

**FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE INCREASE OF STREET CHILDREN IN MERU
MUNICIPALITY**

BY

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DECLARATION

This research report is my original work and has not been presented for an award in any university.

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This project report has been submitted with our approval as the university supervisors

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DEDICATION

This project report is dedicated to my children; Tony, Joy and Ken for their encouragement and understanding; my parents Stella and Elijah for their prayers and support; my brothers and sisters for every single minute they spent on me during this study period.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ANPPC	: African network for the prevention and protection against child abuse
CRC	: Convention on rights of child.
KANU	: Kenya African National Union
NARK	: National Rainbow coalition
NFE	: Non-formal education
NGO	: Non-governmental organization
NPA	: National Plan of action
SFRP	: Street children family rehabilitation program
UNICEF	: United Nations children's fund
VCO	: Volunteer children officer
WFP	: World Food Program

ABSTRACT

The quest for this study was to examine factors contributing to the increase of street children in Meru municipality in Imenti north sub-county. The study was guided by three objectives and research questions. These objectives are; to establish how poverty contributes to the number of street children in Meru municipality, to establish how family status contribute to the number of street children in Meru municipality, to asses how child abuse contributes to the number of street children in Meru municipality. The study was guided by social development theory coined by Erik Erikson (New York 1969). Relevant literature reviewed revealed that there are several factors that contribute to increase of street children in Meru municipality. The study was mainly qualitative. It employed descriptive research design which was preferred because it allowed the researcher to conduct in-depth interviews and observation schedules to gather both factual information systematically and also record the characteristics of interest as they occur. The secondary target population was 950 children. Three rehabilitation centers were purposively sampled to participate in the study. These are SOS children's village in Meru, Kaaga MCK street children's home, Jerusha Mwiraria children's home. Purposive, stratified and simple random sampling methods were used to determine respondents. Data was collected through open and close ended questionnaires. The categories of respondents were street children, children in rehabilitation centers and administrators from the three centers. The study revealed that there are many socio-economic factors contributing to the increase of street children in Meru municipality ranging from poverty, lawlessness, alcohol and drug abuse, social permissiveness family break-up, child abuse and inadequate good will from the governments towards supporting poor families evidenced by lack of feeding programmers' in public primary schools and free primary education. The study concluded that there was an urgent need for the government to facilitate provision of feeding programmes, in public primary school's, compulsory free primary education should be enforced and stakeholders sensitized on their roles to promote street children to access quality education. The study recommends that the church focuses on spiritual formation and teaching on marriage and family life to strengthen the basic unit of society, which is the safety net for the children. The government as well as the civil society should spearhead massive education on the rights of children .This would reduce the rampant of children rights brought about through ignorance.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Over the last five decades, the phenomenon of street children has become prominent globally with serious implications for the survival of these children. The presence of street children in major cities of the world has transcended the level where it was viewed as strictly uncommon occurrence to a worrisome global problem. Worldwide, the problem of children roaming the streets endlessly is escalating and alarming (Leroux, 1998). Global estimates of street children stood between 10 – 100 millions and the number was increasing rapidly since 2002 (UNFPA, 2003). The phenomenon has not only attracted public concern but has become a matter of priority to governments as well as national and international organizations (Panter-Brick, 2002).

A research carried out in Karnataka village in India by Moriojose (1999) revealed that majority of children in polygamous families are not educated and work in the farm which makes children to take to the streets to look for freedom.

According to Casa Alianza (2000), an estimated 100 million children live and work on the streets of the developing world. Most street children (75%) have some family links but spend most of their lives on streets begging, selling trinkets, shining shoes or washing cars to supplement their families' income. The rest (25%) live on the streets, often in groups of other children. They sleep in abandoned buildings, in doorways or in public parks.

Particularly in Africa where the problem of street children is new unlike the situation in Asia, the presence of large number of children has now become a major issue (Kopoka *et al*, 2000). Sub Saharan Africa with less than 30% of its population residing in cities is the least urbanized region of the developing world. Never the less, the region in the recent times is experiencing the highest urban growth rate in the world (Mehta, 2000). Decades ago Africa witnessed rapid and wide ranging socio-economic and political changes. There is rapid urbanization, runaway population growth, wars, internal crisis and increasing disparities in wealth. The introduction of structural adjustment programs in a country like Nigeria and globalization affected the structure of African society. It is instructive to note here that, the emergence of large numbers of children on the streets of Africa today was partly a reflection of extreme poverty and lack of social services that

are endemic in many highly populated urban areas in Africa. Studies done by Okpukpara (1993) in Abuja in Nigeria have shown that the menace of street children is alarming in the public spheres such as markets, bus stops, car parks, garages, street corners, and under bridges.

According to a study done by Mogome-Ntatsi (1993) in Botswana major urban centers, he noted that throughout the world, there are children who have drifted away from their homes or families of orientation. They are commonly referred to as “runaway” children. Since their usual domain is the street, they are also referred to as street children in the towns of Botswana, particularly Gaborone, a cursory glance is sufficient for one to observe a considerable presence of such children. These children are not in school and are separated from home for the most part of the day with the result that they are deprived of parental care and guidance in their formative years. The consequences are negative social and physical developments for the child and the wider society. Ntatsi further noted that these children are tardy in appearance, and are often a common nuisance to the average citizen in shopping malls. He pointed out that their presence causes some concern to both the public and authorities. According to the annual report from UNICEF (1992) several factors were considered responsible for the prevalence of street children in Botswana. Some of the cases are conflicts within the family, physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children. Single parenthood, poor parenting, poverty, termination of education and peer influence. All of which activate the desire to seek excitement outside parental control.

