

ASSESSMENT ON MAJOR CAUSES AND PSYCHOSOCIAL CHALLENGES OF  
CHILDREN ON THE STREETS: THE CASE OF CHILDREN ON THE STREETS IN  
MASERU, LESOTHO.

BY

MOELO MOKOLE

**ID 1326629**

ADVISOR: MOSISA KEJELA

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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled **ASSESSMENT ON MAJOR CAUSES AND PSYCHOSOCIAL CHALLENGES OF CHILDREN ON THE STREETS: THE CASE OF CHILDREN ON STREETS IN MASERU, LESOTHO** (write the title in block letters) submitted by me for the partial fulfilment of my MSW to Indira Ghandi National Open University, (IGNOU) ,New Delhi is my original work and has not been submitted earlier, either to IGNOU or to any other institution for the fulfilment of the requirement for any other program of study. I also declare that no chapter of this manuscript in whole or in part is lifted and incorporated in this report from any earlier work done by me or others.

Place: Indira Ghandi National Open University

Signature

Date 01/11/2017

Enrolment No. : **ID1326629**

Name: Moelo Mokole

Address: \_Maseru 100, Lesotho

## **CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that Ms / Miss MOELO MOKOLE Student of MSW from India Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi was working under my supervision and guidance for her Project Work for the Course MSWP-001. Her project Work entitled **ASSESSMENT ON MAJOR CAUSES AND PSYCHOSOCIAL CHALLENGES OF CHILDREN ON THE STREETS: THE CASE OF CHILDREN ON STREETS IN MASERU, LESOTHO**

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Which she is submitting, is her genuine and original work.

Place: Signature -----

Date: Name-----

Address of Supervisor:

---

Phone No. -----

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**Table 1.1 Demographics of participants**



## **Acronyms**

UNICEF United Nations Children Education Fund

HIV/AIDS Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

IGNOU Indira Gandhi National Open University

NGOs Non-Government Organisations

CBDs Community Based Organisations

GOs Government Organisations

FGD Focus Group Discussion

## **ABSTRACT**

This study focused on the psychosocial challenges faced by street children. Ten participants were selected for this study using purposive sampling. The data was collected at Kick4Life. The interviews were analysed using thematic content analysis and themes were extracted and presented. The results of this study indicate that children living on the streets experience many psychosocial problems. Focus group discussions using a guide with open-ended questions were conducted to collect data from 10 street children, which was then analysed by coding into themes, notably forms of abuse such as emotional, physical, sexual, neglect and poverty. The research provided recommendations how to avert the situation of street children through active participation of governmental, non-governmental, community and family as well as affected children.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background of the study**

This chapter focuses on the overall outline of the study and focuses on the problem of the research project, the statement of the problem, the objectives of

the study, research questions and the significance of the study. The chapter also gives brief explanation of causes and psychosocial challenges faced by the street children.

Street children is any boy or girl to whom the street in any broad sense of the word is or has become his or her habitual abode or source of livelihood and who is inadequately protected, supervised or directed by responsible adults (United Nations, 2008). UNICEF categorises such children in two ways, firstly, children on the streets are those engaged in some kind of activity during the day but return to their family home at night (UNICEF, 2008). The children of the street actually survive entirely on the street, or outside of the normal family life. These children are below the ages of 18 according to the United Nations definition. In Maseru there are such children who are of the streets or whom the streets is their home and the children who are on the streets and return home at evening time.

According to the passage of time the concepts of childhood has altered a lot. It is believed that a child should not have any worries, should not have any compulsion to work, and should be a mixture of happiness, wonder, angst and resilience. It is generally the time of enjoying, playing, learning, socializing, exploring and worrying in a world without much adult interference, aside from parents (Child, Wikipedia, 2012). But this definition of childhood is not universally followed, hence emerging various problems. Lesotho as one of the countries highly infected by the HIV/AIDS, there is no time for child headed families to enjoy, play and learn like other children as they have to take care of their siblings and end up on the streets to support their family.

Street children are faced with a lot of problems in the streets and such problems affect them emotionally and psychologically. One of the problems they are faced with is physical and sexual abuse in the form of abduction, beatings, rape, sodomy and murder (Hyder, 2007). Some of the children choose to become

commercial sex workers due to the need for necessities such as food, clothing and accommodation while others are forced into trade after being kidnapped,(Muhmmad and Zafar, 2006). This is clearly seen on the streets of Maseru in the evenings as young girls flock the streets to make money as sex workers to earn a living.

Street children are also often beaten by policemen, arrested and harassed, children are therefore always at risk from the police (Amal, 2004). The street children are also faced by health problems and lack of medical care as they do not have any one to take care of when they are on the streets.

Children are the most precious wealth of a nation. Children are the most crucial period in a person's life because growth and development attain maximum level during this period (IGNOU, P.34). For every nation or country, the future is in the hands of children and the governments have to work hard to keep the foundations solid. The foundation is in the children and street children are another part of the foundation that the governments should invest a lot in. Researches suggests that there are a multitude of complex factors which causes children to leave their homes; including poverty, unemployment, physical and sexual violence and broken families (Tufali, 2006).

Children on the streets have a right to grow up being children without worry, distress and depression, living healthy lives in healthy environment. In the streets they are exposed to a lot of stress, depression and too much trauma from bullies in the streets. Some of these children experience physical, emotional abuse in the streets or even from their home and sexual exploitation. (UN, Committee on the Rights of the Child.2003)

In Maseru however, some of the children do not choose to be on the streets but get abandoned to die on the streets. This is due to the HIV/AIDS having left these children as orphans. For instance in Nazareth Ha-Pholoane and other

districts of Lesotho very young adults are being abandoned on the streets. Relatives are either incapable of looking after the children or do not want to be overburdened by someone's HIV-positive child who is going to die anyway (Makoa, 2006).

