

Early Childhood Experiences in Zimbabwe: A Study on Street Children in the Harare Centralbusiness District

Abstract

This study examined the reasons why children prefer to live and work in the inner cycles of urban cities in Zimbabwe. The study was conducted in the inner cycles of the Harare Central Business District in Harare Metropolitan Province. The specific objectives were; to establish the levels of parent-child relationship experiences in early childhood of street children; to explore the key dynamics which tend to generate the problems of children living and working on the streets and to determine interventions and sustainable strategies that could be used to curb the occurrence of children living and working on the street. Qualitative data was obtained through in-depth interviews, FGDs and direct observations from thirty street children (fifteen boys and fifteen girls) within the inner cycles of the Harare Central Business District. Five key informants presumed to have knowledge on the phenomena and street vendors' familiarity with the lifestyles of the street children within the inner cycles of the Harare Central Business District were interviewed. The study established that children who appeared deprived of attachment-bond in early childhood tended to have disturbing problems in later years and yet very little in this context has been done to address the dilemma. The study concluded that there is need for comprehensive interventions and strategies that could be used to address the problem. The study recommends that the Government and agencies should intervene by strengthening policy formulations and programmes. This could be in the form of participative model that educates families and parents, as well as children, to re-enforce parent-child attachment bond in early childhood. The aim is to curb the appalling problem of children living and working on the streets.

Research Article

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Received: 02 December 2023; **Accepted:** 20 December 2023; **Published:** 28 December 2023

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Keywords

Street Children • Attachment • Begging • Metropolitan City • Food • Scrounging

Introduction

The problem of street children living and working in the inner cycles of metropolitan cities the world over, particularly in developing countries such as Zimbabwe, needs to be researched on. Substantiate that the presence of street children working on the streets is a global problem that is affecting the academic, economic, and social and health development of millions of children around the world. In Zimbabwe, particularly in the Central Business District (CBD) of Harare Metropolitan Province, the rate of children living and working on the streets is increasing against the background of the socio-economic and environmental hardships. The number of children living and working on the streets over the past decades has been on the increase leading to the countless definitions that classify

them. For example, basic concepts such as street children, street living and street working are some of the definitions that categorise them. [1, 2] and defined street children as children below the age of 18 years, who live and work on the streets. UNICEF provides that street kids are children who ran away from their families to go and live down the streets. They spend nearly all of their time on the streets fending for themselves instead of returning home on a regular basis. Erstwhile studies demonstrate that there has been minimal attention on the psychological functioning of the street children and yet these street movements affect mostly the psychological and cognitive development of the child. Child development as defined by [3] refers to the physical, social and cognitive changes observed in the children as they grow and mature. This paper focuses on the street children who ran away from home, have no fixed abode other than the streets, and have no family support systems to fall back on whilst living on the streets. The rationale behind this particular study is that the inner cycles of the CBD of Harare Metropolitan Province have become a safe haven, over the past decades, for children living and working on the streets compared to the other provinces in Zimbabwe. This suggests that if the problems of street children living and working on the streets are to be reduced significantly, the challenges that might have possibly forced them to leave home need to be adequately examined and understood. In that regard, this study seeks to examine the parent-child attachment bond experiences in early childhood that might be endlessly generating the considerable numbers of children to occupying the streets of the inner cities. The specific objectives of this study seek to establish the existing early parent-childhood relationship experiences of street children; to explore the key dynamics generating and perpetuating the street children's phenomena and to determine the possible interventions and sustainable strategies that could be used to curb the occurrence of children living and working on street. The study is confined to the main street corners of the Central Business District (CBD) of the Harare Metropolitan Province of Zimbabwe.

Background Information

Globally, the problem of children living and working on the street is particularly high on the agendas of most developing countries including Zimbabwe. [4] shows that there are approximately 12,000 street children

countrywide as compared to 2004 where the numbers were 5, 000 respectively aver that the numbers of such children who engage in street labour due to poverty and economic inequality is increasing by 140%. This is a higher manifestation than it was in 2004. Earlier studies focused broadly on the socio-economic environment, inequality and HIV and AIDS challenges encountered by street children; exclusive of investigating the quality of early childhood attachment bond experiences which appear to perpetuate the phenomenon over the past decades. [5] Confirm these observations highlighting that the rise in street children population has been in the context of socio-economic crises which are marked by records of inflationary rates and the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Consequently, only a study by explored the concurrent relations between inter-parental conflict strategies and early child-parent attachment bond relationships. The study therefore provides supporting evidence for the sensitivity-security linked for both mother-child and father-child in naturalistic settings, during the toddler years.

Regionally, Metropolitan cities continue to experience worrying episodes of children living and working on the streets but without specifically trying to find out the root cause of the phenomenon. More than a decade ago, international institutions that work with children, for example estimate that there were approximately hundred million street children - with that number constantly growing in developing countries, including Zimbabwe. [6] Concur that the number of street children is presently estimated at 250 million. The problem of street children in Zimbabwe, for instance, is widespread in numerous inner cycles of the main streets of the Harare Metropolitan Province's CBD where boys and girls are found living and working on the streets, and even perform numerous illegal activities. At national level reveal that in 2004, there were approximately five thousand street children in the HCBD. A significant number came from Harare (17%), Chitungwiza (3.5%), Mutare (5%) and Masvingo (3%). The study further shows that about 58% did not disclose their place of origin and this indicates that this special group prefer to hang about undisclosed for the reasons best known to them.