In spite of dearth of data from recent empirical studies on street children in Kenya, there is consensus in literature that various issues such as poverty, hunger, insecurity, child abuse, domestic violence caused by communal clashes e.g. post election violence 2007, inadequate care, death of a parent (or both parents), need for income in the family, inability to continue with school, willful deviance in a few children, unemployment of one or both parents, illiteracy, housing challenges, drug use by children and peer influence are the major factors pushing children onto the streets (Oloko *et al.*, 1999).

Onyacha (1999) study on education for street children in Kenya, noted that in 1975, there were approximately 115 street children in Kenya. This number increased to 17,000 in 1990, and subsequently to over 150,000 in 1997. In Nairobi, the number increased from 3,600 in 1989 to 40,000 in 1995 and 60,000 in 1997. By 1999, the number in Mombasa had reached 5,000; in

Kisumu, 4,000; in Malindi and Kilifi, 2,500 each; in Kitale and Nakuru 2,000 each. From the above statistics, one gathers that street children can be found in all major towns in Kenya. Today the presence of street children is recognized to be a serious problem that requires urgent attention. In 2001, the government of Kenya, through the children act, committed itself to providing free education to all children. After the historic elections of 2002, in which the ruling party KANU lost, the new government hastily declared free and compulsory primary education for all. Even with the declarations and commitments many children in Kenya are still out of school and in the streets of major urban centers e.g. Nairobi (Nzomo, 2004).

Kilbride and Kilbride, (1993) observed that in cases where mothers are serious drinkers, children are often left alone for many hours and may not be provided with adequate nutrition.

Ruto's research (1999) in Nairobi, attributes the presence of children in the street to "push" factors such as poverty, war, drought, family dysfunction and death of a parent as well as "pull" factors like following friends, or believing that there are good things to discover in the streets. (Muraya, 1993) conducted another research in Nairobi and identified "push" factors to the street as use of corporal punishment at school or at home, occasional escapades to the street, truancy from school and idleness due to lack of schooling.

Not only have the numbers of street children grown over the years, their lifestyles and the display of overtly aggressive behavior make them the subject of suspicion and hostility by the public at large and the law enforcement agencies in particular. This is a true reflection of issues in the Kenyan Society and a sign of underlying socio-economic problems. There are an estimated 250 well known organizations in Kenya that claim to be intervening on behalf of children living and working on the streets (Nzomo, 2001). However, an assessment of these efforts indicates that most of these organizations are focused more on the symptoms rather than the deeper socio economic problem. The street rehabilitation program (SFRP Draft, 2005) reports

That population of the streets children has not decreased because there is a constant inflow that keeps on replacing those rehabilitated. The increase is a reflection of underlying socio economic issues which need to be addressed. The nutrition and health status of street children is not at satisfactory levels. Food intake is both quantitatively and qualitatively inadequate. Street children have infrequent medical care, they lack bathing and toilet facilities, and they are exposed to

various health hazards, unsanitary surrounding, and climatic variations. Occupational hazards include, car accidents for street vendors, and cut infections for rag-pickers (Lusk, 1989). Street children involve themselves in alcohol and drug abuse, prostitution, drug trafficking, pick pocketing and acting as spies for thieves and criminals in the city. They are separated from the parents and therefore lack protection and security.

A community based organization CBO in Meru south has recently raised the concerns over the increased number of street children in Chuka town. According to CBO Mugwe, Vice chairman Mutembei (2011) the children roam the town begging for food and money from the residents and commuters, especially around the main bus stop. Mutembei further notes that the problem of increase in street children is attributed to the dropping out of school, poor parenting and physical abuse of children. However factors are many and varied.

North Imenti Sub-county advisory committee in a meeting noted that Meru had 700 street children in 2011. They further noted majority of the street children came from neighboring counties who claimed Meru to have plenty of food (Star Paper 29th Dec 2011). However not much has been done in Meru municipality in relation to the phenomenon of street children hence the data of the population of street children in Meru is a rough estimate from advisory committee

1.2 Statement of the problem

Studies done in the past revealed that the number of street children continued to increase globally. There was need to explore the factors that contributed to the increase of street children in the streets of major towns throughout the world. UNICEF (1992) report in New York has some factors which contributed to this e.g. conflicts within family, physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children. Single parenthood, poor parenting, poverty, termination of education and peer influence.

Allianza, (2000) estimated 100 million children living and working on the street of the developing world. Most of the street children (75%) have some family links but spent most of their time begging, selling trinkets, shining shoes or washing cars to supplement their family income. The rest (25%) live on the street, often in groups of other children. They sleep in abandoned building, under doorways, under bridges or car packs.

Bose's research (1998) on developing countries reviewed that majority of children in polygamous families are not educated and work in the farm.

Onyacha, (1999) based his study on education for street children in major urban centers in Kenya, hence noted that in 1975, there were approximately 115 street children. This number increased to 17,000 in 1990 and subsequently to over 150,000 in 1997. In Nairobi the number increased from 3600 in 1989 to 40,000 in 1995, and 60,000 in 1997. By 1999, the number in Mombasa had reached 5,000, in Kisumu 4,000, Malindi and Kilifi 2500 each Kitale and Nakuru 2000 each. From the above statistics he gathered that street children can be found in all major towns in Kenya and they normally came from poor or broken families or they are orphans.

It is clear that the government is unable to deal with the problem of street children effectively. Nevertheless free primary education and the national task force on street children by NARC government 2003, existing official institutions and NGOs have been appreciated for their contributions in curbing the menace. There is therefore need to identify approaches to the phenomenon of street children because the problem does not only have implications for the child but also for the Kenyan society. Little has been done in Meru municipality on studies relating to the phenomenon of street children. Therefore this study seeks to investigate factors that contribute to increase of street children in Meru municipality.

1.3 Purpose of the study.

The purpose of the study was to establish factors contributing to the increase of street children in the streets of Meru County with particular reference to Meru Municipality. The study also established possible solutions to put in place to help reduce the number of street children in the urban centers and upcoming urban centers Meru town being one.

