature of the jobs they do and for protection.

In summary, it may be argued that streetism denotes street life. Thus, streetism refers to street-living and ways of coping and surviving on the streets (Ennew, 2003). The nature of streetism is such that its characterised by risk and diversity that may impair positive growth and development in children. It entails spending most of time in the streets, being deprived of the basic rights such as education, hygiene, nutrition, and security (Zarezadeh, 2013; Crombach & Elbert, 2014).

Characteristically, street children are described by some researchers in derogatory terms. From a gendered perspective, Ward and Seager (2010) and Boakye-Boaten (2006) explained that the majority of street children are males, and females only constitute a small percentage (10%) of street children due to reasons such as their usefulness at home. Cheng and Lem (2010) described them as street children's psychological well-being is affected by their exclusion from mainstream society. According to Van Niekerk, Coetzee, Monyeki and Pienaar (2007), the general appearances of street children include the fact that they look much younger than their chronological age due to malnutrition, which makes it difficult to say their exact age. They dress in rags; have unkempt hair and the public fear them. Human and Thomas (2008) street children have highly negligible formal education, especially to those who were born on the streets.

In that sense, the street child is a girl or boy who adopt street life and make the street and other public spaces their alternative home, and/or ways of making a living but are unprotected and unsupervised by the responsible adult (UNESCO, 2006) This UNESCO definition is adopted for the study. Within that frame of thinking, the street child exists in four categories (Mashicolo, 2016; Malindi, 2009; Ayuku et al., 2004) as follows: 1) children-of-the-street – those who are totally estranged from their families, 2) children-on-the-street - who spend the majority of the day on the streets but return home, 3) children who live on the streets with families as well as children residing in shelters, 4) Children who are completely abandoned and neglected by families or street children who work on the streets and have absolutely no supporter or provider beyond themselves (Panter-Brick, 2002). These categories of children were identified and involved in the study.

### **2.3 Causes of Streetism: Identifying reasons for intractability of streetism**

There are several explanations for streetism in Ghana and elsewhere. Studies suggest that the growing number of street children, school drop outs of children and poverty are some of the reasons why the topic of streetism attracts many researchers (Mashicolo, 2016; Zarezadeh, 2013). The curiosity in the phenomenon of streetism aims to contribute on prevention of social problems that lead to streetism (Zarezadeh, 2013).

Generally, violence and poverty are identified as the root cause of streetism (De Benitez, 2007). Some earlier studies, (Panter-Brick, 2004) specifies that current studies are focusing not on demarcating street children from other children who are facing adversities but seeks to examine the lives of street children in light of broader analysis of childhood adversity, poverty and social exclusion.

Alenoma's (2012) study in Ghana which examined the perspectives of parents of street children showed several reasons. From the analysis, Alenoma argued that children are on the street due to reasons such as wanting to learn a trade, gap in the educational system at the basic level and the children's need to raise pocket money for school the next day. Aside from these Alenoma identified poverty, divorce or separation and a need for children to support guardian in return for support for further education. Also, Alenma argued some children are on the street for reasons including that the guardian is too old to work and provide households, avoiding idleness at home and raising money to buy cooking wares (especially the girls).

In Africa, poverty, death of parents, sexual abuse, violence in the home, neglect, and divorce in the family are some other reasons why street children exist on the streets of African countries (Orme & Seipel, 2007:490). Furthermore, other reasons include civil war and children trafficking to other neighbouring countries, which lead to exploitative domestic servitude, street labour and commercial sex work (Hayes, 2008:39). HIV/AIDS is also identified as one of the major causes of streetism (Charma, 2008).

According to Genemo (2018), poverty, natural disasters and family disintegration, AIDS and violence are the major reasons why children live and work on the streets. From a Ghanaian perspective Arthur (2013) investigated the phenomenon of "streetism"—the manner of life of homeless or unmonitored youth on the streets of Accra, Ghana, and other urban centers and outlined experiences of poverty and marginalization of the youth as the push factors driving children onto the streets. The findings of the study highlighted how poverty, dropping out of school, breakdown of

the extended family systems, parental death, urbanization, adventure, and earning of personal income influence the migration of youth to the streets.

According to Darko (2013) indicated that the children are on the street because the children has no source of support. It indicates their economic conditions in their children home are very bad. The child is on the street not by choice but has been forced by family economic circumstances and materials need to survive.

A fundamental cause of streetism postulated within the literature is the disintegration of the African social support system (Genemo, 2018; Arthur, 2012; Nukunya, 2009). In explaining the point, Genemo (2018) argued that the causes of streetism are the result of social change of varying degrees, changes which destabilize life or disintegrate the family and the community. Historically, traditional African societies were firmly grounded in communities comprising members of various extended families and lineages (Nukunya, 2009).

Several works in Ghana identified the extended families and members of the lineage lived in close communities, such that they have acted as socialization agents in the development of most young people (Arthur, 2012; Aidoo, Bentsi-Enchi & Raphael, 2009; Nukunya, 2009). In fact, it traditionally has been believed that African community structures are the foundation and underlying framework for social development. Various kin and non-kin arrangements included networks of formal and informal relationships which ensured reciprocity and exchange in the form of service and support (Yizengaw & Gebiresilus, 2014). Fosterage and adoption, volunteerism, and collective endeavours that have been quite widespread in Africa provided safety nets for children through such arrangements have largely absent in contemporary

Africa. As such, the youth now find themselves in the throes of social dislocation and collapse of the traditional support systems (Arthur, 2012).

An important factor identified within the literature is family disruption, in the form of desertion, separation, divorce and death due to HIV/AIDS or other natural causes, has shrunk the family size among the poor still further, often resulting, in poor single-parent or child-headed households (Genemo, 2018). The nature of the family structure means that parents' behaviours have a big impact on the construction of a child's personality (Arthur, 2012; Aidoo et al, 2009).

Economic factors have been identified as a responsible for streetism. Genemo (2018) identified poverty as the main cause of child streetism and children seek work. Poor parents send their children to work, not out of choice, but for reasons of economic expediency (UNICEF, 2012). The hunting grounds for child traffickers are invariably areas of the most extreme poverty where families have exhausted all other strategies for survival (Genemo, 2018; UNICEF; 2006). From a social protection perspective, UNICEF (2009) poverty that underlies streetism is also a symptom of child labour. Denial of education blocks the escape route from poverty for the next generation of the household. Aderibigbe (2012) and Genemo (2018) contends that children who live and work on the streets often come from slums and squatter settlements where poverty and precarious family situations are common, schools are overcrowded with no safe places to stay.

Also noted within the literature as one of the main factors associated with children finding themselves in difficult circumstances in developing country is rapid urbanization (Genemo, 2018; Aderibigbe, 2012). The populations of urban areas in many developing countries are growing at an alarming rate. The causes of this urban

demographic explosion are both internal and external to cities. Among the internal causes is the high population growth rate that results from high birth rates. External causes include all factors that favour the exodus from the rural areas. The net effect of the pressures on infrastructures is the development of densely populated peripheral areas and slums, in which many people are deprived of basic services, and the environment becomes so polluted that there is permanent risk of epidemics (Aderibigbe 2012; Beckett, 2003).

Abuse and neglect are variously cited as factors that push or force children to the streets. Abuse is characterised as verbal, physical abuse and conditions of neglect also drive children from home. Some of the families of street children are headed by mothers who are victims of abusive male partners. The mother has no alternative but to endure the abuse, because she needs the male partner for economic survival. These children run away from home due to poor relationships with their step-parents.

Housing conditions have been identified as part of the push factors drawing children to the street. The argument has been made that there are children who are on the streets in many developing countries because they have no suitable homes (Genemo, 2018). Some have families which live in very cramped conditions, perhaps one room or even a room shared with another family. As children reach adolescents, they are no longer able to live in such conditions and opt for the streets. The dimensions of the accommodation are too small to allow any intimacy.

There are studies suggesting that some children are in the street because they seek independent and free life. These studies argue that children wandering in the streets is just to seek an independent and free life; they are attracted to the streets by the freedom of the streets. Genemo (2018) cited examples from Colombia and South



Africa to argue that, most street children were not neglected or abandoned. Thus, for some street children, wandering in the street often meant enjoying freedom, which is regarded by them as their life priority.

Parenting problems are described as another factor pushing children into the streets (Vergara, Meneses, García & Aburto, 2013; UNICEF, 2012). Questionnaire survey of 900 street children discovered that, although family financial crisis played an important role in pushing children to drift into the streets, the connection between parenting style and children's running away from homes is stronger. Child neglect and abuse by family members are indicated as the main factors responsible for children's presences in the streets (Vergara et al., 2013; Bourdillon, 2000).

According to Darko (2013) in the story we find majority of minor escape to cities without prior knowledge of where they will live or work, and are often left with no option than ultimately working as porters carrying loads on their heads and other menial jobs. Darko revealed that the street children are often subjected to all forms of abuses such as rape, torture, starving and harmful influence. Others suggest that most of the street children are poor and mostly operating in and around lorry parks and markets in Ghana's cities (Abaka, 2016; Gyekye, 2011). These children having been abandoned to the street, each one of them has had to grow rather quickly into the streets, each one of them has had to grow into the ways of the world in order to take up for themselves those regions sibilates on which their parents have turned their back.

Gyekye (2011) explained that most children, who find themselves on the street today, is because they have many siblings therefore their parents cannot cater for them. Ideally the streets are the only alternatives to seek refuge. The children are left to

find for themselves for meager fees to support themselves. Arthur (2012) lamented that large family is considered as a contributing factor because more children are needed to work to contribute towards the family livelihood (Arthur, 2012).

According to Darko (2013) said that most children find themselves on the street because they have many siblings of which their parents cannot cater for them. They are left to find for themselves for meager fees they earn from their labour. It has been seen that many children have parents who are alive but most of them do not stay with either or both parents as a result of increased divorced rate, death of one or both parents, peer, pressure influence, hardship, bad cultured practices in their communities and torture from some mothers (Arthur, 2012). The findings on family circumstances of street children point to the fact that single parenthood may be on the increase in Ghana (Darko, 2013).

Several authors suggest that most of the children drop out of school due to inability to support them by providing them with their basic educational needs such as bags, uniforms, shoes to mention just a few (Darko, 2013; Arthur, 2012; Gyekye, 2011). Some children come from a background that do not offer them the enabling environment do study, or do not have anyone to support them in their homework or their academic exercises such as children soon lose interest in schooling and may find themselves in the street.

The street children are often subjected to all forms of abuses such as rape, torture, starving and harmful influence. It also discovered that some street children grow up to become social deviant such as thief, armed robber and commercial sex workers some of the street children take some sort of drugs in the form of cigarette or

marijuana. The drug helps some to cope with cold weather, hunger, fear, pleasure, experimentation and courage.

According to Darko (2010) depicts that most street children are without homes to turn in during the night. They sleep in front of store and abandoned motor vehicles most of the children sleep at night on cardboard in front of meat shops, old mat and old bed sheet respectively. However only a handful is staying with their parents but decide to stay on the street during the day and go back to their parent's homes in the night.

Erinosho (2013) a lecturer at the Faculty of Law of University of Cape Coast, advised parents, guardian and general public to respect the rights of children. According to the lawyer the 1992 constitution defines a child as someone below the age of eighteen (18) years and that article 28 (2) indicates that every child has the right to be protected from engaging in work that constitute threat to his health, education or development?. Hence, the laws of Ghana have vividly stated to respect rights enshrined in the constitution.

A research conducted by the university of Ghana in 1990, noted the following: –Walking through the principal street of major cities in Ghana, Kumasi, Accra, Tokoradi, Koforidua indeed confirms how some children are neglected by their parents because of either their parents are unemployed or financially handicapped. Also an interview conducted by the same research indicated that some of the street children were runaways escaping harsh treatment from their parents or guardians or forced marriages. There were others who out of business do not want to succumb to training by guardians or do not want to live in structured environment. Some also were attracted by the promise of heaven or luxurious life led them to the cities to look for money to fend for them.

Information extracted from [www.Ask of org.com](http://www.Askof.org.com) portrayed that the street children struggle to take care of them. They try to make a living by changing all kinds of jobs. The boys often earn money by shining shoes, pushing trucks, gathering reuse and carrying it to the dumps site. Some street children are “hawkers” which means they try to sell their wares (often small, items like chewing gum) hanging around, especially by chasing vehicles. The girls are selling water, oranges and bread. Some children sell plastic bags at the market. You can also find number of girls who carry loads of goods in bowls on their heads.

Gyekye. (2011) lamented that many of the children end up on the street for a number of reasons, many are number of reasons, many are rooted in family instability and poverty other are being rejected and abandoned their families for various reasons. Some leave their homes because of domestic violence, abusive relatives or neglectful families.

Article 28 of the 1992 constitution that “every child has the right to same measure of special care, assistance and maintenance. Article 8 (1) of the Act state that “no person shall deprive a child access to education, immunization adequate diet, clothing, shelter, medical attention or any other thing required for his development.

Given the plethora of causes, some argue that the causes of streetism can be divided into three categories. These categories include macro-level, meso-level and micro-level factors (Mashicolo, 2016; Kiros, 2016; Grundling, Jager & Fourie, 2004). These are summed by Mashicolo as follows.

Macro level	Meso level	Micro level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urbanisation</li> <li>• Forced resettlement</li> <li>• Overcrowding</li> <li>• Non-compulsory education</li> <li>• School boycotts</li> <li>• The destruction of teaching facilities</li> <li>• Few or no job opportunities</li> <li>• Low salaries</li> <li>• High cost of living</li> <li>• A lack of recreational facilities</li> <li>• Violence and unrest</li> <li>• Lack of community involvement in the problems of families and individuals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate or unplanned moving by parents from rural areas, which leads to poverty unemployment</li> <li>• unfortunate standard of living</li> <li>• Sicknesses due to malnutrition</li> <li>• Single-parent families</li> <li>• Physical and psychological maltreatment of children by parents</li> <li>• Lack of parental control and supervision</li> <li>• The presence of stepparents</li> <li>• Clashing values of parents and children</li> <li>• Corporal punishment by family members</li> <li>• Lack of a father figure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hunger</li> <li>• Shame</li> <li>• Failure at school</li> <li>• Lack of money for books and uniform</li> <li>• Feeling unwanted and feeling like a burden to the family</li> <li>• Running away from welfare</li> </ul>

However, from a resilience theory perspective, argued that factors contributing to streetism can be categorised as economic (poverty, injustice, unemployment big gap in social classes, unjust distribution of wealth), social and cultural (population growth, migration, war, change in cultural and social values, the differences among generation and difference in attitudes, wrong beliefs such as considering children as sources of income, being harsh towards children and lack of support for them), familial (extended, populated and stressful families with delinquency and addiction background, parents unawareness of children's appropriate needs, divorce in the

family, sexual abuse and death of parents) and individual or bio-psycho factors (Mashicolo, 2016; Zarezadeh, 2013; Charma, 2008; Orme & Seipel, 2007). Thus it can be argued that the intractability of streetism seems to go beyond the decisions made by children to be in the streets. These reasons need to be explored and published. This is what this research contributed to knowledge.