Lesotho has one of the highest HIV/AIDS infected rates in the world at about 30 to 35 percent. As many as 14, 000 children have been orphaned by the disease. The orphans must then provide for themselves and younger siblings. These children often turn to the streets where they are vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking (Protection Project – Lesotho 2009).

Moreover, there are many reasons why children in Lesotho leave their homes and be on the streets, such reasons include the push and pull factors. These include the lack of supervision in the households, poor relationship between children and their caregivers, family chaos, boredom and abuse (Sepheo, 2015). Children in Maseru are on the streets to earn money for themselves and support their families, to find shelter and to escape from family problems including rejection (Pokane, 2015).

According to IGNOU (2012, PP.36-37) factors responsible for children living on the street include socio-structural, economic, school-dropout, natural calamities, cruelty and abuse, neglect, broken home, peer group influences. These difficulties and problems lead the children to physical problems such as homelessness, health problems; psychological problems that include a stressful past, a transitory lifestyle, substance abuse and unlearning of learned behaviour as well as social problems that comprised of deprivation of needs and lack of resources and opportunities, exploitation and stigmatization.

### **1.2 Statement of the problem**

For a child to end up on the streets there might be several open and hidden causes from individual to the societal. I have found that there is no research on context specific to causes and psychosocial challenges faced by streets children

at the study area. So my focus of doing this research is to carry out the context specific causes and psychosocial challenges faced by the street children in Maseru, Lesotho. This would be filled the existing knowledge gap in this arena. When a child reaches in the street, he has to face several problems being what to eat, where to live, whom to live with, what to wear etc. These children when they are in the streets they suffer from psychological challenges such as emotional pain from abuse, rejection from the society, discrimination, behavioural and educational (Pokane, 2014). In this research the major factors are brought out so that to make easy for counsellors, social workers and policy makers to control existing problems.

### **1.3 Objectives of the study**

#### **1.3.1 The general objective of this study**

The general objective of the study is to identify the major causes and psychosocial challenges of street children on the streets to suggest means of reduction of the causes and challenges.

#### **1.3.2 The specific objectives of the study**

- To identify the socio-economic causes behind being on the street to strategically tackle these challenges of the children.
- To identify the psychosocial challenges such as emotional abuse, shelter, food and clothes the street children face in the streets to reduce these challenges.
- To generate recommendations for the governmental, non-governmental and community based organizations as well as the family to pay attention to reduce the children suffering on the streets.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

The research questions are the purpose of the study and they are as follows;

- 1.3.1 What are the socio-economic causes of children being on the streets of Maseru?
- 1.3.2 What are the psychological challenges that are faced by street children of Maseru?
- 1.3.3 What are major possible recommendations for GOs, NGOs, CBOs and the family to pay utmost attention to reduce the children suffering on the streets?

#### **1.5 Significance of the study**

The importance of this research is to inform the government about the challenges the street children are faced within the streets and what causes them to be on the streets. This will help the government to see where it needs to work things well to improve and what things need to be changed for the betterment of the children's lives.

Furthermore, findings from this research would be useful to the local NGOs, policy makers and community in providing information about the increasing challenges the street children are faced within the streets of Maseru.

#### **1.6 Scope and Limitation of the study**

The study focuses on the major causes and psychosocial challenges of street children are faced within Maseru Lesotho. Street children are common in almost all urban areas of Lesotho and there are number of projects working on helping street children. Due to time and resources constraints the researcher focuses on the street children in Maseru the capital city of Lesotho.

Street children's literature was limited and most of the literature was above five years old. The researcher had to be accompanied to focus group discussions for fear of the street children. The assumption was that they were drug abusers or took strong alcohol, such as marijuana or glue, and that they might be difficult to work with. The accompaniment was also for the protection of the children, as a precaution against any unethical behaviour or malpractice by the researcher.



Initially, children were afraid of telling the truth and did not trust the researcher since it could have been anyone from the law enforcement bodies who wanted to know their insider dealings.

### **1.7 Chapterization of the study**

The study comprises of five chapters. Chapter one deals with background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, limitation of the study. Chapter two focuses on review of related literature. Chapter three describes the study design and methodology. Chapter four presents the data interpretation and analysis. The last chapter five focuses on Conclusions and Suggestions.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter explores the literature review on the causes and psychosocial challenges faced by the street children.

#### **2.1 Overview of street children on global perspective**

The United Nations Education Fund has estimated that there are tens of millions of street children and adolescents globally in both developed and developing countries, (UNICEF 2015). It is also unclear whether the number of street

children is actually growing or the awareness of the issue is increasing in societies around the world. An even more recent study has stated that "...the figure almost certainly runs into tens of millions of street children across the world and it is likely that the numbers are increasing" (Gomes, 2011).

There are several problems that drive children to the streets, such as family structure disintegration, mental breakdowns and poverty. Children leave their homes because of hunger and being orphaned (Wienckie (2008:3). Family ties that maintain African cultural values are slowly being eroded, possibly due to a scramble for riches. Therefore, some of these children get chased out of their homes because parents' relatives took over their home. In the Republic of India, the seventh largest and second most populous country in the world, 22% of the population live below the income poverty datum line. India has a high unemployment rate of 8.3% and is characterised by migration to cities in search of a better life, leading to increased numbers of street children. ([www.oppapers.com/topics/Unemployment-India/0-42k-accessed-20thMarch2017](http://www.oppapers.com/topics/Unemployment-India/0-42k-accessed-20thMarch2017)).

## **2.2 Street Children in Africa**

In Africa there are several problems that drive children to the streets, such as family structure disintegration, mental breakdowns and poverty. Children leave their homes because of hunger and being orphaned. Family ties that maintain African cultural values are slowly being eroded, possibly due to a scramble for riches. Participants revealed that some of them were chased out of their homes because parents' relatives took over their home (Wienckie 2008:3).

