

Exploring The Challenges and Coping Strategies of Street Children
The case of Woliso town
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Abstract

There are large numbers of children living or spending most of their days on the street. Several organizations have been trying to help these children, but their approaches are ineffective as a result, many children are increasingly joining the street life. Children living on the street face numerous problems. They are ignored, abused and their needs such as food, clothes, and good living environment are neglected by those who are supposed to look after them. Different studies conducted in different parts of Ethiopia confirmed that street children face numerous problems which include: psychological, health, social and economic problems. This study was conducted in Woliso town of Oromia Regional State. It was conducted using qualitative research method. The data of the study were collected from 27 participants who took part differently in In-depth interviews and FGD. Key informant interviews were also conducted to collect data from government officials who are knowledgeable on the situation of street children. Purposive sampling method was used for selecting participants of the study. The finding of the study indicated that participants joined street life because of the situations such as: family conflict, inducement, death of parents and search for opportunities. The participants of the study explained that they are encountering different problems in their street life. These include: social abuse, health problems, drug use, and sexual abuse, lack of access to food, clothes, and shelter. The study finding also indicated that street children use different coping strategies such as: flight, acceptance of abuse, engagement in remunerable labor activity, begging, scavenging and living in a group. The finding also indicated that lack of tangible projects in Woliso town aimed at street children impede the implementation of Ethiopian child policy. Therefore, this study can serve as baseline information to further conduct another intensive research on other challenges of the street children in Woliso town.

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of street children is rapidly becoming one of the global epicproportions whereby many countries have started to look at it as one of the factors that hinder development. UNICEF's annual State of World's

Children reports have for many years highlighted the extremely difficult circumstances in which children live and work on the streets. It also reported that children living and working on the street are present in all parts of the world (UNICEF, 2012).

The term “street children” was widely accepted during 1980s in Latin America and then spread overseas to Africa and other continents (Benitez, 2011). The term is utilized everywhere in the world but its use varies from one country to another. For instance terms like “out of place”, “homeless children”, “runaway”, are used in different countries to refer to street children. These terms have similar meanings, but it is due to difference in socioeconomic and cultural situation, and magnitude of the problems between countries identifying specific groups of street children (Abro, 2012).

Street children are among the poorest of the poor segments of society (Bhaskaran & Mehta, 2011). In the study conducted in Zambia (Harju, 2013), it was indicated that the problem of street children is not limited to financial aspect rather it manifests itself in form of susceptibility to ‘exploitation, crime, violence; negative perception by the society; lack of access to different services, substance abuse, feeling wasted and etc. It was also argued in the same study that these problems are far more severe among female street children compared to their male counterparts.

In Ethiopia, the phenomenon of street children has become a critical social problem in most cities and towns throughout the country. The problem is mainly caused by miserable poverty, rapid urbanization and family abuse. The level and magnitude of the problem have been increasing through time as a result of which street children become a major character of nearly every city and town of Ethiopia (Adugna, 2006). According to Mahderehiwot (2014), numerous factors such as break down of social network, drought and famine, armed conflict, rural-urban migration and rapid urbanization that is now going on in most parts of the country are the main factors that expose children to street life. She also stressed that despite many similarities shared by most urban centers of the country, streetism among children in Ethiopia and the problems they face vary from one urban center to another with Addis Ababa taking the lead followed by Adama in Oromia, Gonder in Amhara regional state and Awassa in Southern Nation and Nationalities regional

state. Children in Oromia regional state constitutes 46% of the total population, and according to research conducted in Adama (Girmay, 2007), out of this number, 11.6% are homeless which accounts for 26.75% of the total homeless children throughout the country.

Taking the above fact into consideration, it is obvious that children in Woliso town, as part of Oromia regional state are also among that number of homeless children. But because of lack of accurate statistics, their number cannot be determined. However, the Bureau of Labor and Social Affairs of South West Shewa Zone has estimated that around 2,000 to 2,700 children are living on the street in Woliso town alone apart from other Woredas of South West Shewa Zone. Therefore, it is logical to hypothesize that they are facing different life challenges.