## **2.4 What Children do on the Street**

This section reviews the literature on what street children do and how they survive on the street. In doing so, some descriptions that are used to denote the condition of the street child are considered vital to the explanation of what they do on the street. One important characterization fundamental to explaining what children do on the street how the local people describe them.

All the derogatory terms that were used to refer to street children portrayed street children as a nuisance that needed to be brushed or pushed away (Lalor, Taylor, HusseinAli & Elim Bushra, 2002). The work of Mashicolo (2016) explained that, in South Africa, street children are described derogatively as *malalapipe* (pipe sleepers), twilight children (children who are active in the dark), *malunde* (those that sleep in the streets) (Barrette 1995:8; Le Roux, 2001:106) and also as the “lost generation” (Vogel, 2001). Other terminologies used to describe street children include Gamin - Chinchés Urchin/Bed bugs (Columbia), Marginais - Criminals/Marginals (Brazil), Pajarofruterero - Fruit birds (Peru), Polillas - Moths (Bolivia), Resistoleros - Little rebels (Honduras), Scugnizzi Spinning tops (Italy), Bui Doi - Dust children (Vietnam), Saligoman - Nasty kids (Rwanda) and Poussins or moustiques - Chicks or mosquitos (Cameroon). These terms seek to ascribe a characterization to street

children that presents a certain idea of what they are presumed to be doing on the street.

Different writers identified various activities that are done by street children. Notable activities include begging, carrying of goods for people, small income-generating activities such as shoe shining, car window washing, truck pushing, and collecting refuse (Grundling et al., 2004:102). Victimization of street children is also evident. People that children trust become the perpetrators of violence (Contini & Hulme, 2007:219). In Ghana, Ishmael (2013) explained that street children are typically limited to working as porters, street vendors, and security personnel. The study stated that the most viable of all the options is porting. It requires no prior knowledge of the job, only willingness and ability to do the work. Work as a Kaya (porter) on the street vendors of Accra and in other urban centers attracts most of the street children. In Ghana commented that in order to survive they are forced to take on menial jobs and often exploit selling dog chains, plastic bags and sell water, or as market porters or pantry assistants and kitchen hands for Chop Bar (Ishmael, 2013).

According to Darko (2013) said that the increase in social vices is another problem of street children in Ghana, children who find solace on the street often join gangs who introduce them to social vices such as armed robbery, drug abuse; prostitution among others can be traced to children who started on the street. According to Darko, street boys and girls are subjected mainly engage in street hawking, begging and pottering in ways that deprives them of their childhood, potential and self-worth that could advance them in society. In terms of social networks, Arthur (2012), Darko (2013) and Ishmael (2013) explained that children who do not have ties with their families join peer groups which play the roles of family and are a source solidarity, economic

and emotional support for their members. Knowledge from elsewhere suggests that each group has a leader who is obeyed by group members, reflecting how well organized they are (Le Roux and Smith, 1998). In terms of security, some of them depended on peer groups to provide them with such security and protection. Some survival strategies of street children include menial income-generating activities in order to survive. Some of these activities include helping motorists at car park, washing cars, begging for money, selling fruit and vegetables, and prostitution, carrying personal belongings of passengers as well as collecting scraps from garbage and dumps and selling them (Kiros, 2016; Samuel, 2014). The money that they earn from these activities is used to purchase food, cigarettes, local beverages and other necessities. These knowledge shows that streetism has several effects on children which the next section of this literature review explores.

## **2.5 Effects of Living on the Street**

There are several documented effects of streetism on the street child. One argument is that the difficult life in streets may lead to mental-ill health among street children (Malindi, 2014). This suggests that there are several psychological conditions that children go through while living on the street. In discussing the effects of streetism, (Lalor et al., 2002) noted that the positive qualities that street children have include the ability to improve their conditions of life on their own and the ability to earn income that help them buy food and other necessities. Aside from these several negative effects of streetism are described within the literature.

Mashicolo (2016) noted that the street life is not easy for the street children. The contestation was that there are many challenges that street children encounter in the streets. The negative effects of streetism Mashicolo identified include: Extreme



deprivation and social exclusion of street children which create opportunities for engaging in crime; self-perception as discriminated and hated by the members of society; stigmatized because they do not have power to demand attention from public and private agencies. subjection to social, physical, psychological and sexual abuse.

Other writings (Kids Report, 2012; Van Baalen, 2012) identified that street children face malnutrition or difficulty to access basic nutrition and are susceptible to cuts and wounds due to lack of shoes and protective clothes. They argued that street children also suffer injuries and physical pain due to work and walking long distances. Additional effects include exposure to drugs, violence and abuse by other street children, general public and law enforcement officials that street children endure in the streets may make them feel nervous, scared, angry or confused (Kids Report, 2012:10; Kiros, 2016).

According to Ado (2013) street children, suffer multiple, repeated, violation of their right, child in the street situation are high risk of suffering violence particularly torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. This result in psychological distress to profound trauma. Violence on the street include daily psychotically violence through stigmatization and intimidation of street children, random physical and or sexual violence within street gangs by organizers of forced sex-selling or vagrancy, through forcible police round-ups premeditated rapes and extrajudicial killings.

An important effect is the labelling of street children. Hayes (2008) noted that street children are labelled as criminals, thieves, rebels, gangsters and prostitutes by neighbourhood residents. Difficulties in the street forces street children to develop bad

behaviour such as aggressive behaviour, theft, drug abuse and inadequate socialization (Vogel, 2001).

However, Orme and Seipel (2007) identified heterogeneity of street children in the way they conduct themselves. While street children are known of their bad behaviour, this study revealed that sometimes street children decide not to engage in crime and anti-social behaviour because they are encouraged by other street children to endure challenges. Street children have a high degree of hope of a better future, believe in God and play by rules so that they will be able to succeed (Orme & Seipel, 2007).

Kudrati et al. (2008) indicate that street life is characterized by working hours that are defined by eating, glue-sniffing, begging for food from restaurants customers or purchasing restaurant food from restaurant staff. They walk barefoot, have two or three clothes changes, and engage in activities for pleasure (football and music). They obtain money by working for others, independent work, theft and sex work for girls.

A report by Abaka (2014) disclosed that health problems are major problems of street children in Ghana. Streetism exposes the children to a lot of health problems and other hazards. The children work in unconducive environment and they are vulnerable to defilement, sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS, syphilis and gonorrhoea as sexual abuse become a reality. She further stated that aside the abuse information, those street children who sell on the street stand the risk of being run over moving vehicle moreover teenage pregnancy is also a major problem of street children in Ghana. Teenage girls are often hired and rape by irresponsible men on the streets. Those who become pregnant in the process and are unable to cater for the needs of their children end up offering sex for money.

The most common problem in street children in African countries is the abuse of inhalants (Olga, Dindar, Artugrul, Omeroglu & Aydogan, 2007). These inhalants include substances such as petrol, tobacco or glue. Street children end up in jail, car accidents, drowning or succumbing to sudden death because of these inhalants abuse (Olga et al., 2007). The argument is that street children are known to survive through drug abuse and drug trafficking (Van Blerk, 2012). They survive and cope by engaging themselves in unlawful activities. Abusing drugs helps them to numb their feelings of coldness and hunger (Kiros, 2016).

Doing drugs is noted to have debilitating effects of street children. This comes in the form of sicknesses of all kinds. Sicknesses that result from this are skin infections, wounds from fighting, stomach ailments and viral contagions (Mashicolo, 2016). Street children have the following health problem that they refer to as minor health problems: heart pains, headaches, chest pains, back pains, abdominal colic, renal colic, blood in urine, shortening of breath from running, cough, wounds and bruises, diarrhoea, dental problem, fever, and discharge from the ear (Ali & Muynck, 2005). In countries such as Ghana, street children are in danger of getting malaria as a result of their exposure to mosquitoes (Orme & Seipel, 2007).

Other unlawful activities comprise theft, robbery, assault, prostitution, petty offences, fighting among them, littering in public places, gambling, causing disturbances and deliberately damaging vehicles of people who decline their offer of parking assistance and car washing (Van Blerk, 2011; Ward & Seager, 2010). These unlawful and dangerous activities that street children engage themselves in may lead to serious injury or even death (Sauma, 2008). The relationship of street children with people around them contributes to their means of survival.

Van Blerk (2012) explained that street children's relationship can either be intergenerational or intragenerational. Intergenerational relations refer to the state whereby street children still maintain their relationships with parents, particularly mothers, especially the "children-on-the-street". These street children usually visit their homes to change clothes and eat; nevertheless, they stay only for a short period. Intragenerational relations refer to a situation where street children take care of their siblings on the streets, especially children of the street who stay with their families. In this case, the older siblings protect their young siblings in return of the younger siblings doing some work for them (Van Blerk, 2012; Kok et al., 2010). They also form friendships and alliances with adults who survive on the streets as a way of adapting to street life. Kiros (2016) also reveal that street children's coping mechanisms also include changing their sleeping locations to hide from their aggressors, sometime even hide in underground, creating their affiliated community where they could live in an atmosphere of love and sense of family hood. The survival mean and coping mechanisms mentioned above point out that even though street children live dangerously in streets, they have hidden resilience in them. Malindi (2014) points out that the researchers should stop viewing street children from medical and charity perspectives by treating them as clients who need to be rescued from the street hazards, but instead, they should focus on the street children's coping mechanisms and how they resile during adversities.

## **2.6 Social Protection for Children on the Street**

There are several propositions about the social protection of street children. Hagon (2003) consultant, Gender law and Development, said these children were denied their basic rights to life, health, shelter, education and to food. She said the convention on the rights of the child places responsibilities on the state to take

appropriate steps to protect children from all forms of physical, mental and sexual abuse through the establishment of investigation. She therefore urged that the authorities to come out with pragmatic measures to give them a trade that would add value to their lives.

Mashicolo (2016) noted that there are actions that should be taken in order to deal with streetism. First, the reasons why children leave their homes and reside in streets need to be examined. The reasons for streetism are common worldwide. One of the most common reasons of streetism is poverty and family dysfunction. Dealing with these contextual challenges will therefore reduce the problem of street children. Dybics (2005:765) suggests that the myth that street children are delinquents and that they adopted their life styles due to the appeal of freedom and adventure that the streets offered, should be dispelled.

According to West (2003), there are four strategies that can assist in dealing with the issue of streetism. Those issues are covered under the following headings: prevention, the street, the street children protection centre, and reintegration. The first step is prevention. Dybics (2005:765) refers to this stage as a primary intervention. The “push” and “pull” factors leading to streetism are imbedded within extreme poverty (Dybics, 2005:765). Prevention of streetism can be done through community-based programmes that support employment creation in the informal market and increasing people’s sense of responsibility for their own development (De Moura, 2007:198). Government should also play a crucial role in eradicating poverty through skills development and employment creation (Ward & Seager, 2010:96).

Government can also assist by providing housing for children, offering them skills training, giving them grants, providing primary healthcare and emergency assistance,

providing assistance with identity documents (IDs) and residence permits, and reuniting street children with their families and returning them to schools (Dybics, 2005:766). Furthermore, children migrate to streets due to physical, sexual, emotional abuse and lack of parental skills (West, 2003). West therefore suggests that in this case, children who are at “risk” of migrating to streets due to the above-mentioned reasons should be identified, removed from dangerous family circumstances and placed in other forms of care such as foster care or adoption families.

The second step focuses on children who are already on the streets. Dybics (2005:765) refers to this stage as secondary intervention and mentions that to assist these children, micro-enterprises should be developed so that street children are able to secure their legal income on the streets. Other strategies that can be applied in this category include drop-in-centres, shelters, children’s homes, as well as street education (Ward & Seager, 2010:96; West, 2003). Education can be used to intervene in the problem of street children (Ouma, 2004:37; Vogel, 2001:232; Anarfi, 1997:302). Education should be prepared in such a way that it allows street children to express their views, thoughts and ideas in order to develop their self-esteem (Ouma, 2004:37).

The creation of institutions such as shelters and drop-in centres will also enable street children to receive formal and informal education, rest, bath, have food, social recreation, counselling and a place of safety (Dybics, 2005:765). To strengthen their services, the centres should collaborate, be assessed and evaluated to establish the physical and mental needs of children and also engage in psychiatric care and substance abuse treatment (Ward & Seager, 2010).

According to Vogel (2001), skills such as orientation skills, perception skills, emotional skills, communication skills, creative thinking skills and critical thinking skills can play a pivotal role in assisting street children cope with street life challenges. Assisting street children to acquire these skills will prepare them to be able to deal with their everyday challenges without engaging themselves in dangerous activities such as drugs and prostitution.

Street children also have needs such as the need for belonging, the need for power, the need for freedom, as well as the need for fun (Vogel, 2001). Understanding of all these basic needs for children will lead into uniting all the stakeholders into ensuring their well-being. The third stage will then be protection centres where the staff should be trained on the convention of the rights of children, counselling and communication skills (West, 2003). These centres should focus on the creation of a warm and developmental environment for those who have undergone traumatic experiences (Dybics, 2005:766).

West (200b) identified reintegration as the last stage and suggests that before reintegration is done, it is important to first find out why children left their homes. Kudrati et al. (2008:447) specified that reintegration should be done provided that children's migration to the streets is not due to abuse, poverty or war in their home setting. The same reason can make children return to the streets. Further, West (2003) indicated that the reintegration process should be done through personal relationships at home, in life in the neighbourhood and at school. Prior to the reintegration process, it is important that children's homes are visited to make a follow-up concerning the reasons why they left and to identify if there are any issues in the family that need to

be resolved (West, 2003). Some authors (Kudrati et al., 2008) noted that during the reintegration of street children, the process should ensure the following:

1. The focus must be on building trust first and rapport with the children so that they leave the streets voluntarily.
2. There must be a length of period of counselling and exposure of children to life in the community for them to be successfully integrated.
3. Police must be trained in child-protection and designing preventative, educational programmes to work with marginalized children.

In the case of migrants and street children who have never experienced family life before, interventions should be done through the economic and social welfare programmes at a national level (De Moura, 2007).