In regard to the educational background of children, no variation across continents especially in Africa and Asia was noted. The reason for high record of poor educational background of the street children was that they often got

used to the street life in their early years of life. In Africa among 25755 children in the sample size studied, 23.28 Percent of them were illiterate and the residual 50.65 present were literate (Islam 2013).

### **2.3 Street Children in Lesotho**

In Lesotho and four other African countries; Botswana, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe—at least 20 percent of adults are infected with HIV/AIDS. Lesotho has one of the highest HIV/AIDS infection rates in the world, at about 30 to 35 per cent. As many as 14,000 children have been orphaned by the disease. The orphans must then provide for themselves and younger siblings. These children often turn to the streets, where they are vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking (The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), The Johns Hopkins University 2009). Between 70 and 100 people are dying every day in Lesotho as a result of HIV/AIDS and poverty. The numbers of street children and orphans are on the increase as a result.

[www.uspg.org.uk/our\\_work/our\\_work\\_lesotho.php](http://www.uspg.org.uk/our_work/our_work_lesotho.php), accessed 17/03/2017).

The economy of Lesotho is still primarily based on subsistence agriculture, especially livestock, although drought has decreased agricultural activity. The extreme inequality in the distribution of income remains a major drawback (The World Fact book, U.S.C.I.A. 2009). This in itself draws more people to the city searching for jobs hence more street children in the urban areas of Lesotho.

### **2.4 Street children in Maseru**

Maseru as the capital city of Lesotho attracts many migrants from the rural areas. People come to the capital city to seek better life as there is lot of poverty in the rural areas. Some of these migrants come to the city with their families and end up not being able to take care of their daily needs such as food and clothing and shelter. For this reason children's circumstances force children to stay on the streets begging and doing jobs like car wash Children also work as

domestic workers, car washers, taxi fare collectors, and street vendors.

Experiences of parental neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse and extreme poverty are common drivers of life on the streets (Oppong Asante 2016). This in turn increases their vulnerability to both health risk behaviours and mental health problems which is further exacerbated by limited access to education, support and health facilities. The street children are also suicidal and engage in unprotected sex and other high risk sexual behaviours as a means of survival (Ward & Seager, 2010). They also have high rate of substance abuse (Morijele, Parry, Brook, & Kekwaletswe, 2012).

### **Government's role in street children**

The government plays an important role to street children but does not work with them directly. It sponsors organizations which work with street children, for example Sepheo organization gets some of its funding from the government and shares the documents written about street children with the government. Sepheo is an organization that is devoted to removing the children from the streets, mentoring them, putting them back into school and reintegrating them with their families.

## **2. 5 Major Cases of Street Children**

### **2.5.1 Children being on the streets**

In Lesotho while cases do exist, only a small number of children came to the streets because they are expected to contribute financially to the family (10%) or because no family member took responsibility for them after the death of their parent(s) (15%). 15% of children or youth came by their own choice, without a compelling reason (Sepheo, 2015). Rarely do relatives or biological parents come to look for their children in the streets. As a result, what could have been a

temporary situation had an intervention occurred quickly goes on for weeks and months before finally becoming permanent.

The longer children are on the streets the more comfortable they become the more negative behaviours they pick up and the harder it is to convince them to leave. They begin enjoying the freedoms the street brings and grow used to doing whatever they feel like, without authority. It is this process that leads to “street children”. Children are not generally on the street because no family members exist. Lesotho’s family or community structures are incredibly strong, and finding a child with no relatives willing to stay with them is extremely rare (Sepheo, 2015).

#### **2.5.2 Relationship of parenting skills to child’s outcome behaviour**

Children are abandoned by parents due to poor parenting skills or are orphaned, and as a result have nowhere to stay. Hence, they adopt a street life. Most of the children leave their homes because of violation of children’s rights. In general, children lack happiness in their home environment. They need hugs, love, praise, and appreciation of who they are, (Van Blerk 2009:35). This is very rare in the rural areas for parents to praise their children for any good work, parents do not see the need to be friends or have a quality relationship with their children.

#### **2.5.3 Lack of schooling for children**

Lack of schooling leads to idleness and children resort to going to the streets to find something to occupy them, which may turn out to be child labour or prostitution. Such children share their work time with school time and may eventually abandon school (Van Blerk (2009:35). This is evident in Lesotho as most children from rural areas do not attend school because of financial problems and poverty. These children then migrate from rural areas to the city

for a better.

Moreover, school drop outs end up in the streets because they are likely to become destitute hence turn to the streets to support their families (Van Blerk 2009:35). This is common in Lesotho especially for girl child as they often drop out of school due to domestic poverty then leave for the streets in an effort to provide or supplement their family's income most of them end up being sex workers.

Poor local access to education may also be due to the long distances the children walk in poorly (UNICEF2012:31). In the rural areas of Lesotho children walk long distances to get to schools and government has not worked out building more schools in the highlands of Lesotho to reach those people in need they therefore leave their highlands to flood the streets to make ends meet.

## **2.6 Major Challenges of Street Children**

This section deals with major challenges that street children face in the streets. There are many challenges that street children face in their daily lives in the streets.

### **2.6.1 Physical Abuse and stigmatisation**

Street children have challenge of being beaten by the police on the streets and also being physically abused and stigmatised by the society due to their state of homelessness (Ogunkan & Adeboyejo 2014). The society in itself stigmatizes the street children because of their habitation on the streets. For example because of the absence of regard for hygiene, anyone who walks by them might cover their noses, which would show a stigmatization against them. There is a need for every human being to feel accepted; these individuals certainly all have potential and their self-esteem being trampled on and this causes further

psychological damage that might force them to engage in violent crimes. The more alienated they feel from society, the easier it is for them to be violent towards society. Also, as they live in streets, their full potential does not even come close to being realized, so this lost potential excellence contributes to an inefficient society.

