

Coping Mechanisms of Street Children to Hard Life of the Streets in Nakuru Town, Kenya

Betty Chepngetich^{1*}, Kibet Ngetich², Eric Kiprono Bor³

¹⁻³Department of Peace, Security and Social Sciences, Egerton University, Kenya

*Corresponding author

Betty Chepngetich

Article History

Received: 18.01.2018

Accepted: 27.01.2018

Published: 15.02.2018



Abstract: The article answers the question of what survival mechanisms aid the life of street children to continue living in the street in Nakuru Town. The phenomenon of street children in urban centres globally has been increasing at an alarming rate. However, the efforts to resolve it have failed partly due to lack of adequate knowledge by the concerned stakeholders on the strategies to employ because of the street children way of life in the street. Children in the streets face many challenges as the life they lead is largely inhumane with unending abuse and suffering that jeopardizes their lives. Hence, it is important to understand the reasons why they resist rehabilitation and choose to continue with suffering in the streets. Limited studies have been done on the factors that make street children resist rehabilitation and choose to continue with hard life in the streets. The study established that street children are able to earn money through various activities that they engage in. They are also obliged to pay membership fee, which assures them of security and territorial accessibility. The group-members look for food brings them to the base where the base commander administers equitable distribution. The study recommends that interventions targeting rehabilitation of street children should understand the social economic and coping mechanisms of street children to street life in order to apply appropriate intervention.

Keywords: Coping Mechanisms, Street Children.

INTRODUCTION

Children who work and live in the streets have posed a great challenge in Kenya. It is an undeniable fact that these children are part of the urban scene in the country. The street children cope with harsh realities of the street every day. It is apparent that efforts directed towards alleviating this phenomenon have achieved very little success as large numbers of children are moving to find an alternative life on the streets. Available literature on the phenomenon of street children in Kenya focuses on the challenges that street children faces on the streets, health and nutrition among street children, the activities they engage in, their family background and other concerns. However, limited studies have been done on the factors that make street children resist rehabilitation.

Street children phenomenon has continued to be a major social problem in the world. The phenomenon is not new and not restricted to certain parts of the world [1]. It is one of the greatest challenges of urbanization as well as political and economic growth. Social inequalities and deprivation are prominent features in the contemporary societies, and the presence of vast numbers of children living and working in the streets in unsupervised and unprotected situations provide a typical example of this phenomenon [2]. However, despite their existence, the

problem and nature of street children varies from country to country depending on the size and the level of urbanization.

The street children phenomenon is universal [3]. Past studies have estimated that there are 100 million street children in the world [4]. The United Nations International Children's Education Funds (UNICEF) estimates that out of 100 million children who call streets their home, only 20 million children live in the streets, without their families. In South America alone, there are 40 million street children [5], there are an estimated 10,000-12,000 homeless children in South Africa [6], while in Kenya, there are 250,000-300,000 children living and working on the streets with more than 60,000 of them in Nairobi [7]. The number has increased in recent decades because of wide spread recession, political turmoil, civil unrest, increasing family disintegration, urban and rural poverty, natural disasters and rapid industrialization [8]. In Africa particularly, street children is relatively a recent phenomenon that reflects the patterns of urbanization and advent of capital economy [9; 10; 11].

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the social network and resilience theories. The target population of the study was street children living in Nakuru Town. The unit of

analysis was the street children in Nakuru Town. The study applied multi-stage sampling techniques that comprised of purposive, stratification and snowballing in selecting the respondents. Four wards categorized as informal settlement were purposively selected that are considered to be the breeding ground for street children. Street families that comprise of street children operating together were identified with the leader of each group sampled purposively. Street children in every group were stratified categorically according to their gender into males and females. In every stratum, representatives were selected using snowball sampling in reference to those street children who happen to have been enrolled in rehabilitation centers and later came back to the streets. Social workers in street children rehabilitation centers as well as the county children officers in Nakuru Town were selected purposively to give more information concerning the factors influencing street children resistance to rehabilitation. Observation, interview and life histories methods were used in data collection. Data analysis used both qualitative and quantitative methods where analyzed data was presented in tables, pie charts and cross tabulation followed by interpretations and discussions in order to address the objectives and research questions.