1.4 Objectives.

1. To establish how poverty contributes to the number of street children in Meru municipality.
2. To establish how family status contributes to the number of street children in the area of study.
3. To Assess how child abuse contributes to the number of street children in the area of study.

1.5 Research questions

1. How does poverty contribute to the number of street children in Meru municipality?
2. How does family status contribute to the increase of street children in the area of study?
3. How does child abuse contribute to the increase of street children in the area of study?

1.6 Significance of the study.

The researcher anticipated that the outcome of the study would help in highlighting the exact reasons which contributes to increase of street children especially in the streets of Meru town.

The results of the study may benefit scholars in that it may provide an opportunity for scholars to have access to a wide scope of evidence to inform their research .The study could serve as a spring board for further research in areas related to street children not covered under this particular study. From the findings, the study may also enable the ministry of gender and children to formulate and relevant policies, strategies, design programmes and projects and assessment tools for working with in curving the menace of street children. The study would provide feedback to the government and other agencies that provide funds to support rehabilitation centers occupied by street children. The study would also provide a deeper understanding of the needs of street children, this information would be essential for social workers and child counselors in rehabilitation centers.

1.8 Delimitations of the study.

The study targeted Meru municipality in Imenti north sub county

The study established how poverty, child abuse, family status contribute to the increase of street children within the municipality.

Success of the study was facilitated by the existence of street children within the targeted area. There was also a wealth of literature from where information to inform the study was gathered. The target location was within Meru town and easily accessible for research purposes.

1.9 Limitations of the study.

The study used correlation and descriptive research designs, therefore the design established the relationship of variables and not causes. Interview consumed most of researchers time Filling questionnaires was a slow exercise due to unavailability of the respondents Language barrier was a common problem due to low literacy level among the respondents. The researcher was assisted by volunteer children officer (VCO). Street children live in a hostile environment and as a result have developed hostile attitude towards the public. The researcher offered food parks to the street children interviewed and did interviews in presence of (VCO) who respondents felt free with.

1.10 Assumptions of the study.

The study assumed that the street children found within Meru municipality were representative of the street children population of the whole town. It also assumed that those street children would be willing and ready to cooperate and give truthful information to the researcher. The study also assumed that the respondents would answer questions objectively. The study assumed pretesting of the data collection tools was conducted to ensure validity and reliability of the tools.

1.10 Definition of significance terms.

Child abuse- This is denial of child rights

Family status-According to this study family status may mean family living arrangements, also it is used to refer to the type of family.

Poverty- This is defined as lack of access to basic needs for survival such as food, shelter, clothing, health and education.

Rehabilitation centre - this is defined as a place with home environment where homeless children are brought up by well wishers (according to the study context)

Street children- these are children termed as vagrants, homeless children, abandoned children, or run away children. They live on the streets without any adult support. Their family support has become increasingly weakened and therefore must share the responsibility for family survival.

1.11 Organization of the study

This project is organized into five main chapters. Each chapter addresses different issues as described below.

Chapter one covers the background of the study, the problem of the study, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations of the study, limitations of the study, assumptions of the study and definitions of significant terms are all in chapter one.

Chapter two presents a review of literature where various authors have been reviewed in relevance to the factors that contribute to the increase of street children. Theoretical frame work is discussed under this chapter, conceptual frame work is developed. Finally knowledge gap is discussed and a summary of literature review. Chapter three outlines the research methodology used in this research. Chapter four is the presentation of results arrived at in this research. Chapter five presents conclusion and recommendations of the research findings. References come immediately after chapter five and finally researcher attached appendices including the letter of transmittal and questionnaires used to collect data.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter comprises review of relevant literature. It was organized according to the study objectives. This chapter high writes the relationship between the variables and the dependent variable .Only three variables are discussed in this chapter.

2.1.1 Street children issues.

Majority of street children move in groups, some of the street children work and live on the streets, but there are a few of them who still have close ties with their families and return home for meals (Wainaina, 1981). There are also those who establish relationship with business people who own shops in town and are able to get some food by offerings services such as washing the shops, fetching water, shoe shining or sometimes from generosity of these people (Undugu society 1999). Studies have reported that street children face a lot of insecurity while in the streets, for instance; most street children express lack of food, shelter, clothing and harassment as their major problems. Frequent fights and police arrests have been reported as usual experiences of street life. These situations may deny street children the opportunity to grow and become useful members of the society. According to Ayako (1991), research done in Kibera slum in Nairobi Kenya he stated that street children indiscriminately take drugs, inhale petrol, glue and take alcohol, which obviously endangers their mental as well as physical development. Most of the street children spend money they earn immediately it is earned, on food, entertainment, substance and drugs. They rarely save since they have no safe place to keep their money and because it is too dangerous to walk sleep on the streets with money in their pockets.

A study done by Hussein (1998) in Cairo about street children and violence revealed that street children are faced with violence almost every day of their life. Violence normally takes place through three main channels: i.e. violence with small children groups, either by peers or by older street children especially when they get drowsy and under the effect of the substances they consume; violence from the surrounding community through other people on the streets who tend to exploit them or by the community itself as a reaction to their existence in particular settings and areas where their presence is not appreciated; violence while working by their

employers or through other peers working in the same place such as; selling items in the streets in areas where other people or children exercise control. Violence normally ends in cuts and bruises to the children, since it often entails fights. Children normally carry razor blades to defend themselves incase others attack them.

Sexual abuse is a common problem to most street children, especially the young new children and females, which is often associated with violence. Many street children fear that they might be arrested by the police and be sent back to their families that they ran away from or to institutional care which they have no idea about the services or care the institutions provide (Sedik 1995). Street children take substance and abuse drug for various purposes such as relief from the pressures of the street, to sleep easily, to be able to endure pain, violence and hunger. Female street children consume substances which include; cigarettes glue and tablets. The substance according to the street girls is connected with street life, peer pressure and a means to endure pain and torture. When girls are under the effect of substance abuse, they expose themselves to attacks and sexual exploitation.