1.1. Statement of the problem

The problem of street children is a worldwide phenomenon since these children exist in every part of the world. According to the report by FSCE, children leave their home for various reasons and start living on the street in most urban cities. The vast majorities of these children work and live in large, urban areas of developing countries. Some of the street children are part of entire families who live on the street (FSCE, 1998). According to Mekonnen (2011), streetism is becoming one of the major challenges of all urban areas of Ethiopia. The capital city Addis Ababa is among the cities that are highly affected by the problem of street children.

The magnitude of the problem of street children in Ethiopia was first captured by a survey on the street children in 1974. This study used a head counting technique and documented that there were 5,004 (4,955 or 99% male and 49 or 1% female) Street children living in Addis Ababa (SC UK, 2012). According to the recent head count by UNICEF in Addis Ababa, only 10,706 street children were accounted for and the highest numbers of street living children are found at *Cherka sefer*, behind *Bole Medhaniyalem* (547), *Alert* or *Zenebe Work* (338) and *Stadium* (637) (UNICEF, 2012). They live on the street with less access to food, clothe and shelter, high exposure to crime, health problems, physical and psychological abuse, and ignorance from general society. According to (UNDP, 2005) as cited in (Mekonen,

2011), high rate of street living children is an indication of under development of a particular country. Therefore, sustainable development goal of Ethiopia cannot be realized while ignoring the difficult situation that street children are going through. As a result there is a need for a greater attention to their situation through allocation of resources and programs to holistically address various problems they are facing.

Although different studies were conducted on the cause, problems, and coping strategies of street children in Ethiopia, almost all of them focused on the capital, Addis Ababa and few towns and cities of the country. While street children in Ethiopia do not make an homogeneous group, (Girmay, 2007) there is a need for research studies to be conducted at various localities to understand and grasp their situation on that particular environmental context.

1.2. Research questions

This study aim at answering the following questions:

- ⇒ What are the factors that expose children to live on the street in Woliso town?
- ⇒ What are the economic problems that street children in Woliso town face and how do they cope with them?
- ⇒ What are the social problems that street children in Woliso town face and how do they cope with them?
- ⇒ What are the health problems that street children in Woliso town face and how do they cope with them?

1.3. Objectives of the research study

The following are the objectives of this research study:

- To describe the factors that expose children to live on the street in Woliso town
- To describe economic problems that street children in Woliso town face and the way they cope with them
- To describe social problems that street children in Woliso town face and the way they cope with them

- To describe health problems that street children in Woliso town face and the way they cope with them

2. Methodology of the study

2.1. Study Designs

The research method that was employed during this study is cross sectional qualitative research approach. The justification for using this method is that the study was conducted in a single point in a time and was largely based on subjective explanation of the participants. As Nick (2010) assert it, qualitative research tends to be interpretive and seeks to understand a phenomenon in its context in greater depth.

2.2. Sources of Data

The sources of data for this research study were samples selected from street children in Woliso town, officer from South West Shewa Zone Bureau of Women and Children Affairs and police officer from South West Shewa Zone Police Station.

2.3. Sampling Technique

During the study, purposive sampling technique was used. This is because this sampling technique allows us to select samples of our study on purpose. In purposive sampling technique, we may have prior knowledge that indicates that a particular group is important to our study or we select those participants who we feel are ‘typical’ examples of the issue we wish to study (Allen & Earl, 2009). Purposive sampling technique, also called judgmental sampling is a deliberate selection of research informants because of the qualities the informant are presumed to possesses. Simply puts it, the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience they possess (Allen, 2009).

2.4. Sample Size

The sample size of this study was 27 participants in which 17 participated in an in-depth interview and 10 participated in focus group discussion. According to Creswell (2007), the sample size of qualitative research is largely determined by theoretical data saturation especially at a point during

data collection stage where new participants do not any longer bring in new data or additional insights to the research questions.