Research shows that resilience building is important social protection mechanisms for street children. Such writings show resilience is a context-specific term that is not easy to define (Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2007; Henley, 2010). Further research indicates that resilience processes, namely, risks and protective resources, are likewise context-bound. A risk in one context may not necessarily be a risk in another context, and the same applies to protective resources. This notwithstanding, there is consensus that resilience depends on what Masten (2001) calls the ordinary magic of lives that are lived well. In this regard, resilience depends on the full functioning of adaptive systems such as families and well-performing schools.

Mampane and Bouwer (2009:445) pointed out that people that demonstrate resilient coping are those who have —.a disposition to identify and utilize personal capacities, competencies and assets in a specific context when faced with perceived adverse



situations”. This view suggests that one requires personal assets, which according to Masten (2001), must then combine in complex ways with assets found within ones social and physical ecology to promote resilient coping.

Ungar (2005) argues convincingly that resilience is a process that depends on what is built into the child and what is built outside the child. This underscores the need for one to mobilise one’s personal resources and then navigate and negotiate one’s pathways towards health promoting resources that must be made accessible in culturally meaningful ways (Ungar, 2006:55). One of the pioneers of resilience research, Rutter (1999:119), noted that resilience refers to the demonstration of “...relative resistance to psychosocial risk experiences”.

Protective resources are processes that typically contribute to positive outcomes despite risk and adversity (Brooks, 2006:69; Theron & Malindi, 2010:719; Henley, 2010:297). Since protective resources are context-specific, no single protective resource can be considered to be generally protective; instead, protective process must be scrutinized in order to comprehend how they enable individuals and groups to demonstrate resilience despite exposure to risk and adversity (Bogar & Hulse-Killacky, 2006:319). Resilience resources would include having interpersonal skills such as verbal skills, capacity for emotional intimacy, independent-mindedness or assertive behaviour, enthusiastic outlook on life or optimism, competence, self-worth, and supportive contexts (Bogar & Hulse-Killacky, 2006:319; Malindi, 2009:55). Protective factors are divided into individual and ecological resources (Malindi, 2009:55). Ecological factors are familial, extra-familial and cultural resources. Other protective factors contributing to resilience are intellectual ability, self-esteem, self-efficacy, effective parenting attachment to caring and supportive adults, and

environmental opportunities (Brooks, 2006:69). Nevertheless, it is evident that the type of family that provides love, warmth and guidance is likely to produce successful individuals (Malindi, 2009:55; Henley, 2010:297). An unrelated person can also play a significant role in providing a child with warmth and healthy living that contribute to helping him/her to be able to cope with adversities (Henley, 2010:297). These unrelated people can be teachers, caregivers and all people who are close to or working with the child.

Schools and communities can play a primary role that fosters healthy, physical, social, emotional and cognitive development (Bernard, 2004:2015; Mampane & Bower, 2006:443). The presence of a healthy attached peer relationship also enables one to gain trust, support, and encouragement (Henley, 2010:297). In this relationship, a child also gains the ability to negotiate and be provided with realistic feedback.

## **2.7 Resilience among Street Children**

Given that this work is premised in resilience theory, this section explores the literature on resilience among street children. This is important as the literature is clear that street children are exposed to the risk of violence in the streets (De Benitez, 2007), life in the street is difficult (Mashicolo, 2016) and that children require some degree of adaptive, absorptive and transformative capacities to survive on the street. Some researchers using other frameworks identified the presence of hidden resilience in street children (Malindi, 2009; Kombarakaran, 2004; Ungar, 2006; Speakman, 2005; Kruger & Prinsloo, 2008) and have mentioned that what can be seen by people as unacceptable actions or behaviour (e.g. sexual activities, drug abuse, theft, begging) may be a resilience source to children –at risk” (Malindi, 2009:87; De Benitez, 2007:7; VanderPlaat, 2015:8).

Also, life in the street and the associated risks are influenced by factors such as gender, age, ethnicity and disability. For example, as boys are assumed to be more aggressive, girls are assumed to be more vulnerable to violence such as sexual abuse (De Benitez, 2007). Some researchers argued that street children are also subject to abuse and neglect in detention centres and welfare homes which are supposed to protect them (Mashicolo, 2016; De Benitez, 2007).

Authors suggests that resilience may be promoted in children by families (parents), teachers (schools) and society (Brooks, 2006; Malindi, 2009; Perez & Salazar, 2001). Families are identified as the primary source of resilience enhancement by studies (De Benitez, 2007). They have a responsibility to prevent negative developmental outcomes in children facing multiple stressors and nurture unborn development systems (Bernard, 2006).

However, given that some street children may not have families that care, enhancing resilience in street children needs cooperation from all relevant stakeholders including social workers, police, significant others and children themselves (Kruger & Prinsloo, 2008). According to Bernard (2006), resilience is a gift to all human services, one that gives “hope”, and it (resilience) also shows how useful protective processes are in enhancing resilience. Some of the risks that are regarded as reasons for the migration of children to the streets are poverty, racial discrimination and injustice, limited opportunities for education and employment, child abuse and neglect, poor parenting, as well as biomedical problems (Malindi, 2009; Panter-Brick, 2002). These risks can be overcome if there are strong protective factors (internal) such as temperament, physical health, sense of humour, self-esteem, locus of control, family support, intelligence, coping techniques, sense of direction or mission (McAdam-Crisp, 2006),

as well as external protective factors such as familial, extra-familial and cultural resources (Malindi, 2009).

The role of social workers in supporting families to strengthen resilience is also regarded as one of the interventions. Social workers should advocate for reducing poverty-enhancing employment opportunities and creating communities that promote a positive quality of life for all (Brooks, 2006).

Schools can also play a critical role in instilling resilience in children through subjects such as Life Orientation in South African schools (Theron, 2007). Life Orientation was introduced to equip youth with problem-solving skills in order to overcome challenges. Schools can ensure that a child respects adult as well as other fellow peers (Theron, 2007; Kruger & Prinsloo, 2008). The studies highlighting schooling as a source resilience suggest that when street children are enrolled in school, the institution can ensure that the following are done to promote resilience (Kruger & Prinsloo, 2008; Brooks, 2006):

1. The manner in which teachers plan and structure their activities, assignments and lessons should incorporate competences, integrate and utilise children's innate abilities, experiences, learning styles and prior knowledge.
2. Educational psychologists should be employed to identify children who are at risk, work with them, their teachers and their parents with the aim of enhancing resilience.
3. Training of parents by educational psychologists in order to continually enhance and develop resilience modalities in children at home.
4. Further development into developing an objective instrument to measure resilience in the South African context needs to be made.

Aside from such arguments, De Benitez (2007) also recommends that social policies should work to secure a social protection system with a wide variety of options for supporting children who have experienced multiple cases of abuse and created a variety of coping strategies. In these policies, children's perception and experiences must be incorporated into planning and evaluation processes.

In this study, however, the focus of resilience in street children is taken to mean ability of people to recognise, challenge and transform the unjust and unequal power relations that dictate their vulnerability; to adapt positively to changing circumstances; and to mitigate, prepare for and rapidly recover from shocks and stresses such that their wellbeing and enjoyment of human rights is safeguarded. To do so they need to develop their absorptive, adaptive and transformative capacities. Absorptive capacity is the ability to prevent, prepare for, or mitigate the effects of negative events, through coping mechanisms that focus on essential basic structures and functions. Adaptive capacity is the next step on from absorptive capacity, bringing about longer-term change. Transformative capacity is required to challenge the impacts of the ecological, economic or social structures that keep people trapped in a vicious circle that makes the existing system unsustainable.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Overview**

In this chapter, the researcher adopted systematic data collection. The chapter covers the research design, the study area, population, sample and sampling procedure, instrumentation, pre-testing and administration of instruments as well as ethical consideration.

#### **3.1 Study Area**

This study was conducted in Accra, the capital city of Ghana. This city is where the phenomenon of streetism is most prevalent. It is common to see children begging, selling as hawkers and carrying loads as head potters. At night and the early hours of the morning, it is common to see a lot of old mats and ply wood in front of people's shops. Those mats are usually used by street dwelling children in the night. Social activities in the form of association meetings, church gathering, gambling, drinking, video, music and commercial sex workers goes on daily in Accra. Parts of the cities have developed into slums and most of the street children are settled around the main market centres.

#### **3.2 The Research approach**

The research employed the qualitative approach. Qualitative research according to Cohen, Manion and Morison (2011) collects 'sof' data using interactionist methods. The process of enquiry draws data from the context in which events occur, in an attempt to describe the occurrence, as a means of determining the process in which events are embedded and the perspectives of those participating in the events. In this research, the context is Accra, and the those participating in streetism are the street

children and people from child protection organisations. Qualitative research uses non-positivistic methods to understanding multiple perspectives as enacted within peculiar contexts (Yin, 2009). As such, in this research, interviews and observations were drawn upon as the main methods of data collection. Also, the data were collected from multiple groups including the street children and people from four child protection agencies. In qualitative designs, induction is used to derive possible explanations based on the observed phenomena. As such, the data collected were analysed using template analysis and thematic analysis. The qualitative design also has the advantage of getting in-depth information from a small group of people. In this research, the total number of participants is nine.

### **3.2 Research Design**

This research was designed as a case study in Accra. Data was collected from multiple sources – five different street children and four different protection organisations to reveal complementary perspectives such that the result is more robust and can be used to develop theory (Cohen, Morison and Manion, 2011). Instead of quantitative data, the focus was on qualitative data (Flick, 2006). The interview questions were open-ended with the intention of exploring the causes and effects of streetism. Some questions asked by the researchers were: why children are on the street and not being enrolled in schools by their parents or guardians. The household conditions of street children, whether parents are living together with their children, support that they get from their parents and social protection for children on the street.

### **3.3 Population and Sample**

Population is the group of interest to the research. The target population for this study is all street children in Accra. In selecting the children, any child between the ages of

6 and 18 years who spends a significant amount of time living and or working on the streets of Central Business Area constituted part of the sampling unit for this research. However, given the qualitative nature of the study, five street children and five child protection agencies were selected. The children were aged between 10 and 15 years who are engaged in work on the streets of Accra.

### **3.4 Sample Selection**

Non-probability sampling was employed by the researcher in sampling the research, due to the fact that, targeted respondents could not be brought together for sampling. The researcher could not compile a list of all street children in Accra; hence, it made it extremely difficult to go by probability sampling; thus, the need for nonprobability sampling. Therefore, multiple sampling methods were employed.

First, purposive sampling was used to select the child protection agencies from where data was collected to help understand the phenomena. Second convenience and the maximal variation sampling were used to select the street children. The convenience sampling was where participants were identified on basis of availability – any street child who was encountered and was willing to speak to the researcher. Maximal variation sampling is a variant of purposive sampling techniques where the researcher ensured that the street children participating in the research were not homogenous. Five (5) children were selected to reflect different categories of street children from different backgrounds to reflect gender, ethnicity, family type and religious background.

### **3.6 Methods and Instruments used for Data Collection**

The methods used for data collection were interviews and observations. The type of observation was non-participant observation. This included observing what the street



children do, where they sleep and their friendship patterns. Observations were done in the night and day. The night observations were done late with the support of friends who acted as protectors of the researcher. Some interviews were also done in the night as the street children were busy selling during the day but booked appointment for the evening. The interviews centred around their life experiences, household conditions, whether parents are living together with other children, support that they get from their parents and social protection for children on the street. The interviews were supported with a structured interview guide while observations were more informal. The interview method was used to allow the participants who were illiterate to speak in a face-to-face manner with the researcher. The interviews were organized on one-on-one basis so that the street children can tell their personal stories. The participants from the child protection agencies were also interviewed using one-on-one interviews.

### **3.7 Data Collection process**

The data were collected using multiple methods from different groups of respondents to allow for triangulation. The data collection started with access. Access to the institutions was facilitated through personal contacts with some friends within the institution. A written request was submitted, and designated officials were assigned to help me to conduct the interviews. One person was interviewed in each institution. The interviews were flexible, interactive, and continuous, rather than prepared in advance and locked in stone.

The street children were contacted on the street at night and during the day. For each child, rapport was established first. This took the form of friendship building and trust building. This process was not easy in most cases. Appointments were booked with each child separately, and for a time convenient to the participant. Their interviews

focused on why they came to the streets, how they came and how they have been surviving in the streets. Their hopes and aspirations were also explored to understand the transformative potentials that each child has and what policy interventions may be possible. The interviews questions were framed in empathetic ways to allow the children to tell their stories while at the same time the researcher could console, encourage and empower them to understand that there is hope in the midst of the seeming despair they were experiencing on the street. Each child was interviewed in a local language, and in one case English was used because the researcher and the child did not speak a common local language. However, the child understood some English, having completed JHS.

The interviews with people within the child protection agencies were conducted in English. All interviews were conducted within the Accra Metropolitan area. At the end of each interview, the participants were encouraged to contact the researcher on the phone if they had difficulties about some questions or if they had some further information to give or to withdraw data. The main areas where the protection agencies interview questions were focused on included reasons why children are on the streets and the protection mechanisms available, and how those mechanisms are being deployed as well as the constraints in dealing with the phenomenon of streetism.

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

The data collected were analysed using template analysis. This involved categorizing the data into groups based on the major research questions. This was important to ensure that the data were carefully sorted such that new themes that emerged could be easily identified. Therefore, data that did not fall into any of the categories were put

re-categorised and put under appropriate themes that were generated. Following that process, Thematic analysis was used to present and discuss the data collected.

### **3.9 Ethical Issues**

The researcher observed ethical principles governing social research such as: informed consent, confidentiality and rapport building. In attempt to get valid information from the Street child, the researcher sought the consent of the street child. That is to say that the researcher informed the child about the processes involved in the assessment; as well as what the child stood to benefit and lose for participating in the research. In order to achieve confidentiality, the child was talked to away from his or her peers, and any other person whose presence may compromise confidentiality. Previous personal experience showed that a street child would not open up unless his or her trust is won. Stemming from this, researcher firstly developed a rapport, coupled with a respectful and trusting relationship with the child. This made the street child open up to share the accurate information with the researcher. The researcher tried as much as possible to avoid asking the street child too many questions.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter looks at data presentation, analysis and discussion. The data are presented in tables and descriptive formats. The data captured represent the views expressed by the street children and their parents from whom data was collected in the Central Business Area in Accra.

The data is organized under five main sections. These are household conditions of street children, why the children are on the street, the work that the children do on the street, effects of street living on the children, and social protection for children on the street. The first section presents data on household conditions of the street children.

#### 4.1 Household Conditions of Street Children

This section examines the data concerning household conditions that explains why children do end up on the street.