Coping mechanism to street life

A resilience lens helps us to understand how street children and youth adapt to their environment. As Street children adjust to life in the streets, rather than being the most victimized, the most destitute, the most psychologically vulnerable group of children, they display resilience and creative coping mechanisms for growing up in difficult environments [12]. This view is also pointed out by Boyden, [13], who comments that, evidence shows that growing up in the context of constant change and contradiction can for some children be a source of strength. He further observes that regardless of being continuously exposed to risk factors such as poverty, the harsh conditions on the streets, they operate within the structures they create on the streets which promote resilience and teach them how to solve problems and successfully handle challenges. The study established the specific coping mechanisms by street children in Nakuru Town.

Mtonga, [14] argues that even though children are considered to be vulnerable, studies indicating the dynamic, interactive nature of child development and highlighting children's coping strategy in adverse settings, challenge the assumption that all or even most children are helpless in the face of turbulence and strife. The street children display resilience which is understood as how people react and cope when faced with adversity. It is used exclusively when referring to the maintenance of positive adjustments under challenging life conditions; resilience is therefore the manifestation of positive adaptation despite significant life adversity [15]. The street life is full of hardships yet

children who should be under the care of adults manage it on their own.

Responses to adversity are understood and described in terms of exposure to risks and positive adaptation. Risks refer to variables that increase individuals' likelihood of psychopathology or their vulnerability to negative development outcomes [16]. Risk encompasses negative life situations that are known to be associated with adjustment difficulties. Ayuku, [17], points out that emotionally; the greatest risk to which most street children are exposed to is the loss or lack of an adequate relationship with an adult caregiver. The risks that children on the street encounter include factors such as poverty, hunger, abuse, exposure to weather elements etc. Positive adaptation is defined in terms of behaviorally manifested social competence or success at meeting developmental stage risk [18]. The current study established some of the coping mechanisms among street children that enable them to respond to negative life situations.

Societies have their own approaches to the management of adversity and to healing, depending on their concepts of causality in misfortune, of wellbeing, power, personhood and social ties. These notions tend to structure the way people experience and are affected by environmental stresses [19]. Based on this notion, Boyden [20], stresses that as we are looking at children, it is important to note that although their responses may not be the same as adults', their way of responding to adversity should always be understood with reference to the social, cultural and moral contexts in which they live. The study sought to understand these variables as regard to street children response to adversity.

Even though children are considered to be vulnerable, studies indicating the dynamic, interactive nature of child development and highlighting children's coping strategy in adverse settings challenge the assumption that all, or even most, children are helpless in the face of turbulence and strife, children have considerable inner resources as individuals and collectively for coping with different challenges. Street children as any social entity, have distinct culture with a structure that defines roles and responsibilities of each member. They depend less on their families and more on the meaningful ties they have established within their groups [21]. It is important to find out their structure and how it binds them together in Nakuru Town. According to Ayuku, [22] street children organize their psychosocial attributes primarily within the framework of the realities available to them and the support existing in those realities. They seek constructive adaptive patterns, even though their own lives have been marred by loss, abuse and exploitation. The street children have formed strong supportive ties and caring relationships and they cope actively with

their lives on the streets rather than homes or institutional environments.

The general notion held that children exposed to adversity and hardships cannot cope and adjust properly compared to adults is not all true as a significant proportion of children exposed to difficulties within their families and communities remain resilient although the experience of multiple stressors is likely to have a cumulative effect which ultimately may overwhelm coping capacity. There is evidence that growing up in the context of constant change and contradiction can for some children be a source of strength [23]. The researcher established that street children go through many challenges but they manage to survive them.

Street children could be said to be one category of children that adapt with contradictions in their lives. Regardless of being continuously exposed to risk factor such as poverty, the harsh conditions on the streets, they operate outside structures such as the family, the community, and the school that promote resilience and teach them how to solve problems; however, they successfully handle challenges in life. Regardless of the absence of these structures, street children demonstrate the ability to meet their basic needs through the achievements of positive adjustments in the face of adversity, encapsulating the view that adaptation in a child experiencing new life “trajectories” defies “normative” expectations [24]. The complexity of the stress being faced by street children means that no one coping response may be appropriate, but different strategies over time may be more efficacious [25]. Survival over the challenges is one aspect that the street children have mastered very well.

According to Psychological researchers in South Africa who were studying on the characteristics of street children put forward that, street children tend to be tough since they have social support from their street friends and these can be inform of being accepted, understood and also having company [26]. On the same note, street children in Ghana put forward that they trusted their friends more than adults and were always curious about their intentions. Whatever the street children do, they do it as a team for example they work together to earn money and also in search of food which is shared amongst themselves [27]. As this enhances solidarity, the study found out how it is exactly carried out in Nakuru Town by the street children to enhance their survival.