2.5. Participants' Inclusion Criteria

During sampling process, the participants were included based on the following criteria: street children who are below 21 years of age, street children who are above 9 years of age, street children who are able to understand their situation and have a capability to explain it.

Qualitative research is marked by intimate relationship between the researcher and the participants. This relationship is developed through verbal interaction between the two parties which to some extends are like co-researchers (Dawson, 2002). According to Robert (2011), generating qualitative data require first and foremost participants with capacity to explain and narrate their feeling about the topic being discussed.

2.6. Data Collection Tools

During this study, qualitative data collection tools were utilized. The main data collection tools that were used are: in-depth interviews, focus group discussion, key informant interview to collect data from key informants, and semi structured observation.

2.6.1. In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with 17 participants differently. The interviews were conducted in an appropriate environment where participants feel more comfortable to response to the interview questions. Each in-depth interview lasted for 30-40 minutes.

Structured in-depth interview is an effective tool to collect qualitative data. According to Robert (2011), in-depth interviews are used by the researchers who want to get and understand the internal feeling of the participant about the phenomenon being studied. Creswell (2007) added that in-depth interview questions for qualitative data tend to be open ended in order to allow the participants to response to the question on their own term and feeling.

2.6.2. Focus Group Discussion

Primary data collection was also achieved through FGD with street children. Selection of the participants of FGD was done deliberately by enlisting street children who are living and working on the street for more than one year and who are between age ranges of 12-14. Both categories of street children i.e. 'on' and 'of' the street were included. All of the participants of FGD were male street children. This was to allow them participate fully in the discussion without obstruction relating to gender difference. According to Creswell (2007), participants of the FGD participate actively in the discussion when they all feel a sense of common identity; this may relate to gender, age, sex, social status, or religion.

2.6.3. Key Informant Interview

Key informant interviews were used to gather qualitative data from other personnel who are more close to the situation of street children. This was done through interviewing two participants who were: one officer from South West Shewa Zone Bureau of Women and Children Affairs and one officer from South West Shewa Zone police station. The reason for limiting the number of participants for key informant interviews was because of time limit and the fact that they were able to provide the needed information.

2.6.4. Semi-Structures Observation

The other data collection tool that was used in this study to generate qualitative data was semi-structured observation. Observation is an important method for social work researchers and it helped to fill some drawbacks present in other methods (Alston, 2003). In semi-structured observation, the researchers observe behavior and events in an endeavor to explore the situation under investigation. There is to some extent a careful plan and organized categories of observation units.

During the study, observation was conducted in areas where street children spend most of their times. They are: Woliso main market, main road, Orthodox Church compound, tunnels where they sleep, and hotels and restaurants where they collect leftover foods. It was conducted both in the morning and evening of the data collection days.

2.7. Data Storage, Transcription and Retrieval

The data were collected and stored using tape recorder and notebooks. The data were latter translated from the original language, and transcribed, they were checked and analyzed for error, after that they were thematically presented.

3. Study Finding

The main objective of this research study was to explore factors that expose children to street life, describe social, economic and health problems facing street children and the coping strategies they use to cope with those problems. To live up to this objective, in-depth interviews, focus group discussion and semi-structured observation were conducted with selected participants. The total number of participants from whom the data were collected is 27 of whom 17 participated in in-depth interviews and 10 participated in FGD. Regarding gender variation, 25 participants were males and 2 were females who are currently living and experiencing challenges on street life in Woliso town. It was difficult to get more female participants because some female street children that were approached refuse to take part as participants in the study.

Although it was reported in many studies that among children living on the street in Ethiopia, 27.5% of them are females (FSCE, 2003 & Adugna, 2006), the information from South West Shewa Zone Bureau of Women and Children Affairs was that almost all of the street children living in Woliso town are males.