**Table 4.1: Age of child participants**

Response	No. of Respondent	Percentage
<10	1	20
10-12	1	20
13-16	3	60
>16	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.1 presents results concerning the age of street children involved in the research. From the results, it could be observed that one child (20%) was less than 10 years. Another was less than thirteen years. The remaining three (60%) were in their

teens but were aged between 16 years and below. This would suggest that the children on the street are young children. Given their ages, it is difficult to understand that they had to sleep in uncomfortable places every night; and that they do not sleep at all some nights.

The situation is not that okay for the child who does not sleep in the street. She explained as follows:

*... You don't want to know where I sleep at home at night. Where we live is not the best. It's a house but you know those houses.... Every night I am so tired and weak. [with tears] I wake up tired and return here every day to ensure we are able to eat. The only difference is that I have a place that I keep my things and sleep every night. My friends here don't have that. I count myself better because some of my friends on the street remain here even in the night and their stories are not very good to hear (Child Five, Female)*

The comment suggested that single parenting can be a contributory factor for streetism, if caring for the children rest upon only one of the parents. In that case, the inability to cater for the children will lead them into the street to fend for themselves q

*The conditions in the home are so bad that I feel good to be on the street. My father is a poor farmer and my mother is also blind. There is no adequate food, money and no proper health care for us. I have to carry these loads in order to earn some meager money to purchase petty things for my family to survive. There is no job in the home (Child Two, Male).*

The comment bespeaks the foundational role of poverty as a determinant of streetism. It bespeaks the fact that home conditions push children into streetism. Thus, improving household living conditions can fundamentally curb the phenomenon of streetism. From a needs-based perspective, supporting families to engage in income generating activities appears to be a fundamental pathway out of streetism.

The central argument that can be advanced is that children are not on the street as a matter of choice. There are several household and economic forces that push them onto the street. Whereas social situations such as broken homes, parental neglect

orphanage are fundamental push factors in the creation of streetism, household poverty and the prospects of economic benefits from living on the street are the fundamental pull factors.

When the street children were engaged concerning parental responsibility, their comments highlight several child up-bringing deficits. Some of the typical comments that emerged included.

*I am a street hawker selling iced water and sometimes dog chains. I have been in this job for the past seven years, chasing cars to sell my items day in and day out. My parents have given up the idea of assisting me in attaining my higher education simply because they cannot afford cost of education.*

*My parents are very poor that they cannot support financially to become responsible person in future. I therefore dropped out of school with the intension to carry loads for people to enable me to pursue my education in future and also support my parents as well.*

The comments show that the children have little parental support due to household poverty. Unlike the traditional situations where parents fend for their children, the street children were responsible for themselves. What was more concerning was the realization that parental poverty served as an instrument of child neglect and the shirking of responsibility.

*My mother is a single parent catering for the five siblings of mine. All my siblings find it difficult to make ends meet. I, being the older brother in the family have engaged in the shoe shine business in order to make money to support my other siblings.*

The views expressed by the child re-emphasized a reversal of the social situation where parents cater for their children. The comments indicated that the street child has little parental support from the mother. Being the elder he is on the street to help meet the needs of the family.

*We are on our own in the streets. For me, I have to support the family. So, they need me to be responsible for their needs. If we had people to take care of*

*us, we will not be here. Many of us wish we had people to take care of us. I have no one to do so ... It is you and your God. We depend on the streets and our friendships to survive. If you ask who is taking care of me, I will say myself. I have my parents, they exist but do not take care of me ... I take care of them... I think of them. I think of their welfare. They are my load. I am the one who is responsible for the family welfare. But let me say they took care of me until I am able to do this things in the streets.*

*As I told you ... I don't have parents. I am my the one who is responsible for my life. I take care of myself. I am just here on my own. I take care of myself throughout life. I have no one responsible for me. Some people have their parents here in the streets with them ... We do not have anyone to take care of us. We are nurturing ourselves and growing up. I don't know what future we have and how life will go for us. What we know is that we aim to succeed.*

*We depend on what we sell and the jobs we do for survival. We sell. We retail anything, anything that you can find. Anything life iced water. ... some people do shoeshine, some are head porters but almost all of us are hawkers in one way or the other. It is not the best. We are suffering. We do not have anyone to take care of us. Look at a child like me here on the streets. Although I return home every night, I cannot say my parents take care of me. I will say I take care of myself. Mine is better because at least when I go home every night they give me some advice and guidance. My friends do not have that opportunity, but I am still disadvantaged. I am taking care of myself, that's the bottom line. It is sad. Just sad [with tears].*

In view of the comments made, it may simply be stated that the children on the streets are taking care of themselves. They have little parental guidance. Also, it could be argued that the participants engaged in different kinds of trades such as selling of iced water, hawking, head porters, shoe shine business etc to fend for themselves. They work in the streets and expect to find work in the streets, find friends, and earn money to survive. While it may be argued that parents were not in the position to fend for their children, Mintah's (2011) argument that parents who shirk their responsibility contribute to the prevalence of streetism. The central thesis, unlike some descriptions of street children across the world, is that parental inability to cater for children leaves them with no option than to engage in some economic activities as a way of earning a

living. In extreme cases where children have to travel further away from home, they are left with no option than to live in the streets and sleep at night on the street in front of shops, abandoned vehicles, discarded cardboards, old mats etc.

The comments from representatives from protection agencies highlight many issues.

For example, some participants noted that

*Most street children are not here because they do not have parents. Some are here because parents cannot take care of them. Things are difficult for the parents. Some are there because the parents themselves are there. Among those are the group we call children born in the streets. Therefore, the question of parents caring for the children is a more complicated issue. I can say many of them has no serious parental care but that is it. There is more to it ...*

*The children in the street have parents. I am sure all of us know that it will be useful if they had responsible parents. The fact is responsible parenting means much and it is determined by several things. You know some have parents they live with. However, those parents are themselves in the streets. Some have parents for whom they are responsible in terms of feeding. Some parents are disabled, some are weak, some are sick, some are too old etc. Some have become unable to do certain things because of serious ailment or disease or accident etc. ... For me the issue is to understand that some have parents at home, some have parents in the streets, some are from single-parent homes while some are orphans. There are many differences.*

These comments note that parental responsibility for street children is a complicated matter. It has several dimensions. Whatever the conception and understanding, however, it seems that children involved in streetism have parents who find it difficult to fend for or provide their basic needs. Other children have no parents or guardian. As such, it is difficult to argue that children in the streets are there as delinquents (Mashicolo, 2013). They are children who are finding it difficult to meet their basic needs. Some felt neglected while others could see no possibility that their parents are able to support them. As such, despite the fact that the street is difficult, these children develop hidden resilience - adaptive, absorptive and transformative capacities - to



survive on the street (Malindi, 2009; Kombarakaran, 2004; Ungar, 2006; Speakman, 2005; Kruger & Prinsloo, 2008). It is my contestation that when see on the streets, these children should be seen as people at risk of sexual abuse, drug abuse, theft, begging while at the same time emerging from their origins as victims of harsh social and economic conditions that make the street more attractive as a place where they can find hope and secure their survival and livelihoods. To further explore this point, the next theme in the analysis focuses on understanding why the children are in the streets.

**Table 4.2: Family size of street children**

Family Size	Frequency	Percentage
1-2	0	0
3-4	2	40
> 4	3	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.1 shows that two (40%) out of twenty street children come from homes where family size is between three or four children. However, 60% of street children come from homes with family size higher than four children. This would suggest that the street children come from homes with large family sizes.

In the interviews with the street children concerning their family size, the following comment emerged:

*I am from a family with very large siblings of nine and since my parents are very poor, I had left home to be on the street to sell all kinds of items such as shoe polish, dog chains, toilet rolls and other things to make a living and also support my younger siblings in the home. (Personal interview with Child Four, Male)*

The comment suggests that the street child is from a large family size home. The size of the family made it difficult for parents to provide for their needs.

Another child also stated that,

*We are five siblings and all of us are on the street because our parents cannot provide us with our basic needs such as shelter, education, healthcare, adequate nutrition just to mention a few. We have been ignored by our parents and only hope of survival is on the street. We are engaged in menial jobs just to earn a living. (Personal interview with Child Five, female)*

The comments indicate that most of the children find themselves in the street because they have many siblings that their parents cannot cater for them.

As the interview data indicate most of the street children were from a very large family, their comments suggested that most of the families were very poor. As such, the children were left to fend for themselves. This indicates that most street children are not supported by their parents.

**Table 4.3: Are you staying with your parents?**

Response	No. of Respondent	Percentage
Yes	1	20
No	4	80
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.2 presents the results further results concerning home conditions of street children. The results show that only one child (20%) was living with the parents. The remainder of four children (80%) were not living with their parents. This would suggest that parental support for the street children do not exists. There were several

explanations to this. In the interviews, some comments related to why children were not living with their parents included the following:

*My mother died when I was four years. Since then I have been living with different people until I left to come here to take care of myself. It has not been easy. You don't have anyone to advise you. You are on your own. You have to be tough, always. Sometimes, I am disturbed but I just tell myself that it shall be well someday. (Child One, Male)*

*My father and mother divorced, and I have nowhere to go. I was stranded and hungry. They both rejected me. I have no option than to find a means to survive. This is where I make a living. I don't even know where my father is. My mother is there and struggling herself too. (Child Four, Male)*

*Me, my parents are more than street children. They don't care about me. They are doing their own things and I am doing my own. I completed JHS and I had no money to continue. Now with free SHS too I cannot go because I need food if I don't get boarding school. I don't know what will happen to me. (Child Two, Female)*

*I have parents. They are far away in the village. I am here in Accra on my own. All by myself. Here I take care of myself from what I do. I am here alone they are there. I don't know when I will see them again. I sleep in front of stores and in abandoned motto vehicles on discarded cardboard, old mat and old bed sheet respectively. (Child Three, Male)*

The comments highlight several issues. First, the children were not living with their parents due to a range of factors. The factors included loss of parents, parental neglect and poverty. The second, issue is that they are on their own. There is not an adopted parent with whom the reside. As the comments indicated, those who do not return home to their parents at night were on their own, living on the street. This presents the kinds with several social challenges. When the child who lives with the parents was interviewed she explained that:

*I stay with my parents but decide to stay on the street during the day and go back to my parent's homes in the night. I go to the street because my parents cannot provide the kind of support that I need. My father is an irresponsible especially for providing our basic needs.*

*There is no money in the house to look after my younger siblings. Its no easy. (Child Five, female).*

The comment indicated that that not all street children remain on the street at night. Some street children do while others return home at night. This implies that the parents are aware of the child's condition. The parents are paralysed from helping her due to poverty. The is also illustrated in another comment:

*I left home due to extreme poverty. My parents have five of us to take care of. ... My father is jobless. My mum what she sells cannot do anything. Its difficult for us. Why should a small boy like me be here? Why should I live like this? Madam, its not good at all .... But what can you do? Nothing [with tears]. There is no money in the home, so I had to engage in menial jobs to support my mother to look after my younger siblings. (Child Five, Female)*

Those who live on the streets were asked where they sleep at night, various comments emerged. The typical comments were

*You sleep anywhere; just anywhere [with tears]. Sometimes you have to pay people to pay people to allow you to sleep in a safe place. ... Hmmm ... Sometimes you don't sleep at all. If you sleep, you they will steal your things. We sleep in cars, in front of shops in people's lotto kiosks, anywhere (Child Two, Female).*

*I sleep anywhere I can find anytime I am feeling sleepy. In car, fitting shop or anywhere you see your friends and other people sleeping. Sometimes when the street is dangerous, you don't sleep. If you sleep, they will steal your money. We organize and protect ourselves and other people. (Child Three, Male)*

*It is not easy. You sleep when there is time and space. You sleep on paper, not bed. In fact, we don't have properties you have nowhere to keep your things. We keep our money with Susu collectors. Sometimes they run away with your money. ... There is nowhere to sleep. We keep our few things with some of the people who have a place and pay every week. I pay GHC10 cedis every week to keep my things there. (Child Four)*

*I sleep on top of cars that are parked at the station. I asked permission from the station officers. They are my friends. ... They know me and my story. They allow me to sleep in the cars or on top of the car. They also keep my belongings for me. I always I am lucky. But it is not easy. (Child One, Male).*

The comment indicates that the children on the street have difficult childhoods. From interviews, at night, the children have no designated sleeping places. They sleep where space is available. They sleep on cardboards in front of meat shops, on top of cars and on discarded cardboards or anywhere available. As a consequence, they experience various traumatic situations and experiences. As the comments from Child Two and Child Three illustrated, there were nights when some do not sleep at all. These are really traumatic experiences for children to go through. In terms of their ages, the results in Table 4.3 shows the children were all less than 16 years.

#### **4.2 Why Children are on the Street**

This section seeks to examine the data that identify why children end up on the street. During the interviews with children concerning why they are on the street, several comments were made.

Their comments highlighted several reasons why the children were on the street. Two comments were:

*We end up on the streets for a number of reasons, many are rooted in family instability and poverty. In the place where I live, children most often leave home because they are fleeing family problems or have been rejected and abandoned by their families for various reasons. ...Me and some of us left our homes because we don't have anyone to care for us. I will say I have no family.*

*Hmmm. Me my friend brought me here. It was difficult, and I don't know what. My friend was supporting me. This is where he gets his living and means for existence. He is on the street so I joined him here on the street. We are here. The street helps us to develop our ability. We are here to get food,*

*shelter entertainment, earning money and protection especially during our early days on the street.*

*There is no hope at home. They cannot take care of you. Life is very difficult for the family. You don't want to become a prostitute. What do you do? You cannot be home and die. We don't have anything.*

*I lost my mother. My father I don't where he is. No one seems to care about me. I have no one. This is where I call home. I get food and people who care about me. I am here because I have nobody, .... I am homeless and an orphan. There is nowhere to go but here. If I can get somewhere to go, I will go. For now, this is where I am. I don't like it but I have no option.*

The data highlights several reasons why children are on the street. From the comments, there are suggestions that the children are on the street for several reasons. There are economic as well as sociological reasons why children are on the street. Peer pressure seems to be a fundamental factor explaining streetism that is not widely documented in the literature. However, the question of family instability and child neglect seemed to be major issues underlying the children being on the street. As indicated earlier some are there because of family instability in the form of marriage break ups or death. The desire for survival and daily existence seems to play a role. Thus, it can be argued that streetism is an existential issue.