### **2.6.2 Substance abuse**

In a review of international literature pertaining to homeless youth it was revealed that the use of intoxicants such as glue, petrol and benzene is wide spread, (Apteke & Stoecklin 2014; Motala & smith, 2003). The cheap and easily obtainable nature of “glue” allows all ages of children and youth to use it, (Oppong, Meyer, & Petersen, 2014; Young 2003). The behaviour expressed by these participants seemed to derive pleasure from the freedom they have on the streets. The desire to be free from parental control is an important reason for youngsters to leave home to live on the streets (Oppong 2016).

Likewise, another study illustrates the common push and pulls factors that bring the children into street. In the study, poverty, big family size, family violence, abuses, urbanization (migration), school abandonment and inadequate parental guidance, etc. were taken to be the push factors while the pull factors included desire for independence, financial security, excitement and glamour of living in cities, and some hope of raising one's standard of living. Although there are several overt and covert reasons ending to streets, street children do not achieve the life they have dreamed (Ali, Muynck, Shahab, Ushijima 2004).

### **2.6.3 Human trafficking**

In Lesotho, children from rural areas move to Maseru to escape domestic violence, and the effects of HIV/AIDS. As street children, they are coerced or forcibly abducted by white men before being taken across the border with the

consent of border officials to border towns and asparagus farms in the Eastern Free State. There they are held captive in private houses where they are sexually and sadistically assaulted over several days by small groups of men. These children are finally returned to the border, or deposited on the streets of towns in the Eastern Free State to find their own way home. Street children in Maseru are also trafficked by long-distance truck drivers, who use them as sex slaves on their routes. These children travel as far as Cape Town, Zimbabwe and Zambia (Jonathan, 2003).

## **2.7 Means of Reduction of the Challenges of Street Children**

### **2.7.1 Protection Provision**

The government aims to improve the lives of children and vulnerable adults. Children and other vulnerable people cannot be empowered to improve their lives and that of their families and communities if they are not safeguarded from abuse, discrimination and harm of any kind, be it physical, sexual or emotional. It is the government's legal duty to protect the children and vulnerable adults of the streets. National Guidance for the Protection & Welfare of Children (2011) produced by the Department of Children & Youth Affairs in Ireland.

### **2.7.2 Psychosocial and Emotional Needs**

Even though the lifestyle of street youth seems to evolve around incidences of violence and drug and alcohol use, they have found ways of surviving these challenging conditions on the streets. The fact that some of these young people have lived on the streets for years points to adaptability and to a strong ability to cope with adversity and thus the harsh circumstances of street life (Ungar, 2011). Therefore these children become attached to street life so much that they no longer want to be reconnected to their families as the streets have become their homes.



It is a problem not only to the children, but also to society as a whole. Living on the streets means that their emotional and physiological well-being is thrown aside as they focus on having meals and making money. As they live on the street, perhaps they do not face the same kind of abuse they did at home, and to them, this might be satisfying. However, this satisfaction may last only a little while, it is still not enough to assume that those leaving their homes will take care of their emotional well-being.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

This chapter describes the study design and methodology, data collection methods, study area, universe of the study, sampling and sampling procedure.

#### **3.2 Study Design**

Qualitative research design is described as logic that links data to be collected and the conclusions to be drawn to the initial questions of the study. It is a broad term encompassing all strategies that describe or explain how, what, when and where the data was collected and analysed in a research investigation (Yin 2009:65).

For this study the majority of the research work was based on the qualitative data, giving reason and explanations to what the nature and causes of statement problem is. The data collection based on focus group discussion, case study and observation by the researcher has informed the vast quantity of the work.

The reasons for using qualitative methods include firstly, it allows the researcher to study the topic under investigation thoroughly and in great detail. Secondly, it allows the researcher to be the instrument for data collection and interpretation (Terre Blanche, Kelly & Durkheim, 2006). Thirdly, in the context of this research the use of a qualitative method allowed the researcher the opportunity to relate to the street children from within their own perspective in order to discover how they construct and interpret their everyday lives. It also enabled the researcher to look at how the street children interpret and recognize their psychosocial needs and the meaning they attach to these needs (Berg, 2009).

The differences between qualitative and quantitative research (Merriam, 1998) Qualitative research is a systematic subjective approach used to describe life experiences and give them meaning while quantitative is a formal, objective, systematic process for obtaining information about the world. Qualitative design is driven by induction and exploration than theory include research questions but no hypothesis while quantitative design is driven by theory rather than induction and exploration and includes a null and alternative for each question hypothesis. In qualitative analysis of data is through the processes for coding and categorizes data to come up with themes while quantitative uses numerical data to come up with findings.

### **3.3 Study Area Description**

The study was conducted in Maseru the capital of Lesotho at the Pitso ground bus station where the children often hang around. Another key location

Kick4Life football club was ideal for conducting interview as they do charity work on regular basis with these children. This provided an additional avenue to meet up with the children. These areas are chosen mainly because they are closer to Maseru city centre buzzing with economic activity which is the prime attraction for street children.

## Maseru's geography



([www.mapsoftheworld.com](http://www.mapsoftheworld.com))

Maseru is the capital of Lesotho and has a population of about 228,000. It is the administrative centre as well as the transportation hub of the country. The Sotho language is the official language here although English is also quite prevalent, (Census, 2006)

Maseru lies on the left bank of the River Caledon along the Northwest border of the country. It is connected to the South African town of Lady brand by a bridge across the river. The city spreads over an area of 138sq km and is at the height of 1,600m. Maseru is located at the foothills of Maloti Mountains in a shallow valley shadowed by the Hlabeng-Sa-Likhama.