At local level, complementary analysis for the inner cycles of the HCBD reveal that the majority of the children (63%) came from Epworth, while 10% came from Mbare and 6% from Dzivarasekwa. substantiates that the foregoing

statistical distribution was roughly the same for those living permanently on the streets and those returning home. conducted remarkable studies to determine the scope and magnitude of the problem. They established that the bulk of the children living and working on the streets all the time leave home most probably because of the socio-economic challenges whilst those children who were forever on the streets left home as an adventure. [7] cited found out that the majority of these street children are HIV and AIDS victims whose demise has been exacerbated by the decapitation of the traditional social safety nets, outstanding of which is the extended family. As a result, the numbers of the street children continue to escalate considerably. It appears substantial gaps created demonstrate that none of the previous studies attempted to interrogate the parent-child attachment-bond experiences in childhood development.

The concern of this study is focused on children brought up in diverse backgrounds and environments which are suspected to ultimately contribute to children living and working on the streets which pose detrimental effects on their psycho-social life in later years. Contest that even though the children in urban areas are born in a world of contemporary technology such as cell phones, computers, and modern distractions, those children born and bred in the countryside are raised in poverty and deprivation. Clearly, whether a child is born in a world of plenty or poverty, comparable studies show that the predicament is the same. Some scholars have evaluated the phenomena and discovered that parents sometimes fall short to mark opportunities that forfeit attention to the basic needs of their children. [8, 9] contributed substantial perspectives on the psychological separation of a child from the parent that indisputably produces much more chaotic and long-lasting effects in adulthood.

As indicated earlier, several programmes have focused on presenting challenges of street children whilst omitting the source or root cause of the problem which persistently escort children to the streets. Discovered that the problem of the orphans and vulnerable children, inclusive of street children, has led to the formulation of many national and global obligations. There seems to have been a short fall in enduring and adopting parent-child attachment-bond relationship over the past decades which are holistic as it tends to encompass social, environmental and cognitive development aspects of children which are bound to bring

about change and roll back the tide of street children. This study therefore intends to support governments, international and national institutions to come up with comprehensive policies and sustainable intervention programmes that address the current problem. After this then, the attachment bond, especially amongst families and communities who work with children and street children themselves, is overlooked. Most importantly, this is an area for further research which could be taken on board in order to put a hem on the incessant occurrences of street children. It is because confirms that there has been minimal attention on the psychological functioning of the street children. The study intends to expand an appreciation of comprehensive policy interventions and sustainable strategies that could be used in raising children from early childhood. Above all, this could be used to create a new paradise for the children within their families. As it appears that there is death of literature on the psychological functioning of the street children in Zimbabwe this study aims to avert the possibility of the massive journeying to the inner cycles of the already overcrowded cities in Zimbabwe by children.

Theoretical Frameworks for the Study

This study is hinged on the Attachment Theory propounded by Ainsworth and Bowlby explain that the Attachment Theory was developed to explain the relationship between maternal deprivation and personality development. The Attachment Theory was developed to enlighten the relationship between parent and child that reinforce the social and cognitive development of the child and builds a bonding between a child and a caregiver. It has been observed that this attachment bond develops when the relationship between child and parent/caregiver is life giving resulting in the child either feeling secure when both have strong attachment or insecure when the bond is weak. Provides that a child feels secure in the presence of attachment figures, and the absence of those figures creates a number of psycho-social issues. Bowlby conducted a study on the significance of not having attachment bond with a parent at a particular stage in which he discovered that the long-term separation leads to distress and the child's reaction is described as desperate. corroborate with views when they state that if a parent fails to be present for the child and is frequently depressed, anxious, angry, grieving, pre-occupied, or otherwise

unable to be calm, the child's physical and emotional, intellectual development is bound to suffer. This is found in life situations where a child has the sensitivity to look for affection and stimulation from the parent or guardian. Added that the most determinant of attachment bond is not food, but rather care and responsiveness which prove to be indispensable. Thus, care and responsiveness relegate the foundation for the future mind-set of the child towards parents or guardians as well as life situations distinctively. According when the attachment bond is abandoned during the milestones of the child's development, the conditions damage the child's future capacity to develop relationships with parent and other people. Further discovered that attachment bond between child and a caregiver develops in phases for which is said to have come up with a framework for attachment phases. The attachment phases are discussed as follows:

The pre-attachment phase is relevant to children from birth to one month. Children are free to interact with anyone. In the making phase, children learn skills on how to interact with people. The process of attachment starts here. Children learn to express themselves by voice and to listen. The clear-cut attachment phase is experienced by children aged 8 months to two years. In this stage, babies miss their mothers and refuse to engage with people with whom they are not familiar. The last phase is the goal corrected partnership which covers children two years and older. In this phase children tend to look for an attachment figure for a purpose. They can cry, shout or follow the figure. At this stage, children are also aware of other people's feelings and guided by inner feelings and expectations Bowlby, termed internal working models.