Street children have strong and influential peer relationships. Street peers sustain and assist one another to survive daily. In Latin America and Guatemala Street children were mentioned as main source of trust. In these areas it was evident that street children lived as a family caring for one another and taught one another various ways and methods for survival. They have good

communication skills and problems are solved amongst themselves [28, 29]. However, to the street children, this aspect is positive in regard to their welfare, on the other hand it counters the interventions intended to alleviate suffering for these children.

The situation of disadvantaged children in Africa is particularly precarious. OAU/UNICEF [30] report has put the plight of Africa’s disadvantaged children in especially difficult circumstances as those who represent one of the continent’s most urgent and devastating problems. This scenario robs our children of their childhood and our societies of their future, denying too many Africa’s sons and daughters their inalienable rights, their most basic needs and fair chance at life worth living. If countries do not act now to rescue those who suffer and sacrifice the most, future human and economic losses from such in action will be intolerable and perhaps irreversible. The report continues to point out that, the process of children going to the streets to work in legal or illegal businesses to supplement family income contributes in part to the later phenomenon of street children. Thus, ‘children can be best understood as a product of their context and socialization, and this includes aspects of their families and socio- economic background.

Socio – economic influences greatly contribute to the forced situation street children often find themselves in. Poverty also could have led to increased stresses in their former homes, which is sometimes manifested in the form of abuse, abandonment, and neglect. The parents often socialize their children based upon their experience. Generally, children’s parents also suffered abuse and neglect from their own parents. Parents of street children repeat the same behavior with their own children, thus, contributes to the children choosing the street as their home [31]. The vicious cycle identified above is one that interventions targeting street children are meant to stop and help them lead better lives.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Coping Mechanisms among Street Children that make them resist Rehabilitation

In the previous discussions, it is clearly seen that over time, street children adopt to street life however difficult it is. The discussions stated that children create networks of relationships and use them to enjoy the street life. The third objective of the study was to establish the coping mechanisms of street children to hard life of the streets in Nakuru Town. The copying actors analyzed include; activities they perform on the street, how they appreciate life on the street, survival techniques on the street, social support from the *base* leadership, experience on the street, challenges and how they overcome them on the street, best survival technique and their long term plans on the street.

Activities performed by the Street Children

In order to understand the coping mechanisms of street children to street life and that make them resist rehabilitation in Nakuru Town, the study first sought to

analyze activities performed by the children that keep them on the street. The analyzed activities included; moving in groups for protection, looking for food, mugging people, manual work and stealing.

Table-1: Activities Street Children Were Involved with

Activity	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev.
Move in groups	97	1	2	1	0.14
Look for food	97	1	2	1	0.32
Mug people	97	1	2	2	0.44
Manual work	97	1	2	1	0.32
Stealing	97	1	2	2	0.51

Table 1 was used to analyze the activities street children were involved in within their groups. The first column is list-wise of the activities followed with the number of respondents who responded to the question, minimum was the minimum response 1 represented by yes which meant that the street children were involved in such activities, 2 represented no which meant that they were not involved in such activities. Mean was the mean between 1 (yes) and 2 (no) and their respective standard deviations. The study established that the respondents agreed that the street children were involved in the following activities; moving in groups for protection, looking for food and doing manual work.

However, the street children were not so open to talk about stealing and mugging. This finding is in contrast with other researchers. As for the dangers of street-life, involvement in illegal activities should be considered as the most significant. Researchers have shown that there is a relationship between being a street child and criminal behavior [32]. The longer a child stays on street; the more likely it is to enter into illegal activities either as being the illegal or a victim; boys are likely to involve in petty crime while girls might engage with prostitution. These are attempts to support themselves on street, which is why they try to find work, seek money, deal with drugs and engage in theft [33]. This was one coping mechanisms they did not like. They probably thought that if they let people know that the mug and steal from others, they will be arrested.

The study by, Lalor and others [34] states that, in most third world cities, they are the shadowy presences who fill the background of daily life, doing odd jobs, scavenging for food, begging and stealing. Street children are involved in various other odd jobs such as jobs in parking areas, working as petty-hawkers, peddlers, messenger boys, and shoe shiners cleaners, helpers in shops and establishments, gas stations, garages, as laborers in construction sites, small factories and institutions. All these occupations have a destructive effect on their behavior pattern and social living.