As identified in the literature across the world, poverty is also listed as a major determinant of why children are on the street. Further comments include that

*Things are not easy. I have no option. I have no money, food or shelter. I had dropped out of school seven years ago. I was forced to go to work on the street every day. At night I sleep on a cardboard mat in front of a meat chop. My friends are five and we stick together for protection but sometimes it's not enough, the grown up beat us even take our money and that sort of things.*

*I am on the street because all is not well at home. If I were to have responsible parents who have enough resources to take care of me, I will not be on the street. How will a child choose to be in this kind of condition?*

*Some of us ended on the street as a result of bad cultural practices. Some of the girls have big problems. I don't have those problems. I just don't have someone who can take care of me. Those who want to take care of you will make you suffer severely for it. The way they use you, it is better you stay on your own on the street.*

The statements highlight feelings of despair. The children do not seem to have options. It shows that there are several factors pushing children to the street. It seems that these factors include macro, meso and micro factors as delineated in the work of Mashicolo (2016). From a macro level, it can be argued that macro level factors such as failure of the State to effectively implement child protection laws is one factor accounting for why children are in the streets of Accra. There are no safety nets for children in the streets or for children who may be vulnerable because they have lost their parents.

At the same time, it seems that there are meso level factors such as lack of community structures that identify and protect children at risk. As Arthur (2012) noted, it seems that the breakdown in the extended family set-up has challenged the ways in which communities and families support children when biological parents are unable to care for their children. Asare (2009) argues that, children whose parents do not cater for them adequately find other means of catering for their needs. As the comments show that the children were on the street because they have no source of support. It indicates that economic conditions in the child home are very precarious. The child is on the street not by choices but has been forced by family economic circumstance and the natural need to survive.

Overall, it be argued that children are in the streets because of economic and social pressures. From the evidence in this work, children end up in the streets for primarily in search of survival – a means of livelihood, because they do not have shelter, parents that could take care of their basic needs. As Darko (2013) explains each of these children has had to grow quickly onto the streets in order to take up for themselves those responsibilities that their parents could either not fulfil for them or are not available to fulfil for them. From my observations during the research these children struggle each day in the streets to work for money to buy food.

The interviews with the child protection agencies did not show significant departure from the views of children. Some typical comments,

*The children are on the streets for several reasons. Some for economic reasons. They are here because our policy initiatives have not sufficiently provided for them. Whether it is abuse or suffering of any kind. It is abandonment, if it is divorce that makes it difficult or single parenting, we have no system in place.*

*The problem of streetism is a testimony of a national failure to protect children. The child protection institutions are under-resourced, and ill-equipped to offer the help that children need. We do not offer community services that support the development of children.*

*The children are in the street for many reasons. Policy failure, combine with community issues and child delinquency. Our studies and interactions have shown that many factors are at play depending on the particular child. ... Overall, however, poverty seems to be a major factor while the love for quick money and some socio-cultural practices are also responsible. We need to admit that we have not done well as a society.*

*Our society has not been fair to children. We have created a society without practical child protection systems. There are family conditions ranging from household poverty to parental neglect and single parenting or delinquency that we can continue to identify as the causes*



*of streetism. ... for me the game changing point is that we cannot continue to blame those factors and explain the issues away. ... We should let our heads down. As a society we have not developed systems to protect children from parental abuse. We have the laws, without enforcement mechanisms. Everything relies on someone making reports before people act. We do not have social systems, we do not have Shelters etc in place to protect children about whom we receive some kinds of reports.*

These comments highlight some agreements with the opinions expressed by the children. However, the views expressed by the representatives from the child protection agencies have a greater focus on systems level factors that are meant to protect children. They focused more on macro-level failures that protect children as identified in the works of several scholars (Mashicolo, 2016; Kiros, 2016; Grundling, Jager & Fourie, 2004). This does not discount the validity of individual or bio-psycho factors and family related factors identified within the literature (Mashicolo, 2016; Zarezadeh, 2013; Charma, 2008; Orme & Seipel, 2007). Similarly, it does not discount culture changes, violence and poverty (Panter-Brick, 2004; De Benitez, 2007). It highlights the broader adversity that children face. This streetism has to be interpreted in the light of broader analysis of childhood adversity, poverty and social exclusion. The argument is that streetism festers because there is not a specific policy design to address the issue. Thus, it seems that as Alenoma's (2012) noted, streetism in Ghana may be as a result of factors beyond the children.

*Let me tell you. ... these children are, children who find solace on the street. ... these are boys and girls mainly engaged in street hawking, begging, pottering. Throughout the country, you find these children at very tender ages exposed to varying degrees of dangers ... they in these situations because they have been deprived of their childhood, potential and self-worth that could advance them in society. It's a sad state for a child. We should admire their resilience and courage to survive in the streets.*

*It is true that there are cultural practices that lead some children unto the streets. Those children do not live in the streets. If there are cultural practices that lead children in the streets we have talk about forced early marriages.... You know some children are smart. When they see the signs, they run away from home, but to where? They end up in the streets because mostly the community members are complicit in those things. Sometimes, they are not complicit, but they don't want to make enemies with the parents. Social Welfare has no protection system. If you come to DOVVSU we cannot help you because we do not have the shelters that are properly connected to us. Our whole system is weak in terms of child protection. Children who cannot endure the ordeal of forced or early marriage try to run away in search of freedom. They have nowhere to go. They end up in the streets. There are many girls like that living in the streets.*

Rather the comments show there are several explanations for streetism. What can be argued is that evidence from studies suggesting school drop outs of children, violence and poverty and poverty are the root cause of streetism (Mashicolo, 2016; Zarezadeh, 2013; De Benitez, 2007) require further interrogations. Thus, there is some credence to the need to focus not on demarcating street children from other children who are facing adversities. We should examine the lives of street children in light of broader analysis of childhood adversity, poverty and social exclusion (Panter-Brick, 2004). It can be argued that streetism is due to gaps in the ways in which child protection is organised, and gaps in the implementation of free universal education at the basic as well as the secondary school level. It may be observed that some children are in the streets not due to divorce or separation but for survival and existential reasons including a need to support parents and siblings.

As Darko (2013) argued, these children should not be associated with the increase in social vices in Ghana. They are children who find solace on the streets because life has become very difficult and unsustainable for them in the places where they originated. From the analysis, it can be argued that violence and poverty are the root

causes of streetism (De Benitez, 2007; Panter-Brick, 2004). However, the basic idea is that aside from household poverty, factors such as forced early marriages and weak child protection mechanisms are the main reasons why children live in the street. Children being in the streets needs to be understood in the context of life's adversities, injustice and vulnerabilities that children have to endure in making that final decision to be in the streets. It should be understood that the risk of violence in the streets (Mashicolo, 2016; De Benitez, 2007), and life-threatening experiences there means that children who live there really have difficulties in finding alternative sources of livelihood.

#### **4.3 What Children do on the Street**

One of the important themes in this research was to explore what children do on the streets. What children do in the streets is fundamental in the ways in which the phenomenon is perceived, and the descriptions and characteristics associated with street children. This section tries to present and discuss the results concerning the kind of work that street children are engaged on the street.

The interviews with the children suggest various elements. Some of their comments included the following

*I sell and carry goods for people. When they are not buying items much, I stop to work as a head potter. I have been in this job for the past seven years, chasing cars to sell my items day in and day out. ... Some people work day and night as security guards for cars at garages or the station... I did that job before. The GPRTU will pay us something small and we go around checking if thieves want to steal things from cars. Sometimes you work as a make for drivers if they don't have mate. It's not easy.*

*I sell on the streets. I am not sure what kind of trade that is. That's what I do. I carry items and follow cars. I am part of those who engage in ice water selling business. I do those kinds of things because you don't need a large capital to invest in such activity. ... Sometimes I join my friends and we go to*

*somebody and we say, we want to guard your shop for you. We shall be there every night so that people don't come and break into it. When they agree, they pay us something small every day and we protect the shop... They like it because our charge is not much like normal hiring of a security guard.*

*I do all kinds of things - security man for shops where we sleep at night, driver mate, chop bar assistants or shoe shine boy... I do many things.*

*I work in group to sell items and sometimes I try to supply goods like a middle man between those who come from the village to buy and those who are selling here. I tried to do a decent business because the GPRTU people sometimes connect people to me. ... You know as I said I spend time with them. Some of the girls work as food vendors at vantage points. Some boys push trucks. Sometimes I work with my friends at the GPRTU to load cargo into cars and they pay me.*

*... The only business that helps us to survive on the street is to sell items on the street or carry loads for people. I sell different things. I a street hawker selling ice water and sometimes dog chains. You sell on the streets where the traffic is heavy. ... I am always in the sun and selling. Its not easy. I just thank God we don't fall sick like that. Its not easy at all.*

*What is do you do than look for money and food. ... We get money and food by doing things differently. ...You don't want to know what I do on the streets. You see those who refused to talk to you, some pf them have to follow different men every night. It's not easy. As a girl, I carry loads during the day, and sell some items in the night. Sometimes men want to take advantage of you. Sometimes they succeed. Other times you manage to get away from them. That's my street life. That's part of it. We the young girls on the street suffer much. We suffer. We don't just sell. Sometimes you have to give yourself to a man who can protect you.*

The comments suggest children in the street engage in selling items. As one comment indicate, their motive on the street is more economic and of survival than anything else. Thus, the children on the street engage in petty business to make money. While some engage in other money-making ventures, their main activity is to sell on the major streets. The most common item they sell is sachet water to passer byes. What is intriguing is that there are some who work day and night. This will suggest that street children go through much stress. It also implies that they do not have a stable life.

I observed many instances during the research period that one of the children did five different jobs in one day. The day starts at the lorry park where he helped to offload cargo from trucks. Later he went selling some plantain chips he collected from a supplier. By 11 am he departed to a chop bar (local restaurant) where he helped in doing the dishes. He returned in the evening to sleep in front of a shop where he and the friends worked as security for several other street children and the shop. Each person who came to sleep in front of the shop paid a token. I learnt many things that day. From my observations, the street children have a difficult life. They do many things to survive. Also, they live a very unpredictable life, a life full of many uncertainties that a child should not worry about. They do not seem to have a regular life and good rest. As their comments suggested they are not happy with life in the street. This exposes them to all kinds of risks that may be very uncomfortable. However, they are people who take security serious as the girls usually pay to be protected by the guys. I was told girls especially seemed so vulnerable as they had to endure unwanted relationships to keep safe on the streets. The solution was to pay and sleep where groups sleep to avoid being isolated and vulnerable.

Other comments from the street children include the following:

*People think those of us here are criminals. The criminals don't live in the street with us. They come to operate and go away. I am here because I want to make money to help my family. ... My parents are very poor that they cannot support me financially to become responsible person in future. I therefore dropped out of school with the intention to carry people items on the street for a fee so that I can get some money to support my education in future and also support my parents as well.*

*When I am selling I sell with a goal in mind. ... Hmmm. My family, mother and siblings find it difficult to make ends meet. My mother is a single parent catering for us. Am the elder and everything I do is to support her. My*

*brother is also in the street engaged in shoe shine business. ... if you ask what I do, I just tell you I look for money. ... It's not easy.*

*The common idea is that we are bad guys. We are suffering guys who are trying to survive. ... Those of us here don't do bad things. If you do bad things you cannot stay on the street with us. ... You will be beaten. We are here to make money ... The things we do here are not easy. We survive. For me, as I said I have nobody to care for me, so I live here. This is my home. It is my family. It is my life. It is my place. I live here. This is the only place I have. When I am selling, I am in my shop. I know that looks odd to you but that's the fact of my life. I know I may leave here one day.*

*But for now, there is no option than to accept that I am not a visitor here. I am here. It's my home. I do many. I engage in all kinds of menial jobs. I have washed dishes at chop bars as attendants, I have been ice water seller, and I have sold pastries*

*I have tried to be a driver mate in trotro [commercial vehicle] as a means of earning something. I have sold drinks, shoes and many other things. We do so because we didn't come here as thieves. We came here because things are difficult.*

The comments of the street children bespeak various levels of despair and frustration, regrets and hopes. Their comments can be read differently as a cry to the outside world for help and liberation. It also speaks of their hopes and commitment as well as resilience to succeed than fail in life. When a girl stated that she sells with a goal; and that she aims to help the family survive, it negates assumptions that these are kids who have run away from home to just live on the street as though they were vagabonds. Theoretically, it can be argued that street children have agenda's and would have been very productive members of society if the appropriate interventions are in place to support their development. main points highlighted in both comments is the fact that the children do not only sell but provide other services aside from hawking. In view of the above comments one could see that most of the participant engage in different kinds of trades such as selling of ice water, hawking, head porters,

shoe shine business just to mention but a few. The children expect to find work in the street, find friends, and earn money to survive.

They sometimes work harder in order to support their younger siblings in their education. children indicated that most of them were engaged in income generating activities such as shoe shine business, iced water business etc in order to make money to support their younger siblings. They engage in menial jobs, working as chop bar attendants, ice water sellers, and pastries sellers and driver's mate of commercial vehicles as a means of earning something for their livelihood. They seemed to be committed to achieving life goals. This will suggest that they could be supported to achieve life goals. It also suggests that the provision of some safety nets would have taken some children out of the streets. In fact, the results suggest that individual and psychological factors have little role in getting children onto the street. Rather lack of social support and economic difficulties are the main drivers.