3.1. profile of the Participants

In total, 27 participants participated in the research study. Twenty five of them are males and 2 are females. Based on age cohort, 26 participants belong to adolescence stage (11-19) years of age and 1 participant belongs to middle childhood stage (5-10) years of age. All except one reported that they have dropped out of school at the time of the conduction of the study. Only 6 of them reported that they originate within Woliso town while the other 21 reported that they migrated from different Woredas and regions of Ethiopia. All the participants were from only two categories of street children, i.e. (1) children of the street and (2) children on the street.

i. Factors That Expose Children to Street Life

Available literatures on street children in Ethiopia from academic presentations, journals articles, books by researchers and situational analysis and survey reports, show a superfluity of factors that expose children to live on street (Berhanu, 1998; Adugna, 2006 & Abebe, 2008).

The participants of this study narrated that they joined street life because of different factors. Some reported that they end up on the street after search for employment opportunities. Ayalew, who participated in an in-depth interview, narrated that:

I was born in Wolaita Sodo. My elder brother told me that there are plenty of good jobs here in Woliso town. As a result, I quit school and came here, but I eventually found out that there are no jobs at all that is why I end up selling lottery cards on the street.

According UNICEF (2012), not every street child end up on the street because of frustration of pre-anticipated advantages of gaining employment opportunity. This was confirmed by some participants of this study, who described that negative factors such as death of parents, living under guidance of abusive parent or relative coupled with lack of basic necessities move them to the street life. A participant named Dagim illustrated his condition as follow:

Both of my parents are dead leaving me without somebody to look after my needs. I moved from village and came here to Woliso, and I joined the group of friends. We are now living together. I work as shoeshine boy on the street so that I support my education.

Melkissa another participant narrated his flight to street life as follow:

Because I separated from my parents, I live with my aunt, but one day she was very angry at me. She beats me and even hit me with a stone. I ran away and never wanted to go back to her. That is why I am living on the street now.

A participant of the FGD narrated that:

I previously lived at home here in Woliso with both of my parents and siblings. My father is deaf and as a result, the administration of the family was taken over by my elder brother. We do not like each other. He always fights with me, that is why I left home and live on the street with my other friends.

Some participants joined street life because they experienced abuses and maltreatments from their own biological parents rather than from caretakers and relatives as the case is with the above narrations.

According to Benitez (2011), children favor the life of hardship on the street more than living with abusive families. This was the case with the participant who narrated his expression as follow: My name is Getachew. I was born in a rural village near Ambo. I came to live on the street because of my mother. She is problematic person. She always quarrels and abuses me

Mulu, another study participant, reported that she stayed on the street for the last two years where she explained her reasons as follow: I quarreled with my father so I couldn't stay with him; my father beat me because I used to come home very late in the night and I ran away and joined the street life.

While the participants above reported that they left home and joined street life as a direct result of escaping abuse or unfavorable conditions, some reported that they left home because of commission of mistakes that their parents were not able to forgive them for. For example, Berhanu narrated that:

My parents are poor and we live in a rental house. One day I broke the window of the house we rent. The landlord ordered my parents to pay for it but they were not able to get such amount of money. As a result they became angry at me and I escaped from them and live on the street

As illustrated earlier, children join street life because of unforeseen negative consequences that may result from migration, the need for freedom from familial control, abuse by parents or Guidant and sometimes as flight for offence they have committed at home. Mulugeta (2000) added that children also go to the street willingly because of seduction by friends who are

already living on the street. This was the case for some participants of this study. For examples Feyissa narrated his story as following:

I have friends whom I always socialize with. We would go somewhere and spend sometimes there. Slowly I started to stop from attending school. My mother was very angry at me. She beats me with an iron rod and she told me not to continue with my friends but I could not stop associating with them. Finally I stopped going home and street becomes my living place.

ii. Social Problems That Street Children Face and Their Coping Strategies

The major social problems that street children face as described by the participants of this study are Sexual abuse, verbal abuse, discrimination, physical abuse, negligence and negative attitudes of the police and society in general against them.