2.2 Poverty increase number of street children

Poverty is defined as lack of access to basic needs for survival. However, Myers (1999) goes beyond that and sees it in the wider perspective of dysfunctional, fragmented and oppressive relations". This notion is also up held by Nayaran (1999) who notes that the poor lack power and control over their own lives. In his report on research done in 40 countries by the World Bank, titled "Can anyone hear us" he observes that the poor are often victims of circumstances that are beyond their control. This agrees with Kinoti (1984) who contends that the most single cause of Africa's social and economic problem is certainly bad government. He observes that poor political leadership is guaranteed to keep a poor country poor and to turn a progressive nation into a retrogressive one. This is true of Kenya because due to the effects of corruption – perpetuated by the leaders in the highest echelons of the society, the poor have been condemned to hunger, homelessness, crime and inhuman conditions of existence especially in the streets. Poverty means lack of basic needs, food clothing, health care, security and protection (WFP 999).

Kiiri (2006) indicates that poverty was estimated at 58% in Kenya according to the central Bureau of statistics. In his research on cost of a basic needs basket in sixteen informal settlements in Nairobi, he alluded to the fact that Kenya is one of the most unequal societies in the world with 10% of the population controlling more than half of the country's wealth. Using data collected from 320 households in October and December 2006, he concluded that poverty levels were very high in the informal areas of Kenya. He further pointed out that poverty was accentuated by escalating food prices, low incomes and unemployment. Kiiri indicated that poverty in Kenya at the household level is experienced more in large families.

Ratti (2005) observes that many Kenyans earn less than a thousand shilling per month and 56% of the total Kenyan population lives on fifty shillings a day and that at least one of every two Kenyans are poor. Poverty robs people of their integrity. This level of poverty has serious implications on street children. It means that many families cannot put food on the table. Children therefore suffer most; some may take to streets with hope of getting enough from begging and scavenging in the dumping sites in the towns. (Nayaran, 2005) children from poor families in Kenya find themselves in desperate situation that they did not create. Further, they have no power to overcome these situations. The structures that condemn them to abject poverty are created by unjust, corrupt selfish and greedy governments that do not ensure equitable distribution of resource. Nayaran further points out that hard work for the poor does not make a difference. He further moves on to explain that despite grueling labor, many poor people go to bed each night with their basic needs unmet. Nayaran's argument informs this study's and brings out the reason why the poor remains poor irrespective of their hard work. The report further states that governments, global markets and NGOs do not adequately respond to the needs and desire of the poor to have a voice in matters concerning their fate. Nayaran contended that current efforts to help alleviate poverty are falling short of the expectations.

Ballany concurs with Nayaran and blows out the devastating effects of poverty on children in Kenya

Bellany (2005) records that one in every six children are severely hungry, one in seven have no health care at all, one in every five have no safe water and one in three have no toilet or sanitation facilities at home. In addition, the children account for an estimated 3.6 million people

killed in conflicts in Africa since 1990 (Bellany, 2003) Nayaran in a World Bank report, brings out the fact that powerlessness and non participation by the poor in their development agenda is a major handicap. This is a possible explanation as to why the impact of organization trying to intervene for the children right is not reflective in the life of the street children (Okumu, 2010) observes that poverty among children is higher than the incidence of poverty among adults. He argues that “in many developing countries like Kenya this happens against a backdrop of generalized poverty and vulnerability as well as social exclusion” he further explains that 46% of Kenyans population lives below poverty line of one dollar a day. Okumu notes that children in Kenya who form 50% of the population need protection. Okumu (2010) noted that protection is widely recognized as an effective strategy to address deprivation and vulnerability of children.

Kanji (1994) observes that the number of street children in Nairobi rose from 4,500 to 30,000 between 1990 and 1994 mainly because of homelessness, evictions and violence. This concurs with the observation by UNICEF, (2004) worker in that Kenya has become “famous” for the exploding populating of street children who are known for committing petty crimes, like stealing cell phones and wallets. This is inevitable because children become homeless and are neither fostered nor institutionalized, the only alternative left is the streets, and while in the street they have need for basic survival hence their involvement in stealing and other forms of petty crimes and anti-social behavior.

According to OAU estimation in 1996, Africa had 32 million street children. This was mainly attributed to poverty, family crisis, overcrowding in the family, abusive and domestic work. A UNICEF worker in Kenya once marked, “What kind of an adult does such an existence produce if crime and violence becomes their survival strategies?”

This question is an expression of desperation and fears regarding the future of a nation whose children appear to be neglected. The government and the society at large have acted irresponsibly causing and contributing to the doom for these children.

Besides poverty, child labor is a major challenge due to the fact that street children work to subsidize family income.

In one literature review by (Daly1996) recent increases in homelessness are attributed to global, economic changes a severe shortage of affordable shelter for low-income households, and cutbacks in socio programs. Among those at the risk are ; single mothers, battered women, abused youth, disabled , frail, elderly individuals and the families of workers whose jobs have disappeared .David *et al.*, (1991) did a study in Philippines and found that various characteristics of the child's family, the local community and the society explain why some children are on the street. These included poverty, uneducated and large families.

The family background of street children indicates that the majority of their parents are single parents who have irregular incomes since they are not employed .Most of the parents are street hawkers and have very low incomes .Most families live in overcrowded slum areas of the urban centers .Majority of the families have income from illicit trade in Chang'aa brewing, petty businesses and prostitution (Njeru,1989).Some parents are jua kali car repairers and tailors who have face problems from the city council of eviction since their business locations and dwellings are regarded as illegal (Undugu society, 1987).