The interviews with child protection agency representatives who participated in the research raised several points that supported the views of the children. Some comments include that

*Many of the children in the street are very hardworking people. They do menial jobs such as selling to passengers and drivers in cars; they are mainly the hawkers and head potters we see in the street. Of course, there are some few some irresponsible ones among them ... but the vast majority are hardworking people engaged in all kinds of economic activities to make money for themselves and their families. When you have time and study what they do on the street, you will respect them. They work much. They are very productive*

*Street children are the mainstay of many activities in the central business area. Just take time to observe them carefully. Those kids are not only the hardworking kids, they are the most resilient. ... Very resilient kids. They do all kinds of work that contribute positively to our society. They are people*

*working hard and helping everybody as head potters, street vendors and sometimes they keep our streets safe.*

*What we know is that these children live and work on the streets. They protect the street because that's their home. That's where they live. It's where they work. They sell in the streets. They sell all kinds of things. From our research, some work day and night trying to make ends meet for themselves and their families. For some, all they come to the streets to do is to look for money and go back. They know what they are about and so they work hard, working with a purpose. I am sure if you follow them, you will see what some of them do and how they do it. I was shocked to realise that they are not the criminals we have thought of them to be. No! They are fine children going through difficult childhood. The resilience they have, many of our kids do not have.*

*The kids in the street sell on the street. Some work as head porters that help all of us carry our heavy stuff when we get stuck at Makola. They sell all kinds of items as street vendors or hawkers. ... They live and keep the streets. What I know is that they hate thugs and do not make the streets violent. A few bad guys come to the streets to steal and harm people, but those guys are not street children. They are ghetto guys in hideouts like the usual slums. They come do bad things and dissolve into the slums. The street kids don't do that. ... The street is their home, and that's where they live, and they do not make it a dangerous place. They themselves are attacked by some of these bad guys from time to time. That's what forces some of them to form groups to protect their territories also. These kids, from my interactions, observations and work on them, are fine guys who are experiencing difficult situations for which we have failed to provide a solution as a nation.*

These comments highlight that the children in the streets do not fit all the derogatory terms that were used to refer to street children (Lalor, Taylor, HusseinAli & Elimin Bushra, 2002). Although the traditional understandings of street children portrayed them as a nuisance that needed to be brushed or pushed away, the comments about what they do in the streets did not appear to support their descriptions as twilight children (children who are active in the dark) (Barrette 1995:8; Le Roux, 2001:106); the "lost generation" (Vogel, 2001); bed bugs or criminals. However, their challenges in the streets make them fit some descriptions such as pipe sleepers and those that sleep in the streets or marginals. While they are not moths, little rebels, mosquitos or fruit birds, their suffering in the streets may make people see them as dust children or



nasty kids. However, when qualified as such, they become an epitome of national failure in terms of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

The results do confirm what some authors identified that the children in the streets are engaged in notable activities such as begging, carrying of goods for people, small income-generating activities such as shoe shining, car window washing, truck pushing, and collecting refuse (Contini & Hulme, 2007; Grundling et al., 2004). What should be understood is that these children do so to survive and to guarantee their livelihoods. As within the Ghanaian literature (Ishmael, 2013; Arthur, 2012), street children typically work as porters, street vendors, and security personnel guarding shops where they sleep at night. Porting is more common among them because it requires no prior knowledge of the job nor starting capital. It requires only willingness and ability to do the work. This puts the children at risk for several reasons which are discussed in the next section where the effects are discussed. One important comment raised was that

*These children, let me tell you ... are not the cause of any increase in social vices in streets of Ghana. They are people who work hard. They are diligent and dedicated people. You take time and see how they work. If all Ghanaians will take their work so seriously, this country will move forward. I am against labelling them as criminals or problems. ... We should see them as children who have had to take their destiny and survival into their own hands because, parents, communities and government, I mean all of us have abandoned our responsibilities towards them. ... See, these children are doing for us, what we should have been doing for them*

In terms of social networks, children who do not have ties with their families form peer groups play the roles of family and are source solidarity, economic and emotional support for their members. Each group has a leader who is obeyed by group members, reflecting how well organized they are (Le Roux and Smith, 1998). In terms

of security, some of them depend on peer groups to provide them with such security and protection. Peer influence through networks and partly poverty were some of the motivating factors for street children in Accra, once they arrive on the street through social networks, street children are able to develop survival mechanism that sustain their lives in the absence of a parent figure.

In sum, it can be argued that children in the streets of Accra mainly engage in activities that help them economically. These include hawking, pottering and car washing. Others worked as guards for cars at garages and security for shops where they slept at night. Some worked as driver mates, chop bar assistants or as shoe shine boys. Some worked as food vendors at vantage points across the city while other push trucks. Also, some assist to either load or to offload goods from cargo trucks and lorry parks. Those involved in hawking engaged in different kinds of things such as selling ice water, dog chains and plantain chips. From the study, children in the streets are not to be classified as criminals. From the study, children in the streets are not to be classified as criminals. They should be considered as resilient children who are struggling to make ends meet by enduring harsh conditions in the streets.

#### **4.4 Effects of Children Living on the Street**

A major theme in any research on street children is the effects that being on the street have for the children. This section looks at the data concerning the negative impacts of children living on the street and to address those problems. Whereas literature have explained several effects, this research explored the effects from a resilience perspective.

Also, two of the children interviewed talk about the effects of streetism on basic needs as follows:

*In this world some of us on the street are trapped in a cycle of poverty and neglected. We lack the basic necessities of food, health care and safe place to stay. We are homeless; we are unable to afford an education our only place of solace is on the street*

*We found ourselves on the street because our parents are too poor to provide for our basic needs. Some of us beg or run errands for survival, majority of us interviewed lack almost all basic needs, shelter education, healthcare, adequate nutrition etc.*

The comments suggested that most of the participant interviewed lack almost all the basic needs in life. Also, their parents are unable to support them, therefore ignoring by parents often lead to social vices, threats and violence. The above comments suggested the plight of the street children. It portrays the hardship condition of the street children and the kind of assistance that they need in order to enjoy life.

During the interview one child stated that:

*... anything can happen to you when you live in the street [in tears], ... hmmm ... sometimes where to sleep is a problem. Sometimes the thieves come to steal our money as well. ... I don't know what to say ... but ... hmmm some people have been raped, sometimes if you don't know and you are some places before police say they are looking for thieves and armed robbers or criminals, they just add some of our friends. Some people think everyone living in the streets is a criminal. Can you imagine? It is bad. Also, some of us grow up to become social deviant such as thieves, armed robbers and commercial sex workers when the situation gets hopeless for them. ... Some do this when they get to join bad friends in the streets.*

Another child also stated that:

*If you are here without father and mother, you are in the mercy of everyone. Where to sleep is a problem, family is a problem, food is a problem. You just have problem. ... People see you as spoilt child. They see you as a thief. They see you as ghetto boy or girl. They see you as a problem to society ... Nobody wants to help you. ... At night, we sleep in kiosks and in front of stores. When*

*you are lucky some of the store owners see us as a source of security to their shops. We are exposed to all kinds of diseases because we inhale these fumes from cars and burning of all kinds of things, and we inhale ordure from sewerage exposing us to all kinds of diseases.... Imagine that you are here on your won like me who has no family and a vehicle knocks you down. Who cares for you when you are at hospital [in tears]. This is why we form friendships. But you see it is also dangerous because some friendships have led some people to join people in the ghettos where they became thieves or lured into robbery, prostitution, drug abuse, and other vices. ... I have seen some small girls having sex with different men just to get some small money for food and for protection.... It is sad, it is not easy ...*

The above comments present debilitating effects of streetism that children have to endure. It speaks of the dangers inherent in street life. The first is characterization types of dangers. These include the social categorization of all street children as criminals, delinquent and dangerous. These makes them vulnerable to police swoops on criminals. The second effect is social networks dangers. These are dangers inherent in the survival mechanisms they have. Girls who seek protection from men become sexually abused in exchange. Thus, the social networks that help street children so that they are able to develop survive and sustain their lives in the absence of a parent figure also inhabits dangers for them. As a result of the search for protection some become preys – being lured into robbery, prostitution, drug abuse, and other vices. A third set of dangers is health dangers. The street children are exposed to all kinds of hazardous health conditions. They inhale fumes from cars, burning of all kinds of things and ordure from sewerage etc. Having sex with multiple partners for protection also exposes them to all kinds of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS. A fourth set of dangers psychological breakdown where the street child suffers double jeopardy. As the comments suggest, the street child who seeks to find solace in the streets come to realise that *‘anything can happen to you when you live in the street’*. They experience all kinds of situations because they are in the mercy of the weather when it rains, when the storms come and when the thieves strike.

Another comment makes these points further

*Mama [referring to me the researcher as a mother] God is the one every child says thank you to.... Hmm ... if not God, what will happen to that child? We know he will keep us and defend us. We know we may not be like this for ever. ... hmmm... you said you have children, imagine that one of them is me who was nine years old when I came here. What will the child be doing? Begging for food? Washing cars? Carrying load for people? Doing what? ... Okay put that aside, where will he sleep? When it rains, particularly when the storms come, and the winds are carrying everything where, will he go? When something happens to him on arrival in the streets, who will attend to him? He doesn't know anyone here. Please, I don't even want to think about what happens to people here in the streets. Who will take you to hospital if you are sick? Who should take you? People in Ghana, have no idea what we go through. If you are not strong, you just join the criminals. You just join them and do all the bad things. If you die, you die ... because sometimes it is as if it is better to be in prison than to be here. What we go through, if you are not strong, there is no way you can be here. The problem is where do you go to from here? Where?*

The comments show street children have a high degree of hope of a better future, believe in God and play by rules so that they will be able to succeed (Orme & Seipel, 2007). However, putting me on the spot and using the analogy of my child brought home to me the nature of effects that streetism could have on a child. It highlights the level of vulnerability that streetism exposes children to. It changed my view of the street child. I became more aware of the dangers they dread on a daily basis. I noticed that being on the street is a difficult life. The street destroys childhood. It turns children to mothers and fathers. It makes them behave like adults who must care for their lives and find their own sources of livelihood. Life in the streets breaks down the will of a child, making them make many decisions. They are not just children in the streets, but some are homeless people living like vagabonds in need of social protection.

In further interviews with children concerning their friendship pattern the following comments were recorded:

*We have nobody here so people are very friendly. It's like we have common problems. We all have friends. You must get friends quickly. It's the first thing you must do when you get here. There are serious problems here. You can fall sick. You can get knocked down by a car. You can be stolen. Whatever happens, you need a friend. I experienced various problems such as food shortage when I don't have money. You need a place to keep your things. That's why you need friends. Its friendships that keep us safe in the streets. You know the society doesn't care about us. They think we are criminals.*

Another child also stated that:

*Some of us stick to friends with good character in order not for us to copy any bad behavior that can lead us into troubles. The pressure to do bad things is great. You need friends who think like you. Sometimes when you clean cars for people, they give you their number and say come and see me. Some girls when they sell people give them number and say call me. ... When you go, sometimes you see they want to make you do bad things for plenty money. We usually go with friends. Sometimes they get angry when you go with friends. ... But we know what we are doing when we go with friends. If you ask me to come to your house, I will come with my friends because ... they are our family. They are our brothers and sisters. They are our mothers, our uncles, nieces and fathers. We love them and they care about us. .... You see when you asked to talk to me, I said you should talk to my friends, yes; that's what we do.*

The comments bespeak strong bonds of friendship among the street children. Peer networking is one of the immediate effects of streetism. The peer groups and networks are so strong. They are either for good or for bad. What I noticed is a game of lottery in the street. Where the street child encounters good company upon arrival in the streets, he/she is introduced into good networks. Where the child encounters bad company in the streets, the child is more vulnerable to become absorbed into criminal activities. What is pertinent, however, is that once they arrive in the streets they are introduced to social networks through which each street child is able to

develop survival mechanism that sustain their lives in the absence of a parent figure. An important connection exist between these comments and the findings from Orme and Seipel (2007) that while street children are known of their bad behaviour, some decide not to engage in crime and anti-social behaviour because they are encouraged by other street children to endure challenges.

When three participants were interviewed about drug use the following comments were raised.

*I don't smoke but many people do. Many people drink alcohol. They take cigarette and some take all kinds of things... but all that is because of the suffering. My friends don't do it, but I think the drugs help us to endure the harshness on the street. ... Some people say that taking marijuana and tobacco help them to cope with cold, hunger and fear. One guy said he started taking alcohol when he met some people from his village and remembered his problem. He drunk alcohol to forget about the pain..... It is difficult.*

*Hmmm. It is not an easy thing. Some of us do take neither cigarette nor marijuana yet we are able to work with our physical strength. We are able to work effective and efficiently without drugs. We didn't take drugs because they are harmful to our health both in the short term or long term.*

*In actual sense taking cigarettes and marijuana leads to mental health and other health related problems such as heart problems, heart diseases, lung cancer, asthma, brain damage to mention just a few ... We have never tasted alcohol before because they are harmful to our health. Taking alcohol for a long time can shorten our life on earth.*

The above comments imply that drug use is common among street children posing seriously threats to both their health and their chance for reintegration into the society. However, the comments equally highlights that some do not. Street children take drugs for various reasons, mainly to endure the harsh conditions of street life. What is

important to note is the drug awareness among those who do not take drugs because of its health hazards. Majority claimed that they can work effectively without drugs. Those who do not take drugs were aware of the dangerous implications including health risk involved in taking drugs.

There are several points that can be argued. One is that street children encounter lots of health-related problems and physical abuses. Some of the children interviewed said that they were subjected to all kinds of abuses such as rape, torture, starving and harmful peer influence. Also, some grow up to become social deviants. Darko (2013) argued major effects of streetism are the exposure of children to a lot health and other hazards. Children, who are engaged as wage earners, work in deplorable conditions that expose them to mosquitoes etc. Apart from these, those who are engaged as driver's mates stand the risk of being run-over or knocked down by moving vehicles. The findings also indicate that peer influence through networks and partly poverty are some of the motivating factors for street children in the Accra Metropolis. Once they get on the street through friends, street children are able to develop survival mechanism that sustains their lives in the absence of their parents.

The Interviews gathered confirmed the some street smoked as a result of the nature of the environment in which they find themselves.

*These children are not bad. ... They are fine children who have come here... However, they are vulnerable because they can easily be recruited to join gangs who introduce them to social vices such as armed robbery, drug abuse; prostitution among others can be traced to children who started on the street.*

*Some children can definitely join gangs. I have spoken to some who told me how their friends have joined gangs who introduce them to social vices such as armed robbery, drug abuse; prostitution among*



*others can be traced to children who started on the street. ... The point is those ones are no longer here in the streets. They live in the ghettos in the slums.*

The participants also agreed that they take some form of drugs in the form of cigarette or marijuana. The drugs help them to endure the harshness on the streets. Neubeck and Neubeck (1997) explained that taking cigarettes and marijuana leads to mental health and other health related problems. Other comments raised by the participants indicate that some of the street children do not take drugs because they deem them as harmful to their health. The study also found out that alcohol intake by the participants was very low.

Overall, it seems that encounters with the general public, law enforcement officials and situations that street children endure in the streets may make them feel nervous, scared, angry or confused (Kids Report, 2012; Kiros, 2016). Street children, suffer multiple, repeated, violation of their right, child in the street situation are high risk of suffering violence particularly torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (Ado, 2013). An important effect is the labelling of street children as criminals, thieves, rebels, gangsters and prostitutes by society (Hayes, 2008). Difficulties in the street forces some street children to develop bad behaviour such as aggressive behaviour, theft, drug abuse and inadequate socialization (Vogel, 2001). It can be argued that health problems are major problems and other hazards are major problems to street children. It can be argued that the children work in uncondusive environment and they are vulnerable to defilement, sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS, syphilis and gonorrhoea as they suffer sexual abuse. Street children who sell on the street stand the risk of being run over by moving vehicle. Teenage girls are

often hired and raped by irresponsible men on the streets. Those who become pregnant in the process and are unable to cater for the needs of their children and ends up reproducing the phenomenon of street problem.