### 3.4 Universe of the study

The study focuses on the major causes and psychosocial challenges of the street children are faced within the Maseru streets. Street children are common in almost all urban areas of Lesotho and there are a number of projects working on

helping street children. Due to time and resources the researcher focused on the children living in the streets of Maseru. Maseru in 2013 had about 120 street children (Sepheo, 2015). In 2017 Maseru had about 90 street children who Sepheo organization is working on removing from the streets and integrating them with their families of who 86 were boys and 4 were girls. Children who are below 18 years make 24% of 90 and above 18 is 76% (Sepheo, 2017).

### **3.5 Sampling and Sampling Methods**

Sampling is critical to obtaining data that brings out or answers the research question. The participants must be honest and share information or “their story” (Creswell, 2007:135). In this research the population has an equal chance of being part of the sample. Selection of the site was specific to Kick4Life because it is a recognized centre in Maseru where street children are expected to use and has the mandate to identify, collect and rehabilitate street children (UNICEF 2005: 13) and bus stop area is another site for data collection as the children found in Kick4Life were not enough for the study.

#### **3.5.4 Sample Size**

In this study purposive sample targeted street children within the age limit of 10-18 to relate with openness and spontaneity their experience of psychosocial challenges they are faced with in the streets. An advantage of purposive sampling was that it allowed the researcher to handpick the sample, based on site and knowledge of the phenomena. Purposive sampling is based on the judgment of the researcher, the sample being composed of elements that contain the most characteristics representative or typical attributes of the population. ‘Population’ refers to a specific pool of cases that will be studied that is the total group of a process that meets the set criteria established by the researcher, while ‘sample’ is a reflection or a representative of the population under study (Yin, 2009:45).

Children between the ages of 10 and 18 were the only ones included in the sample mainly because this was the most available age difference of children which were found to be more on the streets. Secondly, the participants needed to be verbally fluent and able to communicate their feelings, thoughts and perceptions in relation to the psychosocial challenges faced by street children. Lastly, all the participants were speaking the local language fluently and the researcher could address them in the local language and then carefully translated to English language for the purpose of the study.

The population for a study is usually a group of people from whom the researcher wants to draw conclusions (Babbie, 2001). The population of this study was 10 out of 35 children on or off the streets who are involved with Kick4Life volunteered to participate. The composition of the study was the population of both female and male street children from different backgrounds. One of the counsellors helped with the selection of the sample by handpicking participants through her knowledge of each participant's background.

A qualitative sample is not necessarily representative of the population or of primary concern. Despite small samples in qualitative research, if the researcher has critically selected the participants basing on the assumed rich expert knowledge on the topic the results would be credible and trustworthy. Larger samples do not guarantee better results than quantitative research, which aims at statistical precision and would have been repetitive and caused artificial saturation (Mertens, 2005:15).

### **3.6 Data Collection: Tools and Procedures**

Various tools of data collection were employed for the study since social reality is always complex and multi-faceted such being observation guide, Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

Observation as the way of collecting primary data can be defined as a purposeful, systematic and selective way of watching and listening to an interaction or phenomenon as it takes place (Babbie, 2004). In this research, the researcher worked as a participant observer where the researcher got involved in the activities as active observer watching and listening to the activities from which conclusions were drawn. Mainly the researcher observed the behaviours and attitudes of the street children in their weekly meeting at the Kick4Life Football club; this was done every week as the children visit the centre once a week.

Focus group discussion allows the researcher to study people in a more natural conversation pattern than typically occurs in a one to one interview. At the collective level focus group discussion can reveal shared understanding or common views, (Harding, 2013). This was done through bringing about 10 of the street children together in a group and asked questions and discussed. The participants were children between the ages of 10 to 18 so as to get as much information as possible from different age experiences from the group that is found within Kick4Life that the researcher is working with to gather relevant information.

Planning for the FGD to avoid unnecessary questions is recommended (Turner, 2010:754). This also improves direction and focus for questioning and also helps the researcher to ask relevant questions which can be easily analysed to avoid data collector`s bias that is the unconscious distortion of data during data collection. Open-ended questions were applied to allow for more space and collection of more information till saturation (Turner, 2010:755). Saturation is defined as important means, that no new information is being learned from new data that is collected in a specific research context (Turner, 2010:755).

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

Qualitative research data analysis demands much intellectual effort on the part of the researcher because of the detailed data collected (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011:343), while the human instrument becomes immersed in data during analysis (Jackson and Verberg, 2007:37). Data was classified according to themes. These were experiences that came out frequently during data collection. It is further stated that coding is the basis for making sense in qualitative analysis. Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of data collected beyond human awareness or cannot be communicated. Qualitative data analysis is a search for general statements about relationships among categories of data (Wagner et al, 2009:129). In this study the researcher attempted to bring those statements said by participants into concrete sense of wholeness. The primary aim of qualitative research is in-depth (thick) descriptions and understanding of actions and events that are the idiographic motive, with an outcome of generating new hypotheses and theories (Babbie and Mouton 2009:270).

### **3.7 Ethical consideration**

The study is deemed to be one of minimal risk to participants and that the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research was not greater than any ordinary encountered in the daily life of a street child, or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examination. The anticipated stress is that of suspicion of law enforcers or identification by relatives or parents. Any risk to participants was considered minimal as the project staffs at Kick4Life was available for the participants and the researcher.

#### **3.7.1 Institutional approval**

The researcher went through the Project Director of Kick4Life for approval to collect data from the street children and for the protection of the respondents.