Theory is appropriate for this particular study when examining the reasons why children prefer to leave their families enroute to the inner cycles of the Harare Central Business District in Zimbabwe.

Research Methods

Data was collected guided by attachment theory of parent-child attachment bond. Qualitative data was collected within the inner cycles of the HCBD through life history interviews, in-depth interviews, informal conversations, the snowballing method, Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) and semi-participant observations. [10] Productively collected

data on the lives of the street children of Harare using methods such as life history, semi-participant observation and informal conversations.

Sampling Techniques

Purposive sampling method was utilized to collect data from twenty street children (ten girls and ten boys) below the age of eighteen years to examine the parent-child attachment bonding early childhood development. The researcher gained confidence in the sampling techniques because successfully used purposive sampling with the street children of Harare. The snowballing method was also preferred for this study because street children are a category of consortium which is not very easy to find due to their characteristics and mobility. Similarly, an FGD was formed with five key informants to obtain varied views on their understanding on early childhood attachment and in their capacities as parents. Street vendors were believed to have sufficient knowledge on the daily lifestyles of children on the street. Other key informants were two professional social workers employed by the agency familiar with street children. A total of twenty street children and five key informants took part in the study.

Study Setting

The HCBD was selected for this particular study because it is one of the centres of attraction for many people. It is the major metropolitan city in Zimbabwe which tends to attract people of all kinds from all corners of the country. The street children phenomenon is becoming a permanent mark in the morphology of Zimbabwean cities. Street children are found in every corner of the streets, especially in areas where there are lots of business ventures. These corners in the Harare Central Business District (CBD) have become significant places where a lot of street children are involved in various money-making activities. For this particular study, the interviews were conducted during peak hours such that the street children sometimes had to leave the researcher and run to beg for money from motorists. After each interview session, the researcher provided some snacks to the children as a token of appreciation and bid them farewell peacefully. However, the researcher was aware not to persuade children to answer questions because in scientific research, enticing is considered unethical.

Data Analysis

The HCBD was selected for this particular study because it is one of the centres of attraction for many people. It is the major metropolitan city in Zimbabwe which tends to attract people of all kinds from all corners of the country. [11] cited confirm that the street children phenomenon is becoming a permanent mark in the morphology of Zimbabwean cities. Street children are found in every corner of the streets, especially in areas where there are lots of business ventures. The inner cycles where the study was conducted include; Herbert Chitepo, Fifth Street, Robison Manyika and Kenneth Kaunda and Rotten Row Road, Harare Gardens, Julius Nyerere Street, Kaguvi Street, corner Charter Road and Mbuya Nehanda, First Street, Samora Machel Avenues near the Presbyterian Church and Road Port, Chinhoyi Street, First Street, Julius Nyerere and Fourth Street. These corners in the Harare Central Business District (CBD) have become significant places where a lot of street children are involved in various money-making activities. For this particular study, the interviews were conducted during peak hours such that the street children sometimes had to leave the researcher and run to beg for money from motorists. After each interview session, the researcher provided some snacks to the children as a token of appreciation and bid them farewell peacefully. However, the researcher was aware not to persuade children to answer questions because in scientific research, enticing is considered unethical.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data was analysed using thematic content analysis. Qualitative data analysis specifically focused on themes and sub themes that surfaced throughout the data collection. Some of the themes and sub themes included demographic characteristics, reasons perpetuating street living, early childhood attachment experiences, challenges faced by street children, children's expectations and aspirations, possible interventions and suggestions for improvement. In the HCBD, proficiently used thematic content analysis to analyse the collected data from the street children.

Ethics in Research

Ethical considerations with street children and the issue

of confidentiality as put forward were observed with street children of the Harare Central Business District. The researcher first sought consent from the street children by making it clear to them that the information to be collected was purely for academic purposes. The budding researcher was therefore, aware of the sensitive nature of the study and the implications of observing informed consent. Defines ethical considerations as what is or not legitimate to do, or what is 'moral' when conducting research. For confidentiality purposes, the names and places given in the data presentation are not their real names and places. In view of that, pseudo-names were used. The participants interviewed agreed to partake in the study and the information was kept in confidence to protect the children.

Findings

The study presents its findings whilst guided by the theory propounded. The theory put more weight on the parent-child attachment bond experiences in early childhood. The study was undertaken in the inner cycles of the HCBD during pick hours when street children were mobile begging and scrounging for food. The streets were overcrowded and it was during pick hours when people were closing their businesses en route home. In that regard, this tended to benefit the normal life styles of street children at the expense of the research project as it was possible that the interview processes were overtaken by these events. It is fundamental to mention that these limitations were not a handicap to the success of the survey. Instead, the researcher was vigilant to keep pace with the movements whilst using professional skills.

Demographic Characteristics of the Street Children

The researcher interviewed twenty street children (ten boys and ten girls) with ages ranging from twelve to eighteen years. The researcher identified five key informants (two men and three women) with ages ranging from thirty to forty-five years to represent. It was assumed that they were knowledgeable on the life style of the street children. (Table 1) shows the number of street children by age, gender and place of origin.