Once children are on the street they have to work in order to survive. The work done by street children appear to be very similar worldwide and the

differences reflect the economic development of the country concerned [35]. Within the environment of the street, children compete to find the best opportunities for work, which means that they are often located in places where there is dense economic activity such as market places, taxi stands, railway stations and in city centres. In such places, they can offer their services to passengers, shops, restaurants, and hotel owners [36]. The different gangs in the street possess these specific places as their own territory thus having it as one of the survival strategy for the street children.

More often than not those who cannot find work, beg and steal to earn a living, and they acquire considerable understanding and coping skills to help them survive [35, 37]. One of the key informant clearly stated that new recruits are oriented on street tricks such as respect, politeness and ways of begging as a survival strategy for them. It is evident that they have all identified specific places in the streets where they earn more money and they guard it as their territory. Sometimes, others move from one place to another searching for job opportunities and trying their luck in begging. For instance, a street boy narrated how this happens on a daily basis

When I wake up in the morning around 6a.m, I first rush to the market where I help a certain lady to off load her luggage to her stall, she normally gives me kshs.10 and a cup of tea with a banana. After that I come to the parking lot and help drivers, I earn something like kshs.50. That is somehow enough to carry me throughout the day. So I just move around within the town and even end up around lunch hour watching Televisions in shops that sell electronics (A street boy, 15 years).

Most of the street children have gotten used to a routine life everyday as their coping skill, they mark the territory hence being assured of a consistent income. This enables them feel that they have power and cannot be put under the control of an adult. From the foregoing discussion, survival strategies are specific behaviors and actions that make street children develop positive adaptations crucial for enduring street life. Morakinyo [38] describes the organization of activities among children of the street in Yaoundé, Cameroon. Car

washing is organized according to age group. The groups consisting of older children strategically occupy the most lucrative geographical locations, whereas the younger age groups occupy less and less profitable locations as their age decreases.

Children move on from one group to the next, as they get older. The gangs provide them with the protection that they have lost by leaving home or never received from their parents. The gang is a substitute for parental protection, and is considered a family when the ties between the children are strong. Oliviera Ribeiro and Trench Ciampone [39] find evidence in Porte Alegre, Brazil, that children neglected by the parents or who are victims of abuse, form a new family with other children of the street. The street family is organized like a real family, with a mother and father, uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters. All the members of the family have a specific role to play, and respect the rules of the family. However, these rules are not as constraining as they can be in a normal family.

Children in gangs support each other when they are attacked, and younger children in particular, are less likely to have their earnings or goods stolen [40]. Gangs protect children against police aggression and harassment, and sometimes against the population. In all developing countries, children of the street are subjected to assaults from the police. The reason for this is that majority public opinion considers children of the street to be delinquents who are a threat to society. Gangs fulfill the affective needs of its members, and protect them in times of illness and pain. Gangs constitute a family, and like a family, its role is to care for and love, and protect and emotionally support its members.

In street children's gangs rules are of great importance; the rules represent a pointer of what kind of social action is expected in that area. Rules can be connected to a regulating role with sanctions embedded, or they can play a part in constituting meaning. Sharing is one example of the rules and expectations which constitutes meaning to the group and makes the group a part of a survival strategy. One of the key informant stated that, if a child refuses to share with any of the other children in the group the child may experience exclusion from the group as a sanction. The gang represents part of the basis from which the street children mobilize. In that way the gang is part of both their strategy and their mobilization. In one of the focus group discussion, the members stated that the street children use the gang to fulfill their strategy of material and emotional safety. However, conformity and obedience to the norms and regulations is highly upheld, this promotes peer acceptance into the street sub-culture, strengthening their networks of relationships and social bonding that impact positively on the survival of these children in the streets.

In the gang, the street children do the work that suits their age and they help each other with money. As we have seen, the big boys often have control because they are stronger. But even the street children whose lives are characterized by freedom have rules. Rules represent the power aspect of routines and daily life. Mostly, the eldest boys are on top of the hierarchy because they have the highest status. One of the rules for the younger children is restriction of information. Whatever the big boys have done either to them or to others, they should keep it to themselves. As mentioned, the older boys have ways of sanctioning if the behavior of younger or weaker boys does not please them. These ways of sanctioning provides the older boys with a moral imperative to control the younger boys. The study interviewed one of the street boys at Railways base concerning their coping mechanism and recorded the following;

We are highly organized on the street with rules, commanders and distributed duties. Our commander is called jango and his work is to make sure that we are safe from attacks from other gangs, give signals to avoid police sweeps, equitably distribute resources, and discipline those who do not follow the rules. Jango commands us to move in gangs for self-protection, look for food and bring it to the base for sharing, do any manual work for example carrying luggage and bring the income to jango. Occasionally we are forced to mug and steal when things are tough in order to survive although this vice is highly discouraged. (A street boy, 17 years)

The role of the leader is to maximize the networks in order to enhance communication. They encourage the street children to avoid places and activities that compromise their survival on the streets. This continuous practice enables the street children to attain their collective goals on the streets without being interfered with. If there is a deviant member of the group, the leader has the authority to administer punishment based on the crime committed.