Irmias, a participant of FGD described that:

The street life challenges are diverse and very difficult for us. Food sometimes is not the main problem for us because we can find 'Bule' (leftover food from hotels and restaurants). Before coming here I have never heard about sexual rape of male to male or homosexual intercourse. When I heard about it, I was shocked. Once I have also escaped from such incident with the help of my friends.

Achanafu, a participant of in-depth interview added that:

People look at us as dirty. They don't see us as human being. They throw dirty water and sometimes urinate on us when we lay down sleeping on the floor at night. Also when it rains in the night, it is always unbearable but even if we go to seek shelter in the shaded areas of hotels and some government institutions, the security guards and polices always chase us away.

Another participant narrated his experience as follow:

People verbally and physically abuse us especially when they see us roaming on the street. Sometimes they confiscate lottery cards from me by force and refuse to pay when they do not win anything from the cards. The owner of the lottery cards I am selling also abuses me. For instant he insult and force me to pay for cards which are grabbed from me by force but I have nothing to offer him. Police also abuse and ignore us sometimes because of our ethnic background. When there is a dispute between me and Oromo person, they deny and give my right to that person.

Kidane also added that:

Discrimination is the social challenge I am facing here in Woliso town. People especially the native discriminate us because we don't speak their language. They sometimes tells us "go move away from our hometown". They insult us in their language and they also assault us physically.

According to UNICEF (2012) female children living on the street are more vulnerable than their male counterparts due to gender-based violence and exploitation. They are highly exposed to rape and are forced to divert to commercial sex work when other survival options are limited. As a result of both sexual abuse and exploitation, street girls are exposed to various problems such as HIV/AIDS, STDs and unwanted pregnancy (WHO, 2000).

Meseret who was a participant of an in-depth interview explained the problems she faces as follow:

When I left home, firstly I went to work as a waitress in Woliso hotel. But I was fired after two months. I had no option but to go to the street. I thought on the street everything was easy but I found it very difficult and challenging. Especially because men mistreat female street girls so badly, they do many bad things. I was raped by 2 boys in different occasions. As a result, I passed through psychological trauma that lasted for a very long time. I also suffered from womb infection and I was also pregnant at that time but I committed abortion because that was the only option I had.

The analysis of the collected data showed that street children use different coping strategies to deal with life challenges they encounter in their daily life on the street. Some reported that they use escaping as the option to deal with social issues such as abuse while others use different strategies. Yet others reported that they use ignorance or acceptance of abuse as a coping strategy. One participant narrated that:

When street children live in a group or when they seem taught, no one dare to do any sexual assault or advance on them. That is why my strategy to protect myself from those predators is always to keep in a company of my village friends who we are now living together on the street. I never want to go alone.

Some like Alemu resort to use of psychoactive drugs to deal with social problem they are facing. He narrated that:

Sometimes when I am depressed or stressed too much because of anything in my life on the street, the only method I use to cope with it is cigarette. I smoke cigarette and it excite me so that I forget any psychological distress I may be experiencing before.

Key informant interview with the police officer provide a different narration on problems and challenges of street children. The narration of the interviewed officer is as follow:

Children on the street regardless of their age have a strong sense of unity and structure like those of criminal gangs. They are the one causing many social problems being faced here in Woliso town for example night robberies, vandalism and thefts.

iii. Economic Problems and Coping Strategies

Street children are among the poorest of the poor. UNICEF (2005) indicates that street children across the world face many economic challenges. These challenges include extreme poverty, lack of accessibility to education, food, clothes and shelter and lack of proper economic supports being provided by the public institutions.

The participants of this study reported different types of economic problems. These are lack of food, clothes and shelters. They reported that they get it

hard to access food and even if they really get food, it is always not enough and is very poor in term of its quality. Ayalew narrated his food situation as follow: Food is not enough always for us here. Sometimes if you get breakfast you are lucky enough. In times you may spend the whole day without any food at all.