### **3.8.2 Voluntary participation**

The participants volunteered to participate in the discussions but only those under the said age criteria were allowed to participate. Most of them did want to volunteer hoping that there will be something they get such as money or any form of help, so the researcher made it clear to them that there is nothing that they were going to receive.

### **3.8.3 Informed consent**

Street children being people who have their own way of thinking and doing things, the researcher had to ask for permission from them to carry out the study and make it clear to them about the importance of the study, this was done verbally not in a written form.

### **3.8.4 Confidentiality**

The researcher promised confidentiality to the Director so as to protect the children's opinions and had to assure the staff that none of the discussions to be done or taken out of the centre and used against the children in a wrong way.

### **3.8.5 Atomicity**

Protection of human rights is mandatory in health sciences and there is no reverse after damaging one's health therefore it is critical that a researcher treats participants with diligence and respect without harming life and protecting their rights. In this study a reflection of a reasonable balance of informing the participants was through a meeting with the children and talking to them concerning the research. This meant that the participants had a right not to participate or to withdraw anytime when they felt like.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings of this study in accordance with the data obtained from the participants in the interviews. In chapter three, the qualitative method used in this study was discussed. Later in the chapter the themes and sub-themes are discussed according to data obtained. The aim of the study was to address the question: “what are the psychosocial challenges faced by street children.” Relevant quotations from the interviewees were used in presentation and description of the research findings, which are presented in narrative and descriptive form. The methodology embraced both data gathering and analysis during Focus Group Discussions, using a discussion guide until data saturation was reached.

Findings from 10 (six boys and four girls) street children who volunteered to be in the focus group discussion contributed to the study findings. The introductions revealed that most were from broken homes and or were orphans, most staying with relatives. The Focus Group Discussion guide was used with

open-ended questions, in addition to observations during the narrations by the participants. Themes and sub-themes were identified and descriptions of the themes were given.

## 4.2 Results obtained from the participants

### 4.2.1 Demographics of the participants

The participants' details are presented in table 4.1. Pseudonyms have been used in order to protect the participants' identities. Four females and six males with ages ranging between 15 and 18 years volunteered to participate in the study. All the participants were interviewed in Sesotho, which is their native language.

**Table 1.1 demographics of participants**

Name	Age	Sex	Grade	District
Mpho	18	Female	6	Maseru
Malefu	18	Female	7	Maseru
Nnana	16	Female	0	Maseru
Tshereletso	15	Female	5	Maseru
Manman	18	Male	7	Maseru
Motlatsi	18	Male	7	Maseru
Sekhobe	15	Male	5	Maseru
Khotso	16	Male	3	Maseru
Tiisetso	17	Male	5	Maseru
Motlalekhotso	18	Male	7	Maseru

### **4.2.1 Themes**

The themes and sub-themes identified in the interviews with the participants are presented below. It is important to note that some of these themes overlap and they are therefore presented as such.

#### **4.2.1.1 Theme 1: All forms of Abuse**

##### **4.2.1.2 Neglect Abuse**

One participant showed that she left home because her mother kicked her out of the house claiming that the father left them and is not taking any responsibility in raising the child, so the mother does not like her. This made the child to grow in the streets while the mother lives a normal life working in a hair salon. With time this child got a place in the orphanage where she left because she was no longer used to be controlled and wanted her freedom and now continue to live in the streets.

##### **4.2.1.3 Alcohol Abuse**

The participants also reported that parents combined alcohol and cannabis, which worsened the domestic violence such that children would be beaten with an electric cord. They also reported that after all this they felt vulnerable and believed reports that the streets were a better place to be.

Another form of abuse is substance abuse, these children in the streets abuse drugs and that is their way of living. They do this so as to keep themselves high, talking to some of them about why they take drugs they showed that drugs help them take away shyness and are able to do things they are ashamed of doing when they are sober.

##### **4.2.1.4 Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse has led to anger and lower self-esteem for most girls in the streets because of experience abuse from their family they found it better to give their lives to the men in the streets and sell their bodies. Talking to five out of eight of the girls who had experienced sexual abuse they showed that they actually enjoy their current live style of selling their bodies and also planning to leave

the country to go to the Republic of South Africa to sell their bodies as a way of making a living.

#### **4.2.1.5 Emotional Abuse**

Physical and emotional forms of abuse are sometimes inseparable, as the former experience may trigger the latter. Several forms could be experienced at the same time. A child who witnesses domestic violence is emotionally abused. Most of the children showed that they left homes because of abusive parents or relatives (Joanna 2008:82). One girl showed that the grandparent she was staying with was very abusive physically and emotionally. This made the child very sad and decided to leave home for the streets.

Due to cruel experiences endured by the participants, they developed persistent anger that even a simple conversation would trigger anger started using abusive language. Participants reported that most of the time, all that came to their minds was how they would respond to the frequent abuse hence developed abusive language as a defensive mechanism.

#### **4.2.2 Theme 2: Poverty**

Poverty is a state in which one lacks possessions, money or basic human needs, such as food, water, clothes and education leading to economic inequality. Focused group discussions confirmed that street children were from poor families and went onto the streets due to lack of family support. Participants reported that they did not attend school because they were sent by parents and guardians to go and beg on the streets. Most of these children had to drop out of school to go and search for work in the streets so that they could help their siblings or families who are struggling to have food and clothing.

##### **4.2.2.1 Orphaned Children**

After the death of parents children become orphans and have to live with their extended family members. In most cases the parents of the orphaned children leave behind properties and or money which will be used by the other family members taking care of these children. When the money gets finished or

property be all used the children begin to be harassed and abused by their relatives and end up being on the streets as a way of escaping their abusive relatives.