Education of Street Children

Twenty children were asked about their level of education. Two reported they never had the chance to do primary education whilst eighteen indicated that they had done primary education, but not necessarily having completed it. None had completed secondary or tertiary education. When asked about their aspirations, nearly all expressed that they would like to go back to school. Those who had gone through primary education indicated that they would like to return to school to complete their education with the assistance from their grandmothers who would sell some family assets to generate cash for school fees. Confirm these study findings establishing that the majority of the street children wanted to go back to school though they cited lack of money for school fees as the major reason why they were not in school. All the same, none mentioned about a step parent and a few requested to be institutionalised in a home where they could be assisted to start income generating projects. (Table 2) shows the level of education of street children by gender.

Name	Age	Gender	Place Of Origin
Tawanda	12	M	Masvingo
Mucha	13	M	Gokwe
Banda	12	M	Karoi
Meza	14	M	Mozambique
Busi	13	F	Marondera
Dova	14	F	Shurugwi
Peter	13	M	Chirumanzu
Ndaka	15	F	Lower Gweru
Netsai	14	F	Mberengwa
Rasi	14	F	Murombedzi
Chirwa	12	M	Masvingo
Tapuwanashe	13	M	Gokwe
Hore	12	M	Mvuma
Fenza	13	M	Mozambique
Sipiwe	13	F	Marondera
Siyaziwa	14	F	Shurugwi
Peter	13	M	Chirumanzu
Chipo	15	F	Lower Gweru
Fadzai	14	F	Masvingo
Lia	15	F	Chirumanzu

Table1. Street Children Interviewed by Age, Gender and Place of Origin

The research established that early childhood experiences seem to have affected the educational status of the children living and working on the streets. The girl child appeared to have been the mostly affected than the boy child. This probably elucidates that traditionally, society preferred to educate the boy child at the expense of the girl child. Meza was asked about what he would like to do for his life. The boy responded that his plan was to return to Mozambique in the company of some people who promised him that if he gets US\$10.00, they would go with him. According to him, he was planning not to return to Zimbabwe when he gets to Mozambique. His intention was to go back to school and become a pilot after finishing his studies. These findings are supported cited in [12], who found out that “street children generally desire to go home again, although, many feel that this would only be possible if the factors that caused them to leave home in the first place were to change”

Reasons Perpetuating Street Living

Twenty street children were asked on the reasons that had brought them to the streets. Eight children cited child abuse by parents at home and eight reported that they were orphaned due to HIV and AIDS. Two cited domestic violence at home and the other two desired to earn a living in the street. None cited peer-pressure. (Table 3) below shows the potential dynamics that forced children to live and work on the street. (Table 3) shows that parent-child attachment bond experiences were weak such that they perpetuated children to run away to seek a conducive environment. The findings of this study demonstrate that the parent-child attachment bond was fundamental in addressing the problem of children living and working on the streets. These reasons are substantiated who found out that street children tend to be from multi-problem families that are often marked by matrimonial problems, abuse at home, domestic violence, substance abuse, ill-health, maternal deprivation and sometimes the death of a parent.

Focus Group Discussion (FGDs)

An FGD with five key informants was formed to give their views with regards to children living and working on the streets. Two professionals from a representative of the

Level attained	Gender	Frequency	Gender	Frequency	Total (%)
Never been to school	M	3	F	5	08(40%)
Primary	M	6	F	6	12(60%)
Secondary	M	0	F	0	00(00%)
Tertiary	M	0	F	0	000(%)
Total	-	9	-	11	20(100%)

Table 2. Levels of Education Attained by Gender

Reasons for leaving home	Gender	Frequency	Gender	Frequency	Total (%)
Child abuse	M	4	F	4	08(40%)
Orphaned due to HIV	M	4	F	4	08(40%)
Domestic violence	M	1	F	1	02(10%)
Peer pressure	M	0	F	0	00(00%)
Desire to earn income	M	1	F	1	02(10%)
Total	-	10	-	10	20(100%)

Table 3. Reasons for Leaving Home by Number and Gender

civic organizations assumed to have ample knowledge on the value of parent-child attachment relationship and three vendors who happened to spend most of the time selling their products alongside the streets were interviewed. The vendors had varied views on street children. In the focus group discussions, not all key informants considered lack of attachment bond in early childhood as a major contributor to the problem. Most of the street vendors regarded street children as dangerous young-criminals and irresponsible juveniles who are a nuisance to the public. Street vendors mentioned criminal activities as the foremost part of their bad behaviour. Only one female vendor articulated that street children probably ran away from their parents because of misdemeanours to engage in some illegal activities. Others cited economic hardships and family breakdown as the reason for children to come to the streets. Those from organizations familiar with street children cited socio-economic challenges and HIV and AIDS pandemic as the primary contributor to the problem. These perceptions are in line with researchers. They argue that street children are considered a blemish in the city, and a problem needing urgent solution. Confirmed that street children are treated negatively by the general public and the law enforcement agents. They are generally seen as 'vagrants', 'illegal vendors', 'thugs' or 'truants' by both the law and the public respectively.