According to Khamala, (2000) most of street children leave home because of different factors such as parental inability to cope with demands brought about by rapid economic change to instabilities in families. Most of street children take to streets to look for a job because there is no money for education, uniform and activity fee. They are influenced by parents to go to the streets so that well wishers or the government can help them (ANPPCAN,1991) In most cases street children eat food on the streets .Often the food is inadequate and unbalanced as their means can only afford soda, bread and occasionally roasted maize from the streets. During occasions when their salaries are not lucrative, and have no one to give food to them they eat from the dustbins or help themselves to anything available in form of food (Wainaina1981). According to (El-kateb,1998) street children describe their health status as fine, they view the types of illness or diseases they experience as minor or normal as long as they can move, work and run . Sickness in them means inability to move or work. Nutritional status is a key factor of children's health, physical and well being and in cognitive development. Street children are at a wide range of health outcomes and malnutrition. The causes of malnutrition among street children are multiple and interrelated. Consumption of contaminated food, inadequate dietary intake of essential

nutrients, faulty nutrients, fault dietary habits, and repeated illnesses are the immediate causes of malnutrition among them. Street children are at high risk of chronic problems such as respiratory diseases, parasitic infections, skin infections, substance abuse and related health problems as well as exposure to wide range of other diseases. These illnesses increase the nutritional needs of street children and in turn lower their immunity and create a vicious cycle of health challenges. However, the above challenges have no one to attend to since street children are regarded as deviants and criminals and “not as people who have been deprived of their rights” (NCBDA 2001).

(Kiiri, 2006) report a high correlation between poverty and education in Kenya. He observes that returns to primary education are close to zero but higher in secondary.

Education plays a major role in human development. It strengthens people’s ability to increase productivity and potential to achieve higher standards of living and thereby improve the quality of life. Poverty decreases if the people at the house hold level are educated.

Despite the introduction of free primary education program in Kenya, 1.5 million children of school going age are out of school making low the access to early childhood development. (NPA2008). Although primary education is free there is a requirement for uniforms, meals, school equipment and other obligatory contributions such as activity fund (Kiiri, 2006). Children affected by poverty report high absenteeism from school. They have trouble concentrating on studies become of distress and worries and alienation from peers. Teachers who do not know about the pupils home circumstances punish them for lack of attention and sleeping in class and non completion of homework (Subbaro *et al.*, 2001). Children sometimes get withdrawn from school and are expected to financially contribute to the family need for survival. In Kenya there are many children working due to poverty. Work damages their physical and mental health because their physical and mental health is below tasks they perform. They become vulnerable to psychosocial problems and psychological stress. The motivation for them to work is in order to contribute to the financial support of their family which is such a heavy responsibility at an early age. The work deprives them of the time and opportunity due to pressure for survival most of the working children are exhausted, hungry and anxious because even though they attend school their performance is poor. They move around in the streets begging for money and / or food or

hawking. Under education and ill health among the poor children leads into frustrating lifestyle involving drug abuse to escape from reality or theft to survive

2.3 Family status increase number of street children

According to research done by ANPPCAN, (1991), street children take to the streets because of poor relations at home, leading to frustrations, overcrowded homes, hence they consider street as an alternative home. Ebigbo, (1986) observes that some street children prefer street life to family life because of poor relations in their families. Wainaina, (1981) indicates that some children find their homes both materially and morally depriving for example, the parents brew chang'aa, abuse alcohol and mothers welcome as many boyfriends as possible. Thus some children opt to take to street life because of their dislike of what goes on in their homes. According to a research done by Hussein (1998) 82% of street children indicated that they were forced to escape or leave their homes and reside in the streets because of maltreatment, abuse and exploitation they witnessed.

From both parents ,fathers, step fathers , step mothers, older brothers or relatives, and while working informally in shops .Abuse, in most cases took the form of severe beating and insults for trivial mistakes .Hussein further points out that majority of the street children explained that neglect led them to have direct dairy contact with street life due to various reasons such as lack of parental supervision ,parental attitudes to the children as burdens due to large family size, sickness of parents/guardians, fathers who favor females to males or the opposite , and neglect due to divorce or separation (Hussein,1998).

(David *et al.*1991) lack of responsibility on the part of the parents,family conflicts and parental behavioral problems, for example giving priority to material gains, substance use and gambling, leads children taking to the streets. (Nzioka,2002) in his study pointed out that most street girls come from single families as a result of divorce , separation or death of one's parent He notes that most of them are from impoverished social economic back grounds. According to Onyango (1999) the high number of female headed households is a testimony of family separation with the majority of the street children originating from these single parent environments. He further noted that the children on the street come from single parent families, mainly single mothers with limited support network. (Kilbride and kilbride, 1993) Observed that in cases where mothers are

serious drinkers, children are often left alone for many hours and are not provided with adequate nutrition. (UMP working paper series 18:2000) conducted a study in Mathare and Korogocho slum settlements in Nairobi, single female headed households, constitute between 60% and 80% of the population respectively. The study further observes that poor parents are likely to pull their children from school to supplement family income. More often, than not, the girl child become the ultimate casualties in favor of the boys. The study reveals that the girl's survival activities in the street are limited to begging and prostitution while the boys are involved in many other income generating activities like guiding motorist, scavenging. Etc. Other studies on the street girls in Nairobi found that close to 90% of these girls come from households suffering from physical and verbal abuse, and alcoholism. More than half of the girls originated from single parents households in low – income settlements (Ochala, 1996). Another research conducted in Nairobi by Ruto (1999) attributes the presence of children in the streets to “push” factors such as poverty, war, drought, family dysfunction and death of a parent as well as “pull” factors like following friends, or believing that there are good things to discover on the street. (Muraya, 1993) identifies other push factors as use of corporal punishment, occasional escapades to the streets, truancy from school and idleness due to lack of schooling.