Survival on the Street

This section presents the analysis on how the street children survive on the street. Through a focus group discussion with the Children Remand the following were the observed survival techniques by the street children;

When children come to the street, they come in with high hopes; living easy life, plenty of food, frees clothing and protected shelter. Immediately they are ushered into the street life, their high hopes all over sudden deems as reality on the street dawn on them. They therefore must develop survival techniques in order to continue with their lives on the street. One of the survival techniques is to be tough because street life is equally tough. This means that the child is trained the para-military survival skills. They are taught how to

fight mercilessly, how to run and how to hide. They are also taught how to be dirty so that people naturally avoid touching them. The second induction step is taught how to move in gangs to avoid being attacked by other gang members. In the gang, they are taught chains of command and leadership within the gang. The gang leader commands them to go out and look for food in the dust bin and bring it to the base for sharing. They are also taught how to identify both plain clothes and uniform police and which direction to run. They are taught how to go to the market and do manual labour and bring back the money to the base. They are taught how to move swiftly in search of competitive opportunities in the streets. During hard times they are taught how to steal from people, how to mug especially women and also how to forcefully beg from the public. (Focus group discussion, July 2016).

From the above findings, street children are initiated into survival techniques, the researcher was interested in understanding how all this is done, and one of the base leaders who was a key informant, informed that, they have organized rules and regulations that guide them and there is minimal deviances towards it. If one of them goes against the rules, they are either expelled from the base or beaten up by the others.

The established networks of relationships and communication among the street children ensure that new recruits go through the system. One of the group leaders attested to this and further added that other survival skills include code of dressing where the members are encouraged to wear dirty and tattered clothes for them to look desperate in order to lure the public to give them something when they beg. However, their clean clothes are kept safely in their hiding places so that whenever there are feasts, parties or holidays, that is the time they put them on.

Another survival skill as reported by the respondent is the art of telling lies so as to attract assistance from the public. The information they give to organisations and other well-wishers often do not reflect their true life. In addition, they also have codes of

identity where they change their original names in order to conceal their identity. The researcher observed that during the interview, they were could not discuss freely unless they were assured of safety. They also gave a warning that no photos or videos were going to be taken of any one of them. These findings show that the street children have learnt basic survival skills that enable them to survive the street life. One of the respondents reported that:

Sometimes we do not know the intentions of people who approach us and wants to engage us in a discussion. For security reasons, we never tell them details about us unless we get to know their objectives. Some people have bad intentions while others gain money through our desperate situations. (A street boy, 17 years old).

The researcher established that the street children have coded language which helps them in their survival in the streets. One of them reported that:

We need to have our unique language that describes our lives here in the streets, for example, for a policeman we call karau, our group leader is mbuyu, money is called doo, to feel hungry is kukuwa na maubao. When there is a possibility of attack we say ni kungori, to eat in the coded language is kumanga. (A street boy, 16 years old).

The coded language is a survival skill that brings about coordination of their daily activities as well as helping them avoid incidences of danger. They can warn themselves of the presence of a security officer without being noticed. The researcher established that the street children have learnt to identify the security officers both uniformed and ununiformed. They also uphold the principle of confidentiality on matters that concern each one of them. This minimizes their chances of being suspected or arrested.

Survival Tactics

Street children have designed several ways of survival while in the street illustrated in table 2 below.

Table-2: Survival Tactics by Street Children

Tactic	Frequency	Percent
Dodging authority	24	25
Scavenging	43	44
Stealing	30	31
Total	97	100

The study established that majority of the respondents 43(44%) observed that street children survived through scavenging, 30(31%) survived through stealing and 24(25%) survived through dodging the authorities. This finding therefore indicated that street children use various tactics to survive on the street with scavenging in the highest priority followed by stealing and dodging the authority. The study by

Mtonga [41] observes that a common coping strategy that street children employ is scavenging, street children may survive by scavenging for food in waste bins and rubbish dumps. During fieldwork, the researcher established that Gioto was the biggest dumpsite in Nakuru Town and that is where most street children scavenge. It was further observed that scavenging earns

them more money as they get scrap metals that they sell to recycling companies.