Another participant Dagim narrated his story as follow:

When I firstly came to the street, I found out that it is difficult to get food to eat. But I thought and realize that I need to do something that will guarantee my meal. Then I asked my friends and they contributed some money. I opened this shoeshine center, and it gives us some money to pay for our food.

The participants reported that they use different coping mechanisms to deal with condition of accessing food. Some reported that they engage in remunerable labor to pay for their food while others depend on begging for leftover foods from hotels and restaurants. Yet others reported that they depend on food provided to them by kind people who felt compassionate about their condition. For example, Gadissa narrated that:

Work is where I get my meal from. I engage in all kinds of work especially on the market days. Whatever I earned from there I use it to buy food because it is not always enough, but whenever there is no any kind of work, I go to restaurants and beg for leftover.

Berhanu narrated that:

Every morning I go to restaurants and hotels to beg for “Bulle” (yesterday’s leftover food) but they don’t give it freely. They always tell me to clean their dirt in exchange for Bulle. Even if they give, it is not always. If I am lucky enough and got breakfast that is enough for the whole day.

The participants also reported that they get it hard to access clothes to wear and to cover themselves at nights. They described that they depend on compassionate people and also on clothes discarded in garbage centers to wear. Others also reported that they engage themselves in labor activities to get money to buy clothes for themselves. They also narrated that they use

different strategies to cope with lack of clothes. The strategies they use include scavenging from slum areas for discarded clothes, engaging in menial works, begging and sometimes they get help from compassionate religious organizations which help them with used clothes. For example, Achenafu narrated that: Getting clothes to wear is very challenging. Sometimes sympathetic people give us some clothes for example, a man who saw me on the road gave me this shirt I am wearing because the one I was wearing at the time has torn out.

Melkissa added that:

Before I was using the clothes given to me by my family, but as I live on the street now, I rely on people who walk by and feel sympathetic about my condition. Some of them give me and other buys me clothes. For example, the jacket I am wearing was given to me by one boy around church compound

Key informant interview with officer from South West Shoa Zone Bureau of Women and Children affairs reported that they are facing some challenges relating to effort to provide street children with clothes. The officer narrated that:

Last time we had a child integration project funded by USAID that work by linking street children to their respective family. After the child is assessed and his/her family is identified, he/she is provided with some clothes and other school materials and is linked to his family, but those children who were re-integrated went back to street except 2. They sell all the materials that were given to them that is why we don't have anything to provide now because we are thinking of using another more effective approach to help them.

Lack of proper shelter is another problem the participants reported to have been facing. They described how hard it is for them to get sleeping place. The participants reported that they use tunnels and main roads of the town as their sleeping place. This was confirmed by the observation that was conducted in the evenings throughout the days of data collection periods.

One participant of the FGD narrated that: I sleep with my other friends. We roam the town throughout the night looking for sleeping place and we spend the night wherever we find suitable but most of the time around the main market.

Another added that: I do not have constant sleeping place. Today when I sleep here and someone else or the police came and chase me and my friends out, then we move and search for another places mostly dishes on the road sides.

Abdu who was a participant of in-depth interview described his experience as follow:

I don't have a house to sleep. I always sleep with my friends inside holes and water canals by the road sides. For example, that one on the road adjacent to the telecommunication office is our sleeping place now. We have two mattresses we collected from garbage plus old sleeping clothes and we are using it now. We were three inside there but one of us was taken back home by his brother's friend.