#### **4.2.2.2 Moving homes**

There is increased poverty, especially in the rural setting, and that the children will move from one home to the next in search of a better home that would accept them following the death of the parents. In rural homes the children are used as domestic or agricultural servants as cheap labour (UNICEF 2008:10). Some of these children showed that after the death of their parents they had to move from one relative's house to another and were always not treated well made to work hard and stay home while their relatives' children attended school.

#### **4.2.3 Theme 3: Discrimination by the society**

Street children lack love, care and support from their own families therefore it is not easy for them to be loved by the society. They face a lot of discrimination from the society and labelling which leaves them unaccepted and unloved. The society sees these children as hopeless and futureless, mistreating them in many ways like using them without any payment.

#### **4.2.4 Theme 4: Stealing**

The participants when asked about the means of survival on the streets they showed that they have a lot ways that they use to survive. Participants reported stealing from people in town who seemed to have money, in the bars when people are too much drunk they steal their wallets and runaway. *'we don't only steal money even food and clothes from other new street children who don't know much street life even from people who are under heavy use of drugs in bars.'*

##### **4.2.4.1 Snatching other people's food**

The participants mentioned that they snatch other people's food as they can go days without food sometimes. This was also observed by the researcher at

Kick4Life when children came for their weekly meeting. They would fight over food and snatch other people's food. They will even lie when their names are called to collect food saying others are not present at the meeting so that they could have more food.

#### **4.2.5 Survival during bad weather conditions**

Lesotho has four seasons of the year and the winters are very cold. The participants were honest that in winter they wish they had a proper home to stay in as they sleep in shacks, or under plastic bags on the streets without blankets. This is a difficult season for them as they get sick more often and are not even able to see a doctor. The researcher observed that these children are really suffering in winter as most of them have torn shoes and not enough clothes to keep them warm.

#### **4.2.6 Protecting one another in the streets**

In the discussion the participants mentioned that in the streets they have two groups, those who stay in downtown and those staying around bus stop area. These two groups do not work together as the downtown group is considered to be the stronger one that bullies the bus stop area group. One girl narrated *"I stay in the streets with my brother and sister, my brother was deaf and he had a fight with one boy from the downtown group, that fight led to my brother's death as the whole group attacked him with knives and killed him but our group was not able to help him as they fear the downtown group. The only thing we could do was to run for our lives and because we didn't know that if we engaged in the fight it might worsen and lose more lives."* The participants showed that they protect one another by staying away from the powerful group territory in the streets and keep their own company.

#### **4.2.7 Challenges faced with the police**

Street children are known for their deviant behaviour and they always get in trouble with police. Some participants mentioned that they get beaten up by the police without having done anything wrong. The researcher observed the fresh

scars from the participants during their visit at Kick4Life where they claimed they were beaten by the police in one bar during the weekend. *The other time the police took us to the river and beat us, telling us to go back home and stop roaming the streets, the streets is now our home and we cannot go back home that why we get in trouble with the police all the time. At times when we need help from the police we do not get it because we are known to be telling lies and nobody believes our stories so even if we are badly treated we don't bother reporting to the police because we are always on the wrong side.*”

### **4.3 Key informants results**

#### **4.3.1 Delinquent behaviours.**

The caregivers stated that many of the children who live in the streets engage in delinquent behaviours such as stealing, promiscuity and habitual lying.

##### **a. Stealing**

The participants indicated that stealing is a very big problem that they face with the street children. According to the participants the majority of the children in from the streets steal and some of these children have been stealing for a very long time in order to survive. They learnt to steal to survive when their parents died and live in the streets. The participants shared the following experiences: Stealing is quite common among street children. Children steal amongst each other. In the streets they steal from each other either being money, clothes or food. These children have no limits, they steal everything. (Thato)

##### **b. Promiscuous behaviour**

The participants also indicated that many of the children living in the streets if not all engage in sexual relations at a very young age. Many of these children are not aware of the precautionary measures associated with safe sex. These findings suggest that promiscuous behaviour is a challenge for these children as they are likely to be infected with HIV and many of them are already infected. One participant explained that they encourage these children to use condoms for

protection. One girl recently made an abortion when she realised that she was pregnant.

#### **c. Habitual lying**

The participants all mentioned that street children frequently tell lies. It is possible that this habitual lying is an indication of severe psychological difficulties. Habitual lying is evident in the following extract:

I think for most of these children lying is in their blood, they can't help it. When you ask the child, did you have something to eat? The child will say no, only to find out he wants more food and for him to get some he has to lie. (Mathabo)

#### **c. Feelings of rejection by extended family members**

The participants' responses suggested that some of the street children living have been rejected by their extended families. The participants were able to relate to the children's painful feelings regarding this rejection. Although these street children would like to be cared for in a family environment this is not possible due to rejection. The participants' responses further suggest that rejection by extended families results in children experiencing serious psychological difficulties related to the loss of a sense of belonging. Children are then given counselling and life skill classes every week at Kick4Life by mentors.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The aim of the study was to address the research questions “What are the socio-economic causes of children being on the streets of Maseru?”, “What are the psychological challenges that are faced by street children of Maseru?” and “What are major possible recommendations for Government Organisations (GOs), Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), Community Based Organisations (CBDs) and the family to pay utmost attention to reduce the children suffering on the streets?”. The quantitative and qualitative researches were conducted to investigate the phenomenon.

The following objectives guided the research to answer the research questions:

- To identify the socio-economic causes behind being on the street to strategically tackle these challenges of the children.
- To identify the psychosocial challenges such as emotional abuse, shelter, food and clothes the street children face in the streets to reduce these challenges.
- To generate recommendations for the governmental, non-governmental and community based organizations as well as the family to pay attention to reduce the children suffering on the streets.