Early Childhood Attachment Bond

The key findings of the study reveal that children attachment bond in early childhood are significant for the psycho-social and cognitive development of the child. When asked about the quality of attachment bond during early childhood, a significant number of children reported that they normally were left in the hands of a step parents, ageing guardians or other distant relatives. These guardians would (in the long run) fall short of giving them adequate love, care, acceptance and value. Some could not take them serious especially with regards to their social and cognitive developmental requirements. Established that these features are important because attachment bond develops through all the stages and is important in later years. Adopt Erikson's theory which focuses on the psycho-social stages of human development and the crisis associated with each stage in the event of non-fulfilment. Several children remembered the time when they were left under the care a step mother who ill-treated them. They narrated the kind of treatment they received as something undesirable.

Street children articulated that they preferred to continue with street life for fear of going back to the unchanged conditions where they constantly faced different forms

of ill-treatment such as domestic violence, excessive control, and domestic violence. Confirms that the most popular reason for leaving home was due to different forms of abuse and domestic violence which subsequently affected the parent-child attachment bond with care givers. Substantiates that attachment bond is deep and enduring emotional. It connects one person to another across time and space. In that regard, emotional bond plays a significant role in the development of a child from three years onwards. The key findings of this study reveal that the causes of the condition of children living and working on the streets were rooted in the inaccuracy of the attachment bond in early childhood development with parent/care givers. Though children did not enjoy being on the streets, they conveyed that the chances of going back home were uncultivated for some. (Table 4) shows some selected views on the experiences of parent-child attachment bond in early childhood by gender and percentage.

Givemore Case Study

The researcher met Givemore Banda, in First Street, Harare, who indicated that he was from Karoi in Mashonaland West. Givemore was watching a programme from a television screen in First Street of HCBD. As a point of entry, the researcher watched the television with him for a few seconds and on track asked about the channel that he was following. During the conversation, Givemore narrated his story.

“My name is Givemore Banda and I come from Mozambique. My father was working in Penhalonga where we settled as a family. I came to live and work on the street because my mother died of HIV and AIDS while we were still in Penhalonga and my father remarried to another wife

who ill-treated us such that we did not have emotional bond with her. Worse still, my father died of HIV and AIDS some years later which left our step mother with no option but to chase us away. She was not willing to stay with me and my sister. My sister got married at an early age and I decided to come to Harare where I spend most of the time begging and scrounging for food to survive”.

When asked about the kind of life he went through in early childhood, Givemore articulated that he experienced inadequate love and care, extreme poverty, hunger, child beating, and not going to school. Shonkoff explains that love, supportive care and secure attachments are critically important variables for positive children development. The early childhood treatment experienced by the above child shows the disparity with theory which proposes that attachment can be understood within an evolutionary context in that the care giver provides love, care, safety and security for the child.

Challenges Faced by Street Children

The interviewed street children cited many challenges they encountered whilst living and working on the streets. Many opted to sleep in the street corners, verandas that are seemingly dirty, awful and beyond human standards because they usually do not have any fixed abode. Out of twenty street children, four cited hunger and nine cited bullying by old boys. Ill-treatment by vendors was reported by five whilst two reported hazardous environments they faced in order to survive and cope with daily living. The study shows that street children experienced harsh conditions that characterised abuse, extreme poverty, overcrowding in the ghetto, lack of blankets to cover them at night, hunger, sexual harassment and bullying by older boys. Confirm

Types of attachment bond	Gender	Frequency	Gender	Frequency
“Lack of care and love”	M	13	F	7
“Inadequate food and clothes”	M	10	F	10
“Not well understood and accepted”	M	8	F	12
“Not acknowledged and valued”	M	6	F	14
“No freedom and proper care”	M	10	F	10
Not taken seriously		8		12

Table 4. Quality Child-Parent Attachment Bond Experiences

that street children are subjected to negative environments such as sexual exploitation, underpayment, being forced to work in hazardous environments and emotional and physical abuse by members of the community.

These challenges were faced by both boys and girls although the girls had problems peculiar to them which were different from those of the boys. Observed that the females in the streets faced gender-based violence as they complained that they were usually oppressed by the jealous street boys. The study discovered that the girls were found in their own places - not in First Street. They were seen and picked by those who most probably needed them for trafficking and for commercial sexual exploitation with the exception of one girl child who was guiding a parent who was a blind beggar along Fourth Street. Usually, most of these children attached to the beggars do have a home to go back to in the evening but for this particular case; the child reported they were coming from Epworth. The boys were found right in the city centre where they involved themselves in various illegal activities, death-dealing behaviours and scrounging for food.