However, regardless of the resistance children face, some of them rely on scavenging. It is common to see street children, especially young boys scavenging through the garbage in the hope of finding something to eat mostly leftover food or spoiled food thrown away by restaurant owners. They pick all kinds of foodstuff ranging from fruits to discarded raw meat from the butchers shops, which they cook in cans. As bad and deplorable the situation the children were in, they seem to have little or no options but survive through scavenging and some of them seemed content with whatever food they found.

On stealing as a survival tactic Mtonga [42] observes in his interview that; when children cannot find money through begging or trading, they turn to stealing in order for them to have it. During FGD with my male participants, they all admitted that picking pockets in the crowded places was a major source of money. Moyo, a participant in the group discussion had this contribution:

"We all steal from people in the market and the streets, sometimes we get luck, and someone can steal and get a lot of money if he or she is not found. Someone can be lucky and steal a nice cell phone and sell it at a good price. Sometimes we attack people who walk alone in the night, especially women, and then get their money and other valuable belongings they might have and sell them to get money."(A street boy, 16 years old).

The researcher established that most of the time, the group or gang leaders discourage stealing because when found, the police will do sweeps and it will hinder their harmonious living. The respondents attested to their leaders' perspective even though they maintained the fact that if they are not lucky in begging, they have one alternative of stealing or pick pocketing but claim that they do it careful to avoid being caught and taken to police custody. Mtonga [43] further supports the finding by observing that Children are able to meet their basic needs through begging, stealing, scavenging, trading sex and so forth. Both boys and girls employ their agency in their everyday lives on the streets. Although, boys have a wider range of alternatives and options of meeting their basic needs while girls seem to mainly depend on boys for money and food which they acquire from an exchange with sex. This was put clear by one of the girls in an FGD:

Let me tell you the truth, here in the streets, if you are girl, there is only one main way of getting money, you have to sleep with the big boys. If you don't have sex with these boys, you will not have money to buy food. So during the day they will give you money and then at night, they expect you to have sex with them. (A street girl, 15 years old).

The reason girls do not have a wide range of alternatives to meet their needs on the street is due to social norms that perceive certain activities not to be appropriate for girls and on the streets, there are very few activities that are considered suitable for girls. This leaves girls with no choice but to trade sex for food or money. In support of this finding, Mtonga [44] interviewed Police officer in Zambia to establish why they arrest street children and this is what they said;

Street children in Zambia were a threat to the security of the citizens and were a "time bomb" and need to be dealt with before they got out of control. "Most people are afraid to walk at night because of these children attack them and steal from them. And sometimes breaking into shops to steal, this why we arrest them and discipline them. We don't beat to kill them, we just want to control them" (A police Officer, Zambia).

To him, the beatings are purely punitive or "correctional" in approach: as he had put it, they are used to "teach the children a lesson". From the discussion with the respondents, street children know what is required of them. They work hard to avoid incidences that will compromise their survival in the streets.

CONCLUSIONS

The third objective was to establish the coping mechanisms of street children to hard life of the streets in Nakuru Town. Findings from this objective showed that the street children were involved in the following activities; moving group for protection, looking for food and doing manual work. They disagreed that the street children were involved in mugging and stealing from people. The children are highly organized in the street with their commander *jango* well obeyed and give instructions on what should be done with clear line of feedback and reporting mechanisms. The study established the following to be some of the survival techniques by the street children; one of the survival techniques is to be tough because street life is equally tough. This means that the child is trained the *para-military survival skills*. They are taught how to fight mercilessly, how to run and how to hide. They are also taught how to be dirty so that people naturally avoid touching them. Another induction step is teaching on how to move in gangs to avoid being attacked by other gang members. In the gang, they are taught chains of command and leadership within the gang.

The gang leader commands them to go out and look for food in the dust bin and bring it to the base for sharing. They are also taught how to identify both plain clothes and uniformed police and which direction to run. They are taught how to go to the market and do manual labour and bring back the money to the base. They are taught how to move swiftly in search of competitive opportunities in the streets. During hard times they are taught how to steal from people, how to

mug especially women and how to forcefully beg from the public. As children face untold challenges in the streets, the risks they encounter have made them to explore survival mechanisms that allow them to survive. Resilience to this hard street life is a factor that is important for every child. As they are recruited and oriented into street life, they are taken by their group members through survival techniques that enables them have a very smooth entry into the street life.

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