A research carried out in Karnataka village in India by Moriojose (1999) revealed that majority of children in polygamous families are not educated and work in the farm. Since technically two families stay together, there is jealousy between the two wives and their children. This results in quarrel between wives and children which gives negative impact in the children's mind on family. In most cases children leave home to look for peace and end up in the street and eventually become street children. Due to the ill treatment of the step mother or father. (Bose,1998) in case of father or mother or both of them have drinking and quarrelling habit they have their children leave home and run to streets seeking peaceful life. When children are sexually abused by relatives or forced to commit crimes children escape from them and end up on the street in town and cities. Children whose parents fail to send them to school or who are withdrawn by parent from school to do domestic work, take care of the cattle, sheep of the local land lords to earn income for the family, they run away to the street where they can work and sleep when they want. Children affected with mental health come to the streets on their own unconsciously or are driven away by the parents who take children to be burden. Bose further

notes war and ethnic conflict force the family to move to street or refugee camps and some children run away from camps to streets in cities in search of making a living.

Love affairs between girls and boys and severe objection from the parents due to caste or tribe factor forces them to run to town and cities and work and live on street till they find a place in a slum.

2.4 Child abuse increase number of street children

CRC – 1997 notes: children innocent, trusting and full of hope. Their childhood should be happy and loving. Their lives should mature gradually, as they gain new experiences. However, for many children, the reality of childhood is altogether different. Millions of children aged 6-14 years are not in school. Children are exploited at work. Right through history, children have been abused and exploited. They suffer from hunger, homelessness; work in harmful conditions, and deficient health care and limited opportunities for basic education. Child need not live such a life. Childhood can and must be preserved. Children must have the right to survive, develop, be protected and participate in decisions that impact their lives.

According to Forastleri (1997) in his study on factors leading to child abuse in Africa, he noted that the causes underlying child abuse are poverty, insufficient or unbalanced economic growth and structural adjustment programmes.

According to another study carried out in India (2007) 42% of Indians total population was children. It was also pointed out that children are abused in the country emotionally, physically, economically and sexually. Traditional practices such as children marriage, caste system, female feticide, child labor, devodos and tradition increased children's vulnerability (Bose, 2003) .India has the largest population of street children who suffer from destitution, neglect, abuse and exploitation and it estimated that in urban areas alone there are 11 million children on the street. These children have their rights abused. They have their daily lessons on the streets. They learn to survive in the streets. They learn to go hungry for hours, they learn to eat whatever is shoved towards them, and they learn to take risk by jumping signal, running after cars. Bose (2007) pointed out that some children are forced to street life by their adoptive families who keep all the taking including little food that they get from dustbins. Young children of unwedded mothers and sex workers are taken to far places and abandoned in railway stations bus stations. Bose

(2007) also notes that; when husbands favor one wife and her children in a polygamous family. Other children are neglected they lack fatherly love and become subjected to rejection and abuse. They lose fatherly love which every child has a right to an essential in life. These children develop a negative attitude towards father. In most occurrences these children take to street to find somebody to compensate for the lost love.

UNICEF indicates children have a right to care by their parents, compulsory free education the higher standards of health, social security and the provision of rest and recreation. UNICEF goes further to indicate that rights of the working children, whose primary activity is to work, are without question in jeopardy. Any work that endangers children physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development must be brought to an end. Hazardous children labor is a betrayal of every child's right as a human being and is an offence against civilization. Child abuse leading to child labor does not only damage children's physical and mental health but also seriously compromises prospects for future development; work makes children vulnerable to psychosocial problem. Working to contribute to family financial support places a huge burden to children. Work deprives children of the opportunity for normal development and growth. Even if they are in school they cannot achieve the necessary mental development that would enhance their overall growth. Playing is an important factor in facilitating a child's health growth. When children are exhausted, hungry and anxious they cannot perform well in school.

According to Huihambos' (2004) study on factors contributing to child abuse, it was noted that in Africa there is inadequate regulations aimed at restricting child abuse, in effective enforcement of relevant legislation and lack of public awareness. These are among the major contributing factors to street children, economic stagnation, unemployment and rural – urban migration which lead to accelerated urban poverty. These factors aggravated by the rising cost of living contribute to the inevitability of child abuse pushing children to the street with hope of getting better life.

The majority of street children have nobody to care, love and bond with in their early years of life. The early experience of bonding and attachment that creates a sense of security and trust also develop during this tender phase of the child's development.

Girls are more at risk of being abused sexually Huiambo (2004) further notes that girls engage in commercial sex in order to survive. In a report on sexual abuse of Kenyan women and girls aged 15 years and below he indicated that girls aged 15 years and below provides sexual services for less than 50 shillings for their survival.

2.5 Theoretical frame work.

The study was guided by social development theory coined by Erik Erikson (New York;1969). Erik sees people as rational and logical in making decisions and solving problems. His theory lays a lot of emphasis on the psycho historical setting in which the child's ego is molded. He takes into consideration the fact that every significant thing that a person encounters in life helps shape the personality of that person, depending entirely on how the person reacts to each crisis in the life cycle. Erik maintains that every social crisis furnishes challenges that are conclusive to growth and mastery over the world. He maintains that inadequate mastery of early problems hinders an individual's ability to deal with later problems. The theory maintains that each crisis is made up of both a positive and negative component. If crisis is handled in a satisfactory way the ego enjoys the achievement and the individual gains basic trust and autonomy. If on the other hand the crisis is resolved in an unsatisfactory way the ego suffers damage, a negative component, so mistrust, shame and doubt are incorporated in the ego.

The theory also notes that a person must resolve each crisis in order to progress to the next stage. Erikson sees stages falling in a staircase hierarchy all arranged in chronological order with each stage building upon the resolution and integration of previous psychological conflicts. Erikson sees these crises to be potentially present at birth but differentiating at its material time according to an inherited universal structure Erikson notes a sense of inferiority may develop if a child discovers his religion, his race, his sex or social economic status is what determines his worth as a person; he may lose confidence in his ability to take part in the working world.