The case of Muchazoveyi aged 10 years from Gokwe and Tawanda from Masvingo is another example. Muchazoveyi related that his mother died years back and the father remarried to another woman. The step mother was ill-treating them and there was unclear parent-child attachment bond. The situation forced him and his sister to run away to the city for safety. Muchazoveyi. They boarded a bus that was going to Harare without any bus fare in his pocket. He had to negotiate with the bus conductor who allowed him to board the bus without any bus fare. On arrival in Harare, Muchazoveyi settled in Mbare. He said they come into the city centre daily where they beg and scrounge for food. Sometimes they join other street children and sleep on verandas in the Avenues and hide their clothes and blankets to use during the night. When their clothes and blankets become dirty, they go and wash them in the Mukuvisi River, just on the outskirts of the city centre. The street child lamented that older boys intimidate and torment them. The older boys frequently employed smaller boys to sell DVDs and CDs for them and paid them less in cash or in kind. Found out that the common kind of payment was security, food, clothes and blankets to share during winter. Sometimes street children

bring soap to wash their clothes but the older boys come and steal it from them. Every now and then, they reported that they are usually left with nothing to use on themselves and to wash their clothes, discovered that street children are most of the times involved in dangerous activities such as stealing, selling drugs, begging from the moving cars and scavenging from the bins in order to survive. The older boys usually used the younger ones in various criminal activities. Confirmed these findings emphasising that seniority is acquired through tenure in streets and through fighting.

Children's Expectations and Aspirations

Street children were asked about the kind of treatment they would have preferred and expected in early childhood from their parents and care givers which could have prevented them from coming to live and working on the streets. A number of surprising responses emerged. Street children expressed that they expected love, acceptance, tolerance, a sense of belonging as well as sufficient resources to make their lives better. Normally, a sense of belonging is essential for emotional development of a child. Several of the street children stated that whilst happiness and time to play and rest were their prime expectations, they anticipated to be loved and fed, clothed and offered safety and to be understood and accepted. Found out that street children acknowledged that sometimes parents/ guardians or the society at large sought to solve children's problems without considering their views and perspectives. They easily forget that children have their own experiences and knowledge which lead to their individual feelings, preferences and choices in their lives. Street children expected to be acknowledged and valued as persons, to be taken seriously as well as liberated and taken care of by care givers. Street children had the desire to go back to school. One street child expressed that he would like to become a counsellor who can help others to get out of their situation and avoid what he was going through on the streets. Discovered that some street children would like to go to school while others need capital to start their small businesses.

Discussion

This section discusses the findings of the study guided

by Bowlby's theory which specifically deals with parent-child attachment relationships. The study was conducted amongst street children residing in the corners of the HCBD. The aim of the study was to determine the reasons that perpetuated the problem of street living by cross examining the parent-child attachment bond experiences in early childhood. The primary objectives were; to establish the levels of early childhood relationship experiences of street children; to explore key dynamics which are likely to generate and perpetuate the trend and to determine possible interventions and sustainable strategies that could be used to curb the occurrence of street living. The study found out that lack of parent-child attachment bond experience in early childhood seemed to generate and perpetuate the phenomenon of children living and working on the streets. Under various circumstances, the lives of street children become a dreadful. Their experiences are bound to force them to engage in outrageous activities such as smuggling, juvenile delinquency and prostitution. Family breakdown, orphan hood due to HIV and AIDS, domestic violence and abuse are some of the major contributing factors that perpetuate the street phenomenon. It is clear that, children do not usually receive adequate attachment bond in early childhood. [13] Avers that children need to nurture a lasting sense of security, love and affection within the environment in which they live. The case of Givemore Banda shows that he came to live and work on the streets because his mother died of HIV and AIDS while they were still young. The father then remarried and died a few years late because he had HIV and AIDS. The step mother ill-treated them and they ended up not having a good relationship with her such that the two children decided to leave home to live and work on the streets. Unmistakably, children are normally forced to live and work on the streets because of the unfavourable family backgrounds. Observes that available literature on street children reveals a striking lack of an in-depth study of the lives of these children in Zimbabwe.

During early childhood development, the breakdown in securing attachment bond such as Givemore's case is usually associated with failure to develop close parent-child relationships. Establish that attachment bond, which has an impact in later years, develops through all the stages of social and emotional growth of the child. This current study

discovered that lack of attachment bond in early childhood is the foremost contributor to street living. Street children are forced to detach themselves from their care givers or step parents simply because of lack of attachment bond set for them in early childhood. They convey lack of care, love, acceptance and not being valued. State that due to different emotional deficiency, separated children break the bond if they are abused socially, economically, physically and psychologically.

[14] State that since the 1960s, books, articles, and online sources encouraged parents to bond with their babies through investing more time and energy in charming them. Bowlby states that the attachment bond is not food, clothes or assistance but proper care and responsiveness that should be absolutely adequate. Sometimes parents have no time with their children and they separate at an early age due to a number of factors. A considerable number of street children expressed that they faced difficulties because they were under the care of either a step mother or a distant relative. Where parents' divorce or separate, the two look as if they do not take into consideration the impact of the decision they take. As such, attachment bond, which has its exceptional effects on the social and cognitive development of the child bound, is disregarded.

The Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development. Agree that physical, emotional and sexual abuse, economic exploitation, orphan-hood, street life and institutionalisation are a few of the conditions that appropriately serve as evidence to the mounting vulnerable state of street children. The primary and secondary care givers are typically found not be sensitive to the social, emotional and cognitive needs of children. The attachment bond is generally overlooked owing to lack of knowledge by scores of care givers who have children under their care. Point out that if a parent fails to be available for the child and is frequently depressed, anxious, angry, grieving, pre-occupied, or otherwise unable to be calm, the child's physical, emotional, and intellectual development may possibly suffer. In an interview, street children emphasised that step fathers and mothers have the tendency of not showing love and care at the time the children need them.