While it appears that the participants in this research do not do drugs, it seems that drug use is prevalent among street children. Although Olga et al. (2007), Kiros (2016) and Van Blerk (2012) identified this problem, the argument highlighted by this research is that street children take drugs to numb their feelings of coldness and hunger are known to survive through drug abuse and drug trafficking. Many who do not do drugs were aware of the debilitating effects of drug use. Of importance to them is that drug use has the potential of shortening their life (Mashicolo, 2016; Ali & Muynck, 2005). However, the literature highlights several health problems such as heart pains, headaches, chest pains, back pains, abdominal colic, renal colic, blood in urine related to drug use among street children. Reflections on their views indicate that street children are in danger of getting malaria as a result of their exposure to mosquitoes by the places where they sleep. Street children suffer many things and mostly live as homeless people, sleeping in front of stores and abandoned motor vehicles. This requires understanding what help is available to street children and the kind of support or protection they may need.

#### **4.5 How Street Children are Supported and Protected**

This section looks at the data concerning how the street children were supported by their parents. Form the interviews, the child protection agencies have concerns about the protection mechanisms and child protection issues facing street children. The main

concerns expressed centred around the fact that the mechanisms and policies exist to protect children. A typical comment was

*We have all the policies to protect children ... Ghana has plenty laws and child protection mechanisms. We are not in need of more these things [showing me a pile of national policy documents]. We have plenty of these mechanism on paper. What we don't do is the effort to implement these protocols, laws, rules and the support that the child protection mechanisms need to deliver. ... Why do we have children on the streets when we have a Ministry for Gender and Social Protection? Why can't we take care of these children who find their way to the streets? What has happened to our Children's Act? .... What happened to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child? What happened to the Department of Children? What happened to the Department of Social Welfare? For me, this is a national failure. We have the Domestic Violence Act, and we have the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit. So, we have the mechanisms, we don't deliver on them.*

Several issues emerge from the comment. From the comments it seems that mechanisms for child protection are not in short supply. There exist many mechanisms – whether structural, systems or processes. However, there seems to be a general lack of attention to implementation, enforcement or operational utilization of the mechanisms. Laws aplenty exist – including the Domestic Violence Act, the Children's Act and the provisions in the 1992 Constitution about child welfare. In terms of institutions, it seems there are several institutions including, the Department of Social Welfare, the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit of the Ghana Police Service, and the Ministry of Gender and Social Protection. Other comments were similar,

*We have the protection mechanisms. We don't use them. .. In my estimation we have everything - from Ministry for Gender and Social Protection to Department of Social Welfare. We have DOVVSU. We have everything. ... Laws we have Children's Act, Education Act, The 1992 Constitution etc. We have every protection mechanism that should guarantee that children are not on the streets. ... I think you*

*know that we have these mechanisms. The challenge is how we deploy them; how we use them to the benefits of these children. It is about how we as a society make these things work. I think we are disappointing children. We underfund these institutions and the Ministry is focusing on the Aged.*

*We have failed to support children. We are not supporting them. It's a national disgrace. It's a national disaster. It's a national failure. These children in the streets tell us who we are, I mean they are a testimony of the value we place on children and how serious we are about all our national and international commitments we made to children. You are doing research into understanding their issues. What is the state doing? Why is the state not intervening? We have free compulsory education policy. Why are we not enforcing it? Is that not meant to protect all children? I am sure we should not be talking about whether mechanisms exist and what they are. They are plenty. I can't list them. There are state level mechanism, Corporate level mechanisms and NGO and Civil Society level mechanisms. We have legal, institutional and social mechanisms. I am not interested in listing them. I am interested in discussing why they have failed to protect children.*

*We have protection mechanisms available. ... I can argue we have more than necessary. We have legal mechanisms such as the Children's Act, and you are aware Ghana is a signatory to all international instruments protecting children. You can talk about the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, you can talk about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and we can talk about many local documents including the [1992] Constitution itself. ... Hmmmm ... We have institutions for the protection of Children. Since 2001, we introduced a Ministry that oversees issues related to children and social protection. We have all the legal regimes, systems, and institutions necessary to protect children. ... Let's face it. The problem is that children will accuse us as hypocrites if they knew that all these protection mechanisms are there while they are suffering. There are thousands of NGOs that claim they are working for the protection of children. Sometimes I just wonder what we are doing for children. Look at us here [referring to their organization] we do not know what we should do for these children. That's a function of two things – lack of resources and lack of national commitment to*

*fulfil an agenda for our children. We don't value them, we don't have them as our priorities. If you consider how Ghanaians pressure women to give birth, it looks as if we just want to give birth and not how to invest in their safety, wellbeing and development.*

What can be argued is that the support mechanisms have not been sufficiently utilized to protect children on the street. Another argument that can be put forward is that there is not sufficient social scrutiny of how the institutions designed to protect children are deployed for the protection of the children in the streets. A third strand of argument that may be advanced is that the institutions do not seem to have developed capacity or knowledge in the sense of how they could protect the vulnerable children on the streets. Another aspect of the argument could be that the protection mechanisms may have been activated in such ways that the street children get to exist outside of the scope of work that these institutions do in practice.

Also, it can be argued that these mechanisms seem to have turned away from protecting the children in the street to protecting the regular children in homes and in institutions such as schools, orphanages etc. It seems overall that there is a certain admission that the public disdain, objectivization or characterization of street children as delinquents have affected how the protection mechanisms are deployed to protect or to protect them. One point that needs reflection is the proposition that there seems to be a national failure to protect children and that streetism epitomizes how children are taken care of and the exhibits the extent to which national child protection mechanisms have been effective.

These propositions are grounded within the literature explored. First, they highlight the ideas of Hagon (2003) that street children were denied their basic rights to life, health, shelter, education and to food. The argument will be that the children are not

be supported to realise the rights of the child as enshrined within international and national human rights and legal instruments. It should be noted that the provisions in human rights and legal instruments place responsibilities on the state to take appropriate steps to protect children from all forms of physical, mental and sexual abuse through the establishment of investigation.

Another, argument is that the failure of society to protect children does not mean mechanisms do not exist. The issue that coincides with Mashicolo's (2016) argument is that there are actions that should be taken in order to deal with streetism which institutions, the state and NGOs have failed to do. Thus, the reasons for streetism are not simply poverty and family dysfunction, or as Dybics (2005:765) suggests, that street children are delinquents and that they adopted their life styles due to the appeal of freedom and adventure that the streets offered.

Also, it seems as West (2003), suggests, multiple strategies – prevention of streetism, making rules about the street, the protection of children in the street through institutions and reintegration - are needed to assist in dealing with the issue of streetism. Whereas the root of addressing the “push” and “pull” factors of streetism is prevention (Dybics, 2005), it needs to be understood as the primary intervention. This measure will require dealing with extreme poverty using community-based programmes that increases people's life chances. As De Moura (2007) suggests It will require that government plays a crucial role in eradicating poverty through skills development and employment creation (Ward & Seager, 2010). In terms of children, it seems that government can assist by providing housing for children, offering them skills training, giving them grants, providing primary healthcare and enforcing free compulsory basic and secondary education where present street children can return to

school (Dybics, 2005:766). Also, as a preventive measure, children who are at “risk” of migrating to streets due to poverty and other factors should be identified, removed from dangerous family circumstances and placed in other forms of care such as foster care or adoption families. One participant noted this in stating that,

*If we are serious about dealing with streetism, the first thing is to support ensure that children are taken care of at the point of need. We have to activate our poverty alleviation and community child care initiatives. We need to ensure that we enforce the constitutional provision of free compulsory universal basic education and connect that with the free senior high school education that is being pursued recently. This will ensure children stay in school and stay away from the street.*

As may be observed, the second effort is needed to deal with the situation of children that are already in the streets. As Dybics (2005) notes, this aspect of dealing with streetism is a secondary intervention that should focus on dealing with developing children who are already in the streets. One participant made the point so clearly in noting that

*The children in the streets need help. They need shelters. They need to be saved to children homes and given a proper life. ... They need to develop their skills. They need to be supported through psychological and post-traumatic stress disorder training.... The children we see in the streets have potentials. ... They need to be supported to do dignified jobs. They need life skills education and training. They need to be given a life. They need to be brought up in ways that can guarantee the state is interested in their wellbeing as full members of the society.*

The comments suggest a need to ensure that street children are able to secure their life out of the streets. The central issues are the need to enable them secure sustainable livelihoods by helping them gain access to drop-in-centres, shelters, children’s homes, as well as street education (Ward & Seager, 2010; West, 2003). Education can be used to intervene in ways that help street children to develop their self-esteem out of

the problems of the street (Ouma, 2004; Vogel, 2001). It can be argued that saving them into shelters and drop-in centres will need to be grounded in ways that enable street children to receive formal and informal education, rest, bath, have food, social recreation, counselling and a place of safety (Dybics, 2005). In that way they could build up psychologically, experience love develop resilience as they work collaboratively with professionals and peers to build a new life. One street child hinted of this in noting that

*Anyone who wants to help us needs to know we are children who have seen many things. We have suffered many things. ... You see you need to know that we love each other. If you are taking me alone somewhere, I will return to my friends in the street because I will miss them. I need to be with them. I love them. They love me. You need to help us together. But we need someone who can help us see a different life. We need to copy new life. Our life now is like hopeless, we need a different. You need people to help us think differently, properly. It is not an easy life we have lived. It will take a lot to change it. You can see for yourself. ... it's not easy.*

The same point was made by one of the professionals from the child protection institutions involved in the study. According to him.

*The girls and boys in the streets have seen much. They experienced much. .... Look those little one have developed sensitivities and survival skills that require years and professional help to deal with. In doing so, you need to make them work in teams to address their problems. Isolating and working on them one by one will not work. They have bonds, ties and love that will force them back into the streets if they do not get professional help and the friendships they have developed in the skills.*

As noted by Vogel (2001), the comments suggest that the street children requires skills such as orientation skills, perception skills, emotional skills, communication skills, creative thinking skills and critical thinking skills to assist them cope, and as well move away from street life challenges. The proposition I will put forward is that



assisting street children to acquire those skills will fundamentally change their lives and prepare them to be able to deal with the realities of new everyday challenges without engaging themselves in dangerous activities such as drugs and prostitution.

At a third level, there should be fundamental recognition that the children in the streets have needs to be met. These needs range from physical to emotional as well as livelihood needs. Their sense of belongingness, their need for a healthy and loving life is spoken through various comments.

*As I am here in the streets, I live on my own. I am a master of my own life. Any help to me must recognize that. I need complete rehabilitation. I need a completely new life. I need to learn how to take orders or how to wake up and take instructions from someone. I need to understand how people live like a family in a place call home or house. I need to understand family love and fun with children. Itrs a whole new development I must learn.*

The comment fundamentally explains the basic needs for the street child, such as the need for belonging, the need for affection, the need for freedom, as well as the need for fun (Vogel, 2001). There is need to understand that the children are not homogenous. The one who returns home noted the following

*There is only one way to help some of us. You help our family. Anyone who wants to help me must help my family. I am not in the street because of me. I am here because of my family, my mother, my siblings. If you come to pick me up, you are not doing anything at all. You are even hurting my family, because I will not be there to help them anymore. The problem is not me and my suffering. Its more than that.*

Thus, a fundamental dimension in this third stage of protection from the street is that the are understood within the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, (West, 2003). Counselling and skills alone will not solve the problems. The solution needs to be grounded in a broader understanding of the needs of the various categories

of children in the street. Protection initiatives need to be targeted because while some children are in need of family, others have been driving there by family needs. In other words, some have families they love and care about while others do not have family. Thus, protection centres should focus on the creation of a warm and developmental environment for those who have undergone traumatic experiences while integrating others through initiatives that allows them to develop their families and social support systems that they already have. Doing that requires broader thinking and understanding of the specific situations of the various children on the streets of Accra.

Whatever the initiative that is adopted, there were various comments that fit well into how reintegration into broader society needs to be planned and achieved. Two typical comments bespeak that point. A street child noted that

*We are children who have seen much unlike other children. We have behaved like adults and masters of our own lives. We did what we like. We have seen money and always worked for money. We lived like vagabonds. We do not know care and society. Sometimes you think society doesn't exist, nobody cares about you. ... It seems that we to be re-organised. We have to be born again to fit into normal life. Our lives are gone. We live like some animals sometimes. We have terrible lives. If you want us to live normal lives like other children in society, there is much you have to do. Our taste is different. Our attitude is different. We have developed some toughness which is both good and bad. We know how to survive. We don't fear. We are survivors. We have seen and overcame dangerous moments. Some have been raped, some have been beaten and some have experiences they don't want to remember. Our lives have become different. We are not part of normal Ghanaian society anymore.*

The participant from among the protection agencies put the same point differently by noting that

*Protecting these children require much more than just working on their lives in simple ways. Their lives have deteriorated because they live in the margins of society. They have difficult childhoods... Some know no love. They don't know what care is. Some know all that but have been broken in the streets by different kinds of situations... Living in the margins of society means that reintegration is required in ways that must be sensitive to many things. They have lived away from culture, from regular family life, from regular societal norms and practices... They have defined their lives in the context of the streets and not society's values, principles and objectives. Some do not even care about laws and rules for years. They don't know what is happening on the TV's, radio or anything. They have their own world. To reintegrate them is a whole process. So, reintegration is a central issue in dealing with streetism.*

The comments identify with the views of West (200) who identified reintegration as the last stage and suggests that before reintegration is done, it is important to first find out why children left their homes. However, reintegration should consider that the ways that provided that children's migration to the streets is not due to abuse, poverty or war in their home setting. The reintegration process should be done through personal relationships at home, in life in the neighbourhood and at school. Prior to the reintegration process, it is important that children are profiled on individual cases, including visiting homes where possible to ascertain the facts concerning the reasons why they left and to identify if there are any issues in the family that need to be resolved (West, 2003).

The resilience children have developed in the streets should be considered. As research shows, resilience building is important social protection mechanisms which should be understood in terms of how street children developed their lives within the context of the streets (Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2007; Henley, 2010). This should include analysis of risks and adversities they faced in the streets overtime and the protective resources that have secured their lives in the

streets. This will help develop the appropriate protective resources that typically contribute to positive outcomes. The understanding should be developed that since protective resources are context-specific, no single protective resource can be considered to be generally protective (Brooks, 2006; Theron & Malindi, 2010; Henley, 2010). The protective process and mechanisms must be adapted to the various categories of street children in terms of how they enable and build on the resilience developed by individuals and groups and their exposure to risk and adversity (Bogar & Hulse-Killacky, 2006). Within that thinking, it is my argument that resilience resources would include helping them to develop interpersonal skills that enables them to transfer love for their colleagues in streets into love for humanity. It will include rebuilding verbal skills, capacity for emotional intimacy, independent-mindedness or assertive behaviours they deployed to survive in the streets into social skills. They need to redirect their pains in the streets into enthusiastic outlook on life or optimism, competence, self-worth, and supportive contexts (Bogar & Hulse-Killacky, 2006; Malindi, 2009).