According to Erikson if there is a deviance in the child someone else not the child is responsible. To Erikson society plays an important role in shaping a person's personality but the person plays an equal important role in the development and organization of his personality. Erikson's theory is fairly optimistic in the way he demonstrates that each stage of psychosocial growth has the

potential for both strength and weakness, so that failure at one stage of development does not necessarily indicate doom at a later stage.

2.6 Conceptual frame work

Following literature review, the following was the conceptual framework that guided the study. Street children were conceptualized to be the dependent variable with factors contributing to the increase of street children as poverty, family status, and child abuse being considered as independent valuable.

Independent variables

Moderating variable

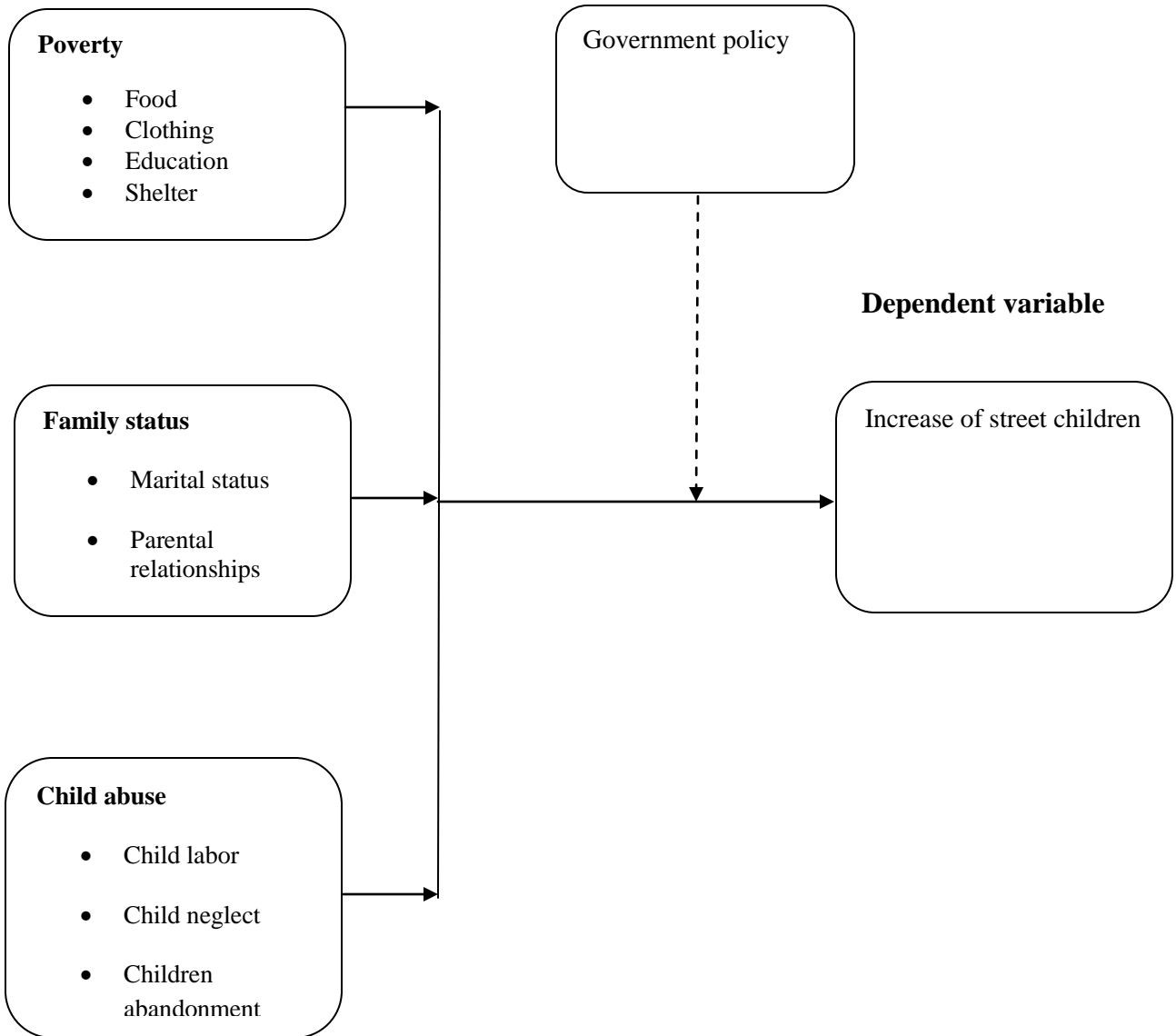


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

2.7 Knowledge gap

The researcher intended to bridge the knowledge gap realized in the study; provoke future study; provide vital information on factors that promote the influx of street children; provide recommendations on how to address the phenomenon of street children with a view to reducing the number and rehabilitating the children; provide relevant information to the ministry of gender, children and social development, children department office, municipal council of Meru NGOs and other government departments. Such information would be vital in addressing the root causes of increase of street children in Meru municipality. The study will also help planners in realizing vision 2030.

2.8 Summary of literature review

According to the literature review it has been noted that today the presence of street children is recognized to be a serious problem that requires urgent attention. The number of street children has not decreased for years because there is constant inflow that keeps on replacing those rehabilitated. It has been reviewed that the number of street children rises due to homelessness, evictions and violence. In Kenya poverty level informal settlements is very high it is experienced more in large families. Many Kenyan's earn a thousand shillings a month, 56% live on Ksh 50 a day therefore many families cannot put food on the table. Children suffer most and as a result they take to streets to beg and scavenge. Children take street as an alternative where home is frustrating. In cases where parental supervision, parental attitude towards children due to large family size is not friendly children run a way. Children made to work for families benefit also are known to take to streets. However, street children are regarded as deviants and criminals and not as people who have been deprived of their rights

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter represents the research design and methodology that was used in the research. It provided the process and rationale used by the researcher in choosing the design, the target population, sample size, sample selection, data collection procedures and data analysis methods.