Literatures demonstrate that children at a tender age are habitually left in the hands of step parents who have no knowledge of the stages every child goes through. Indicate that in this contemporary society, care givers have no time to read, play, learn and struggle together with the growing child. The study underlines that a number of them have not undergone any form of preparation or training to enhance worth child care. Care givers are unsuccessful in embracing the experience and perceptive of Freud and Erikson's child developmental milestones which begin at birth and develops rapidly in the next two years and continues developing throughout life. The majority of contributors to this discourse uphold that a significant number of the children end up living on the streets and yet this aspect has failed to precipitate considerable research and publications with regards to the issue.

Street children indicated that step fathers or mothers fall short of engaging in the attachment bond with them. They even fail to provide essential requirements such as food and clothes. There has not been a well-established multi-stakeholder approach to this predicament and yet the study confirms that a good number of children leave home to look for ways to sustain themselves. A few scholars substantially critique in support of the attachment bond deficiency as a distinctive feature which considerably contribute to social, emotional and cognitive development. Mcloud propounds that the determinant of attachment is not food but care and responsiveness which proves to be significant in every attachment bonding. Expected to be loved, cared, valued, and acknowledged as a human being. His plans were to go back to school and become a pilot. In view of such chronicles, [15] propound that vulnerable children tend to be less valued or less loved. Otherwise, they can be assisted to become assets to society. An urgent wake-up call is for the new approaches which interrogate the child discourse interface towards social, environmental and cognitive development. Treated scores of emotionally disturbed children suffering from social, emotional and cognitive development. His conclusions should not be taken as something that is fictitious but rather a new thought that enhances the creation of a new heaven and new earth for the street children. Although the minority of the street children expressed that living and working on the street gives them optimism of endurance and hope for the future, the mainstream articulated that

they would like to go back to school to enhance their life skills. Muchazoveyi, for example, stressed that when he goes back to school, he would like to become a counsellor who can help others to liberate themselves so that they get out of their situation and avoid what he was going through on the streets.

Erikson and Freud deposited the human developmental psychology feature as being the foremost factor in parent child relationship. Indisputably, it is the work of these early scholars that gave insight into understanding that attachment bond in early childhood plays a major role in making contact with significant others from birth up to about adulthood. This was echoed with evidence by other developmental psychologists who propose that the transition bond starts from babyhood, childhood until adulthood correspondingly. Apparently, some scholars further added that there is a growing separation between the child and the mother up to the point of the next crisis which Freud refers to as the anal stage. Erikson correspondingly, calls "Autonomy vs. Shame, Doubt" crisis which marks the transition as the bona fide beginning of separation. According to Freud, "Play age", and that is from 3-5 years, culminates in the "initiative vs. guilt" crisis.

The child is both in comparative and separation stage which, if not handled well, may possibly be the progression regarded as the authentic foundation of severance where the child takes over a cultural character and makes it his or her own. At this stage, the child experiences remorse at not being able to match up realistically. Freud suggests that initiative requires the development of "Superego" which the agency within the child internalises the demands of society and more or less routinely proceed as a capacity for self-discipline whilst peers become important. The society and child can possibly fall short of addressing the superego dilemma which may force the parent-child detachment and thus the possibility of a problem in childhood.

Bowlby's supposition reminds one that when attachment bond is inaccurately abandoned during Freud and Erikson's milestones, the situation becomes dreadful and not reversible. The disparity possibly causes damage to the child's future capacity for developing attachment bond, especially with parent and significant others. Without the parent-child bond, the child is likely to desire abandoning home and parents, opting for street living. Studies

establish that children with ambivalence attachments are more likely to experience difficulties in maintaining intimate relationships in later years. Thus, countless authors consider this relationship to be extremely major for the healthy and continued existence of the child, even in later years.

Analyse the complexities concerning the issue of street children. They acknowledge that socio-economic factors combined with migration and HIV and AIDS have an impact on street children. The study deliberated to obtain exhaustive insights into the issues, challenges and prospects in respect of this assemblage. It was evidently questioned and concluded that traditional support systems which cushion susceptible members of society in times of need have been eroded. When such a scenario occurs, children tend to discover that they are being abandoned and ignored habitually by their parents or guardians. As a result, children can be more contented if they abscond from home and journey towards the metropolitan cities where there are bright lights and freedom. Focused scholars however promulgate that physical separation can cause anxiety and anger that is followed by sadness and despair due to unending signs of rejection, emotional inadequacy, communication breakdown, prolonged absence or abandonment. The danger is that children disengage themselves and meander in the bright light streets of inner cities at an early age.

Highlights that mother-child and father-child relations are definitely important during early childhood, but may be differentially impacted by the inter-parental relationship such as the conflict strategies that parents use. Agree that children know their problems but they usually drift from home and do not have the knowledge to understand the difference between their problems and the symptoms. Broadly, it is only after solving the attachment bond in early childhood development which is important for their social, environmental and cognitive development.