Therefore, in dealing with streetism, the starting point should be rooted in developing protective factors contributing to resilience such as intellectual ability, self-esteem, self-efficacy, effective parenting attachment to caring and supportive adults, and environmental opportunities (Brooks, 2006). Despite that some children might not have families to return to, protective factors developed to take care of street children should be both on individual and ecological resources such as familial, extra-familial and cultural resources (Malindi, 2009). For those who return home, the protective system should be built on the resilience they have developed towards maintaining a type of family that provides love, warmth and guidance as likely to produce successful individuals (Malindi, 2009; Henley, 2010). For those who do not return

home or have no families to return to, it should be noted that an unrelated person can also play a significant role in providing a child with warmth and healthy living that contribute to helping him/her to be able to cope with adversities (Henley, 2010). These unrelated people can be teachers, caregivers and all people who are close to or working with the child. For those who main return to schools or formal institutions of learning, schools and communities can play a primary role that fosters healthy, physical, social, emotional and cognitive development (Bernard, 2004; Mampane & Bouwer, 2006). The presence of a healthy attached peer relationship also enables one to gain trust, support, and encouragement (Henley, 2010:297). In this relationship, a child also gains the ability to negotiate and be provided with realistic feedback. Thus, it should be understood that protective factors developed to take care of street children should be both on individual and ecological resources (Malindi, 2009).

In sum, it can be argued that mechanisms that are available for child protection are directed away from them because society perceives them as delinquents and criminals. As such, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection and other protection agencies offered little support to children in the streets. It seems safe to conclude that children on the street need great support from individuals, governments and other social bodies. One proposal is to help them to acquire the needed skills which will enable them to become responsible in the society. Aside from that, there was need to develop policies to protect children and family welfare policies that ensure poverty reduction strategies are in place. Another proposal is to encourage family planning among families to reduce large family sizes that occasion parental neglect. Social intervention programmes should be encouraged to help the poor and needy.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the key findings from the research; the conclusions based on the findings and the major recommendations. Also, the limitations of the research and the suggestions for future research are presented. The chapter is organized in four main sections. The first session, presents the summary of the major findings from the research. The second presents the major conclusions drawn from the research process while the third presents the limitations that produce the results. The fourth section presents the major recommendations while the fifth is focused on the suggestions for further research into streetism in Accra and elsewhere.

#### 5.1 Summary of Research Findings

This research set out to achieve a number of objectives. As indicated in chapter One, the main objectives were to

1. Explore why the reasons behind the intractability of streetism in Accra.
2. Analyze what children do on the street in Accra.
3. Examine the effect of children living on the street in Accra.
4. Examine the social protection mechanisms for children living on the street in Accra?

Based on the objectives, four main questions were developed to guide the research.

The questions explored were

1. What are the reasons behind the intractability of streetism in Accra?
2. What do children do on the street in Accra?
3. How does streetism affect the lives of children living on the street in Accra?

4. What are the social protection mechanisms for children living on the street in Accra?

Following the analysis in Chapter Four, this section draws the main findings together. The summary is presented based on the four main questions.

#### **What are the reasons behind the intractability of streetism in Accra?**

The findings indicated that children find themselves on the street because of harsh and perplexing social, and economic reasons. The harsh realities of street life - risk of violence in the streets and the life-threatening experiences there - means that children being in the streets should be understood in the context of life's adversities, injustice and vulnerabilities that children have to endure in making that final decision to be in the streets. From the discussions in this research, street children are children who find solace in the streets because life has become very difficult and unsustainable for them in the places where they originated. The children on the street are mainly from homes where they faced several difficulties. They are children of parents who have difficulty in providing for themselves. Other reasons include household poverty, divorce, large family sizes and loss of parents. The street children face difficulties with basic needs including food, health care services, toilets and bath facilities, and adequate shelter. They also suffer from absence of parental protection and security due to the missing connection with their families. In addition, there is a lack of any kind of moral and emotional support.

#### **What do children do on the street in Accra?**

The children in the street do several things to survive the dangerous, harsh and poor living conditions they encounter. They are resilient children who struggle to make ends meet by hawking, pottering and car washing. Others worked as guards for the

cars and security for shops where they slept at night. Some worked as driver mates, chop bar assistants or as shoe shine boys. Some worked as food vendors at vantage points across the city while other push trucks. Also, some assist to either load or to offload goods from cargo trucks and lorry parks. Those involved in hawking engaged in different kinds of things such as selling ice water, dog chains and plantain chips. From the study, children in the streets are not to be classified as criminals.

### **How does streetism affect the lives of children living on the street in Accra?**

The discussions show that destroys childhood. In so doing, it destroys children by giving them unattractive childhood experiences, forcing them to be responsible for their own lives. They become prey and vulnerable to many harsh social conditions in the streets. As such, they depended on peer groups to provide them with security and protection. Some girls who offer sex in exchange for security and shelter in ways that perpetrate streetism in the sense that it exposes them to unsafe sexual practices that gets them pregnant. Pregnancy leads street girls to give birth to children in the streets. Aside from this, unsafe sexual practices expose girls to sexually transmitted diseases, prostitution (having multiple sexual partners). Regarding their health conditions, street children are subject to sexually transmitted diseases like HIV due to unprotected sexual behaviours among them and also because of casual sexual relationships.

Also, children who find solace on the street often join gangs who often introduce them to social vices such as armed robbery, drug abuse, prostitution and others can be traced by children who started on the street. As such some street children were often victims of police swoops that arrested people in the streets at odd times.

Street children mostly live as homeless people. They sleep in front of stores and abandoned motor vehicles. They sleep on discarded cardboard in front of shops. Some



took of to help them to endure the harshness on the street; to cope with cold, hunger and fear. However, many were aware of the harmful effects of drug use and abstained.

### **What are the social protection mechanisms for children living in the street in Accra?**

There were several dysfunctional support mechanisms available for children in the streets. These mechanisms consisted in laws, policy regulations and child protection institutions. These institutions are underfunded in ways that affected their capacity to support children. Also, they focused instead on regular children in schools and institutions as street children seemed to be generally positioned as delinquents and criminals. As such, the mechanisms offered little support to children in the streets.

### **5.2 Conclusions**

Unlike traditional studies where street children are viewed as delinquents, the discussions showed that street children are very resilient individuals who survive the harsh realities of street life. The risk of violence in the streets; and the life-threatening experiences there means that children being in the streets should be understood in the context of life's adversities, injustice and vulnerabilities that children have to endure in making that final decision to be in the streets. They come to the street because of perplexing familial and micro as well as macro level social and economic issues such as loss of parents, family poverty and gaps in child protection. They are children who find solace on the streets because life has become very difficult and unsustainable for them in the places where they originated. While some occasionally join gangs or engage in activities that are untoward, the majority remain chaste in the hope of a better future this study argues that street children are not to be associated with social vices. The work of children in the streets includes pottering, hawking, chop bar

assistants, driver mates or security for shop owners and other vulnerable people. They suffer several things including health problems, lack of shelter and exposure to all kinds of vulnerable situations. Instead of being considered as criminals, this study argues that street children are children in crises because child protection mechanisms failed to identify and rescue them. Even in their present situations, protection mechanisms are not targeted at street children. Instead, the protection mechanisms are directed to help regular children in schools and communities such that street children remain on the margins. In terms of effects, streetism affects children in several ways: 1) it denies the children their childhood and forces them to be responsible for their own lives; 2) children become prey and vulnerable to many harsh social conditions in the streets; 3) the children depended on peer groups to provide them with security and protection; 4) some become victims of unsafe sexual practices and drug abuse; 5) they are denied basic needs such as security and shelter.

### **5.3 Limitations**

This study has methodological limitations. First, it was designed and implemented as a qualitative research. The data were collected from a small population - five street children and four child protection institutions in Accra. Thus, being qualitative, the results cannot be generalized to all street children. As such its findings are limited to the context, Accra, where the data collection happened. Also, the findings are fundamentally limited to the views of those who participated in the research. Additionally, it collected data from a small number of respondents. Therefore, a wider study may be required to understand the issues more fully and develop national action plans to reduce the incidence of streetism in Accra.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

From the findings of the research the following are recommended:

1. Investment in Free Universal Compulsory Basic Education and Free Senior High Schooling should also include a space for ensuring that vulnerable children at risk of dropping out are identified and supported.
2. Existing children should be registered, categorised and enrolled in appropriate institutions where they can be developed, and their skills enhanced so that they can secure employment.
3. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection should ensure that child protection agencies are appropriately resourced to provide social safety nets for children in need.
4. There is need for child protection agencies to engage in community education that helps to identify children in need and intervene early.
5. Non-Governmental agencies and international development partners need to be encouraged to develop appropriate mechanisms that can offer shelter, safety and food to children in the streets.

#### **5.5 Suggestion for further Research on streetism.**

The research investigated the causes and effects of streetism in Accra. Further research is recommended to understand the issue in emerging towns and nationwide.

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## APPENDIX

### QUESTIONNAIRE

#### **Introduction**

This questionnaire is to collect data for my student research at the University of Education, Winneba. The data being collected is purely for academic analysis. You are not obliged to complete the questionnaire. However, I will be glad that you can share your experiences by completing the questionnaire. The information you give me will help to better understand some of the challenges facing the street children in Ghana. The information you give will be confidential and will only be used for my research purposes. I am not allowed to mention your name in my final report; and so, it will not be possible to link information back to you in any way.

#### **SECTION A: THE PROBLEM OF STREETISM (INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PARENTS)**

1. Age.....
2. Sex.....
3. Occupation.....
4. Are you married? Yes ( )      No ( )
  - b. if yes, are both of you staying together?.....
  - c. if no , where is the other partner staying?.....

5. How many children have you?.....

6. Are they all staying with you? Yes ( ) No ( )

b. How many are of school going age?.....

c. Why are some not in schools? (If applicable) .....

7. Do you think all children should go to school?.....

b. What are your reasons.....

8. How do you feel when you see children on the street?.....

9. What do you think are the reasons why some children become street children?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

10. How do you think children get on the street?

.....

11. How do you think children get affected when they live on the street?

.....

12. Which rights of children are affected by life on the street (and how)

.....

13. What social protection mechanism will recommend to protect children on the street

.....

.....



**SECTION B**

**THE PLOBLEM OF STREETISM**

**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR CHILDREN**

1. Do you have siblings? Yes ( ) No ( ) If yes how many are they? ( ) Girls ( )
2. What work do you do for a living? .....
3. Are you staying with your parents? Yes ( ) No ( )
3. Do your parents live together? Yes ( ) No ( )
4. Which of them look after you? A. mother b. father c. both c. none
6. How are you supported by your parents? .....
7. Where do sleep after work?
8. Do you have some friends? Yes ( ) No( )
9. Do you seek protection from your friends?  
If yes how do they protect you?
10. What are some of the problems that have forced you to leave home?
11. Do you take alcohol and why?
12. Do you smoke and why?

### **Information sheet for research participants**

I am student at the University who is finding out the challenges police face in investigating child trafficking cases in Ghana. I need you to talk to me about your experiences. The information you give me will help to better understand the needs of children in Ghana. The rules of my University do not allow me to tell any other person about what we will be discussing. The information you give will be confidential and will only be used for my research purposes. I am not allowed to not mention your name in my final report; and so, it will not be possible to link information back to you in any way. When I am away, you may contact me on 020 . All I want from you is that, please be truthful with your answers. Please, you are completely free to decline participation and to withdraw later if you choose to participate. I will need your verbal consent that you are willingly accepting to participate in the research. You are also free to ask me any questions you may have concerning my research and your participation.

#### **BIO DATA**

Age

Gender

Academic attainment-primary school, secondary, dropped out? If yes, at what stage?

#### **FAMILY**

6. What is your position in the family?
7. How many brothers/sisters do you have?
8. Who do you live with?
9. What is the occupation of your parents/guardian?
10. Where do you live? In the city, village or ....?

#### **OCCUPATION**

11. What do you do here? – vending or pushing wheel barrow? If vending – what wares do you sell?
12. Who are you selling them for? Self or for someone else?

13. How do you get your wares (stock)?
14. What do you understand by work – what does work mean to you?
15. Do you consider what you are doing as work, a job, or good pastime?
16. How did you get into this? - Personal choice and decision, introduced to it by friends and peers, parents, guardians or who? And why?
17. How long have you been doing this job?
18. Can you recall your first experiences in the park/market?
19. How often do you do this – daily, weekly, weekends only, term time, or holiday times?
20. What time do you start? When do you finish?
21. Who do you give your money to after sales- daily, weekly?
22. Do you account to anybody at the end of the day? Week?

## **EDUCATION**

23. Do you attend school at present? If so what class are you in?
24. At what time of the day do you go to school – morning or evening time?
25. Do you enjoy schooling? If yes, what do you enjoy most about school?
26. What do you not like about school?

## **RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS – peers in marketplaces and with other adults.**

27. How do you relate with the motor park operators and other adults in the market i.e. the police, revenue collectors, traffic wardens, agboro‘ people and motor park operators etc?
28. How do you relate to your vending peers and friends – other children and young people in the market? Who are your friends? Where are they from? What do they do?
29. Do you have any time for play and leisure within or outside this place?

30. Where do you retire to at the end of each day?
31. What other things at home (sweep and tidy house, wash clothes, cook food etc? What else do you do in the house where you live – in the morning and at the end of the day, when you get back to your home?

**GENERAL**

32. Do you have/belong to any association or organisation?
33. How did you become a member - Freely or compelled to join? What does the association do for you?
34. Are there any benefits from becoming a member? What are the benefits? Any disadvantages? Please name them.
35. What do you hope to become or do with yourself after this? - Get into trading, set up your own stall, further your education, learn another trade etc?
36. What changes would you like to see in your life and present circumstance?
37. What do you think can be done to help you achieve your life ambitions?
38. Who can help you achieve them - government, your parents/guardian, trade association to which you belong, town union etc? In what way can they be of help?
39. What are your general perceptions and opinions regarding what the children do?
40. Any recommendations/suggestions /comments etc.

Thank You