During observation, it noted that most of the street children sleep during the night time only, but keep on roaming the town and market areas throughout the day. This could be because of their search for food and possibly because of the temperature that does not permit them to sleep on road side in the day time.

iv. Health Problems and Coping Strategies

Street children are exposed to different health conditions because of their living situation and inability to access proper medical care. According to WHO (2000), the most prominent cause of health problems of street children include drug abuse, poor sanitation and consumption of unsanitary food, sleeplessness and exaggeration of minor illness because of lack of proper medical care. Among the constant health complications that the participants have reported, malaria, headache, stomachache, typhoid, and typhus are the recurring one. They reported that it is hard for them to access proper medical care because of negative attitude against them by the health workers. For example Ayalew narrated that: *Our health situation here on the street is not*

good. Sometimes I feel ill for example because of malaria and other illnesses but it is even more difficult because I do not have proper medical care to get medicines.

He went further by elaborating that: Malaria, headache and stomachache are the main health conditions we have been facing. This is because of the poor living condition, nutrition and psychological state we are in.

He elaborated that his only coping strategy is to stay at home sleeping when sick because he has nowhere to seek medical care.

Gemechu who was also a participant of an in-depth interview narrated that:

In most of the times, the man I am selling his lottery cards on the street gives me medicines when I felt sick, but in a situation where he did not provide anything, the coping strategy I use is to go to private clinic and buy medicines using money I make from that business.

Another participant of FGD illustrated that: When I am sick, I do not go to any hospital. I just stay at home and sometimes when I have some money on my hand; I go and buy drugs from private clinic.

Some participants reported that they came up with different strategies to cope with health challenges they are facing. Among those strategies is cooperative work in which all of them look into health need of any member of their group by taking him to the hospital in case he does not feel well.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1. Conclusion

The study was conducted with the objective of assessing the problems and coping strategies of street children in Woliso town. This section provides the conclusion of the study which was drawn from analysis of the data gathered from the participants through in-depth interviews, FGD and observation.

During the study, it was noted that despite smaller number of street children reported by BWCA of South West Shewa Zone, the number of street children in Woliso town maybe higher. However, the exact estimate cannot be determined. As can be noted by sex imbalance of the participants, it was

also noted during study that majority of street children in Woliso town are males some of them migrated from Southern Nations and Nationalities People's Regional State and some from Woredas near Woliso town. Almost all of the participants reported that they attended formal education.

Interview analysis of the primary data collected revealed that the reasons behind the initiation of participants to street life are violence and abuse at home, death of one or both parents, lack of support in case of orphan hood, poverty (inability to satisfy basic needs) and pressure created upon families due to poverty, family breakdown and family pressure to engage in work, commission of mistake, search for jobs, peer pressure and expectation of positive life as a result of freedom from familial control. The finding of this study according to the participants is inconsistent with previous studies which alleged that children in Ethiopia are pushed to the street in most of the time by poverty at home (MoLSA 2004, FSCE 2003 and UNICEF 2012).

The participants of this study reported that they experience different kinds of social problems on the streets. These problems range from verbal abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, prostitutions, drug use, discrimination, prejudice and constant chase by the police. According to the female participants, these social problems are more sever to them than their male counterparts. They narrated that this is because of their vulnerability to rape and sexual exploitation. But some research participants who are male also explained that they are vulnerable to sexual assault and forced homosexuality especially by strong elder boys.

The participants during in-depth interviews and FGD reported that they find it difficult to get predictable source of food. They reported that one of the main continuing challenges in their daily street life is getting the food. Yet the participants reported that they use different strategies to get food. Among the strategies they reported to be using include: begging, collecting food from slum areas, begging for left over foods from hotels and restaurants, and engaging in remunerable labor activities to buy food. Participants also reported that they engage on petty street business such as selling lottery cards and shoe shining to serve as secure base for their access to food and other necessities. This is consistent with finding concluded from a study conducted with street children in Nekempte (Azmeraw, 2015).

The participants described different coping strategies they use to cope with social abuses they face on the street. But as it was noted from the analyzation of the interview data, these strategies vary from individual participant to another. The main strategy that most participants reported to be using is flight or acceptance of abuse. Some participants reported that they use ignorance and silence especially when they are verbally or physically abused while others reported that they keep on changing their living environments to escape abuses, yet some participants reported that they use living in a groups as a coping strategy to thwart away abuses such as sexual exploitations. The finding is consistent with different studies on the social problems facing street children in Ethiopia (Adugna, 2006, FSCE, 2003, Girmay, 2007 & Heinonen, 2000).