Holistic and comprehensive policy interventions will bring about change and roll back the tide of street children in Zimbabwe. In the past, there have been key underlying factors that restricted the success of instituting policies and programmes that profoundly address the challenges of street children. Until recently, multi-stakeholders such as [16] and the local Government Administration have been applauded for their vibrant approaches to address

the problem of children living and working on the streets. Seeing the increasing number of children drifting en route towards metropolitan cities, the Zimbabwe National Council for the Welfare of Children, in collaboration with undertook studies designed at compiling comprehensive data on the dilemma of street children in the inner cities of Harare and Chitungwiza. Such studies identified that due to outstanding inadequate human and financial resources, planners have been hampered from designing and implementing effective plans for street children. Previous studies have shown that wherever street children appear, most of the programmes bypass them and they are usually not appearing in the plans. Literature indicates that the growing numbers and the image street children portray in the metropolitan cities is one of the key factors that hinder success in designing comprehensive policies and programmes for street children. The planners who have the responsibility of providing basic needs to street children disputing that the presence of this particular group offends particularly those administrators who are responsible for running the city properly. In that regard, street children continually encounter negative societal perceptions and reactions which are likely to be punitive and anti-social resulting in children developing delinquent behaviours.

Interventions

Policy and intervention programmes countrywide have been spotlighted in the quest to curb the problem of street children. Suggest that the National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (NAP for OVC) be put in place to address the plight of children in difficult circumstances. The revised version of the document encompassed issues pertaining to the premise of children on the streets. However, in spite of best efforts by responsible institutions, not much has been well thought-out in terms of its proper context and framework in addressing the root causes. Hence, anticipated endeavours to counteract various categories of street living have not been successful in their proposed actions. Efforts have been besieged on presenting problems that are not decisive to the predicament other than underlying problems that are somewhat significant to the social and cognitive development of children specifically. Established that the existing programmes have relatively tended to address the symptoms rather than the casual factors.

In line with the above, efforts to reduce the number of street children, specifically in the HCBD, has not been achieved over the past decades. Instead, the problem persistently remains a decisive dilemma. The problem continually emerges. Mella found out that sleeping both at home and on the street, the child finally chose the street when home conditions were no longer supportive due to death of a parent(s) or guardian or due to increasing poverty and or child abuse. Research based action on comprehensive policies and programmes provides that targeting families, communities and institutions as well as harmonized stakeholder approaches to curb the root causes of street living is now imperative. The attachment theory by [17] and action-based research can generate important durable solutions with regards to early childhood development. These initiatives encourage the creation of more comprehensive interventions and sustainable programmes to support early-parent relationships amongst families. The families and children who have been overlooked over the past decades can consequently be encouraged to re-enforce the early attachment bond for the cognitive development of children which can only be met in families and communities respectfully. In view of that, other studies challenge the ever-increasing misuse of best practices in bringing up children which leaves a long-term blow on children's prospective personalities for later life. The endeavour is to adopt the initiatives in the form of participative model of child rearing practices.

Conclusion

This study examined the reasons why children prefer to live and work in the inner cycles of urban cities in Zimbabwe. The specific objectives were to; establish the levels of early childhood relationship experiences of street children; explore the key dynamics which are likely to generate and perpetuate the trend and finally, to determine possible interventions and sustainable strategies that could be used to curb the occurrence of street living. The study discovered that parent-child relationships in the contemporary society

are weak. Guided by the attachment theory propounded, the key findings of the study confirmed that this results in children preferring to en route to the inner circles of urban cities for 'life giving' and 'brighter opportunities'. Unfortunately, street children find themselves living under difficult circumstances which now call for comprehensive interventions and sustainable programmes to curb the phenomenon in early childhood. There is need to place in force action research to generate co-ordinated efforts amongst policy makers, international agencies, families, communities, educationists and Churches. The designing of policy formulation and programmes should be in the form of participative model to educate families, communities and children. These programmes need to take into consideration step families and distant relatives as a priority. The study recommends that the Government and agencies concerned with the problem could intervene by strengthening policy formulation and programmes in the form of participative model to educate families, step parents, communities and children sequentially to curb the appalling episode. There is need for comprehensive awareness campaigns for prevention and long-term solutions and to seriously engage in training that determines the protected attachment bond from early childhood. Thus, multi-stakeholder approach with adequate funding and skilled personnel for co-ordination purposes is needed to curb the challenges of children living and working on the streets.

Acknowledgements

This study was part of a research project initiated by the researcher over a period of two years at the Department of Social Work, University of Zimbabwe. I would like to thank all who made this study possible, particularly the children living and working on the streets that volunteered to participate in this study and shared their thoughts and feelings on the topic under research. Most profoundly, without their support, this study would not have been successful. I thank you all.

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Citation: Takaza Chipo Stella and Chikwaiwa K. Bella. "Early Childhood Experiences in Zimbabwe: A Study on Street Children in the Harare Centralbusiness District" *J Glob Entrep Manage* (2023): 102. DOI: [10.59462/3068-174X.1.1.102](https://doi.org/10.59462/3068-174X.1.1.102).