A qualitative research studies was conducted with a sample of 10 street children who were asked to volunteer and participate in the study. A focus group discussion was held with the participants and a discussion guide with open-ended questions was used for collection of detailed data. Observations were made on participant's emotions as they gave an account on the psychosocial challenges that they are faced with and causes of them leaving their homes for the streets. During data analysis themes were deduced from the narrations and verbatim. Subthemes used to describe the factors that drove the children out of their homes.

### **5.1 Economic reasons**

The findings show that street children do leave their homes for streets because of economic causes. These causes include lack of money to take care of the basic needs of the children. Most of these children decided to join the streets so that they could make money and make a living for themselves. Participants showed that economic reasons made it possible for them to attend school like other children and find it better to work their lives on the streets so as to stay out of trouble from home and community.

### **5.2 Physical abuse**

Some participants reported physical abuse during their lives at home. It was in the form of beatings which traumatised them. To a larger extent the children witnessed domestic violence, with parents amongst the major perpetrators augment that biological parents also physically abused the children by beating them (Ajiboye and Oladiti 2008:15). Due to the amount of violence in homes children decided to go to the streets (Joanna 2008:82). Participants reported that most of physical abuses were because of alcohol.

### **5.3 Emotional abuse**

Findings revealed that physical and emotional abuses are inseparable, as the former experience also triggered the latter. The child's home is unstable.

Caregivers are drinking heavily, refusing to share food, constantly fighting with one another or speaking abusively to and about the child. They are physically or mentally ill or emotionally unwell. Frequently a child's biological parents are not together and the parent's new partner does not want a child from a previous relationship, rejects the child, excludes the child from family activities or forces them to leave.

#### **5.4 Poverty**

Many families in Lesotho are poverty stricken in the rural areas; the findings also revealed that poverty is one of the factors that drove children from their homes to the streets. Children from such families are abandoned and not taken care of by their parents or caretakers and these children find hope in the streets. Some participants showed that after the death of the parents they experienced poverty as they had no one to provide for them and take care of them.

#### **5.5 Poor coping skills**

Minor reasons bring children to the streets, for example disobedience to the parents or caregivers and are too scared to return home on their own. Sometimes there has been a conflict and the child has overreacted, running away instead of choosing another, healthier response. While cases do exist, only a small number of children came to the streets because they are expected to contribute financially to the family (10%) or because no family member took responsibility for them after the death of their parents (15%). 15% of children or youth came by their own choice, without a compelling reason (Sepheo, 2015).

#### **5.6 Peer pressure**

The research findings revealed that peer pressure affected girls more than the boys. It was the least notable cause of children being driven onto the streets. Erickson argues that the adolescent child suffers from role confusion due to hormonal changes (Erickson's theory, 1968). Another argument show that

children move to the streets trying to find that glitter however all is in vain, (van Blerk, 2006: 47-74). In this study only the girl children were lured into the streets by friends. Peer pressure did not come strongly as one of the reasons for the children to leave their homes.

## **5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Following the research findings the following recommendations are made based on the research questions of the study.

- The government should have strategies on how to help street children and put aside money for helping organisations that help street children yearly when government budget is made.
- The government and the non-government organisation should work together to build a rehabilitation centre for street children to help them leave the streets and be given necessary psychosocial help.
- Non-government organisations should work hand in hand to find ways of taking the street children away from the streets and providing them with shelter, food and education it be formal or informal education.
- The community based organisation should also come up with strategies of helping these children from the communities so that they do not see the need to stay in the streets.

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## **Focus Group Discussions**

My name is Moelo Mokole, I am a student of Masters in Social Work at St. Mary's University College in Ethiopia Addis Ababa. The purpose of the study is to find out the challenges that the street children face in the district of Maseru. This study is very important and hopefully will benefit other students too, therefore your contribution in this study is critical and it will be highly appreciated. I make a plea to you to spare a few minutes of your time to answer the following questions. I promise you anonymity and also assure you that any information provided will be handled with utmost confidentiality

### **Key respondents: the street children**

#### *Questions*

1. Please tell me about the ways of survival in the streets, food, clothing, shelter, e.t.c

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2. What are the reasons that made you leave home for the streets?

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3. How does the society treat you and what are the challenges you face with the society?

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4. Do you feel like the society is not treating you well or discriminating?

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5. How do you protect one another from bullies and police in the streets?

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6. What are some of the challenges you face with from the police?

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7. Do you get necessary help from the police when you need help from being treated unjustly or misused by the society?

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8. How often do you get help with food and clothing from different organisations or individuals?

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9. How would you like the government to be of help to you?

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10. In your own opinion, how would you like the society to treat you?

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## **THANK YOU**

### **Key informants interview**

#### **Interview Schedule**

1. Can you please tell me about yourself, anything that you feel I should know about?
2. Kindly tell me about your involvement at Kick4Life with street children, for example, your role, of years of experience and anything that you think would be worth noting?
3. How do children become part of Kick4Life?
4. In your opinion what are the problems experienced by street children?
5. How do caregivers cope with expressed difficulties displayed by street children under your care?
6. What type of intervention or resources do you have in place to assist street children?

#### **Observation guide**

- Observing people as they engage in activities that would probably occur in much the same way if the researcher was not present.

- Engaging to some extent in the activities taking place in order to better understand the participants' perspective so as not to call attention to as the researcher.
- Interacting with people socially outside of a controlled research environment, public meeting place, bus station or market – if casual conversation gives way to more substantive discussion of the research topic, the researcher would need to disclose his or her identity, affiliation, and purpose.
- Identifying and developing relationships with key informants.

Consent form

I .....consent to be interviewed by Moelo Mokole for her study on the psychosocial challenges faced by street children.

I understand that participation in this study is voluntary, i may refuse to answer any questions that i would prefer not to, i may withdraw from the study at any time and that no information that may identify me will be included in this research report and my responses will remain confidential.

Signed\_\_\_\_\_.