The participants also reported that they have no clothes. This is what was instantly observed during data collection time because majority of the participants of in-depth interviews and FGD that were approached wore dirty, smelling and tore out clothes and even some of the participants walk with bare foot. According to the participants, lack of clothes is more challenging for them especially during cold weather. They reported that the clothes they wore during the day are the same clothes they use during the night time. The participants also reported that they use different strategies to get clothes. Some of them reported that they collect clothes discarded in garbage areas where are others reported that they get clothes from compassionate individuals and religious organizations, yet some of the participants reported that they engage in menial labor to address their clothing needs.

The problem of housing and safe sleeping place remains challenge for the majority of the participants of this study. Some of them reported that they sleep in dishes, and tunnels along the main roads of Woliso town, while others reported that they have no constant sleeping place as a result, they keep on moving and searching for places to sleep. The participants narrated that they use different strategies to cope with the challenges relating to finding a safe place to sleep. Some of them reported that they sleep in rental dormitories in groups where as others reported that they developed friendship with some business owners and security guards of some public institutions in which they are permitted to sleep in verandas. The finding was

inconsistent with study conducted in Adam and Addis Ababa where it was concluded that street children constructs plastics and cartoon houses and use it as their sleeping places (Girmay, 2007 & Adugna, 2006).

According to the research participants, their health situation to some extent is relatively better. Most of them reported that they are physically health, but yet reported that they frequently encounter some diseases and infections. Among various constants health problems they reported are: malaria, stomachache, headache typhoid and typhus. During observation, it was also noted

that lack of clothes especially in a cold weather, constant sleeping in areas with poor sanitation and eating habit of the street children where they feed on leftover foods from hotels expose them to be contacted by the diseases they explained.

The research participants also reported that they are not able to access medical services from public hospitals when they become sick because of fear of being discriminated and not treatment well.

The participants of the study elaborated on different coping strategies they use to deal with health problems they are experiencing. Some of them reported that they go to private clinics when they felt sick whereas, others reported that they only stay in their trenches when they felt ill just waiting for their body to naturally fight the disease. Accordingly, the data presented by the participants of this study are to some extent consistent with the finding of Azmeraw (2015) about the health condition of street children in Nekemte town. He concluded that typhoid, stomachache, headache, gastric and skin diseases are the main health challenges of street children. But this research finding differs with Azmeraw (2015) in participants' access to public health services because 68.5% of his study participants reported that they get access to public health services.

4.2. Recommendations

To address the multifaceted problems of street children in Woliso town that were identified by this study, there is a need for greater effort to be exerted by the government and other private actors who are engaged in child welfare programs. The following recommendations are forwarded based on the finding of this study.

⇒ There is a need for conduction of more academic and related researches to determine the prevalence and other dimensions of problems that street children are facing in Woliso town which were not uncovered by this research study.

⇒ The administration of South West Shoa Zone needs to actively engage in the effort to get children out of street life. This can be achieved by allocating enough amounts of financial resources to design and implement effective projects aimed at helping street children get out of street life and trace and reunite them with their families.

⇒ The administration of SWSZ and the concerned bodies should open a rehabilitation center where street children should undergo rehabilitation before they are reunited with their families.

⇒ They should also facilitate access to education of the street children who are living with their families under poverty. This should be an effective way to help them get out of street life.

⇒ Bureau of Women and Children affairs should collaborate and advocate to the organizations that are operating in child welfare programs to create a collaborative effort and design programs that will help improve their situation which should include psychosocial education and rehabilitation.

⇒ Their intervention plan should include activities designed to help the families of those reunited street children gain access to credit service in order to attain economic independence to help them take over the responsibility for the education of their children after the termination of rehabilitation

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