3.2 Research design

The study used descriptive research designs. The design was used to gather systematic factual information for descriptive purposes and enhanced the researchers understanding of the phenomenon being studied through observation. Descriptive design permitted the researcher not only to collect the facts for description but also to understand the operations of the street children in their real life situation through observation.

3.3 Target population

The target population is the group which the researcher generalizes the results. In this study, target population comprised of 700 street children, 250 children from three rehabilitation centers within the municipality

Table 3.1 Target population

Location	Population
Meru municipality	700
M.C.K Kaaga street children home	100
Jerusha Mwiraria children home	100
S.O.S Village	50
Total	950

Source: District Children Office Imenti North Sub County

3.4 Sample size and sampling procedure

This section discussed sample size and sampling procedure.

3.4.1 Sampling procedure

This study used stratified sampling method to group street children. The categories comprised children on the streets and street children in rehabilitation centers. Simple random sampling procedure was used to select 115 respondents from all streets in the municipality. Three rehabilitation centers namely MCK Kaaga street children home, Jerusha Mwiraria children home, SOS village, were purposively sampled because of their experience and wealth of information on dealing with street children. One hundred and fifty three respondents were selected from the three homes using simple random sampling.

3.4.2 Sample size

This sample was calculated using the formula below with 95% confidence level and a confidence interval of 10.

Fischer Formula

$$N = \frac{t^2 \times p(1-p)}{M^2}$$

Description

N = required sample size

T= confidence level at 95% (standard value of 1.96)

P= estimated prevalence of street children in the area

M= margin of the error of 5% standard value

Table 3.2 Sample size

Location	Target Population	Sample Size
Street children	700	115
M.C.K Kaaga street children	100	58
Jerusha Mwiraria home	100	58
S.O.S Village	50	37
Total	950	268

3.5 Method of data collection

To collect data the researcher used interview schedules and questionnaires. Each category of respondents had their own instrument designed on the objectives of study. Through interviews the researcher was able to obtain background information of the respondents as well as their experiences, opinions and knowledge on the subject of inquiry.

3.5.1 Questionnaires

The data in this research was collected using both primary and secondary tools. The primary data collection method included questionnaire both closed and open ended questions while secondary data was obtained through library research

3.5.2 Interviews

Face to face interviews were also appropriate in generating information pertaining to the study. The researcher asked the respondents questions on issues relating to street life and specifically the driving forces behind that situation

3.6 Validity

The study has objective questions included in the questionnaire. All tools including the interview guide and questionnaires were pretested to identify and change any ambiguous, awkward, or offensive questions. Expert opinion was sought on the representativeness and suitability of questions and gave suggestions of corrections to be made to the structure of the research tools. This helped improve the content validity of the data that was collected.

3.7 Reliability

Reliability on the other hand refers to a measure of the degree to which research instruments yield consistent results (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The pre-testing aims at determining the

reliability of the research tools including the wording, structure and sequence of the questions. This pre-testing involved 10 respondents from the target population. The respondents were conveniently selected since statistical conditions were not necessary in the pilot study. The purpose was to refine the research tools so that respondents in the major study would have no problem in answering the questions.

3.8 Data Analysis

Collected data was categorized and then analyzed. Data analysis tool that was used was dependent on the type of data, that is; was the data qualitative or quantitative. To analyze quantitative data frequency tables were used. The qualitative data took an exploratory/conceptual content analysis process, this was more ideal as the information gathered from the open ended questions which were large did not consume time. The data was presented using frequency tables.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations in research can be defined as ensuring that the researcher conforms to the standards of conduct of the authorities in the area of research. Examples of ethical issues that may arise are voluntary participation of respondents, deception to participants, anonymity and confidentiality of information given, analysis and reporting, harm or danger to participants and any other professional code of ethics expected. To ensure that the research is done in an ethical manner according to the expectations of all authorities, a letter from the university was obtained. The researcher informed the respondents that the instruments being administered was for research purpose only and the responses from the respondents would be kept secret and confidential. The researcher obtained an introductory letter from the University to collect data from the organization. The researcher pursued a permit from the National Council of Science and Technology, permitting the research. Also, due to sensitivity of some information collected, the researcher held moral obligation to treat the information with utmost propriety. Further, since the respondents were reluctant to disclose some information, the researcher reassured the respondents' confidentiality of the information given.

3.10 Operationalization of variables

Operationalization of variables involves preparation of the research questions from the objectives, identifying the appropriate indicators, and types and levels of measurement of the indicators.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter comprises presentation, interpretation and analysis of the findings from the data collected from the field. The data was collected through personal interaction with different respondents regarding factors contributing to the increase of street children in Meru municipality. The research questions formed the themes along which the analysis is done. All data is analyzed according to the categories. This discussion is presented in three parts. Part A deals with background information of children in both the rehabilitation centers and the children in the street. Part B deals with information related to the reasons which contributed taking to the street. Part C deals with report given by the rehabilitation center administrators.

4.2 Demographic information

The respondents were drawn from three rehabilitation centers within Meru municipality. Three administrators from the three centers one hundred respondents from the three centers and one hundred and fifteen street children in major streets in Meru town. The demographic information of the respondents is discussed below and summarized in tables indicating frequency and percentages.

4.2.1 Ages of the respondents

The respondents were asked their ages and their responses are captured as shown in table 4.1

Table 4.1: Age of street respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
5-9 years	20	17%
10-12 years	30	26%
13-15 years	40	35%
16 years and above	25	22%
TOTAL	115	100%

The table above shows the distribution of ages of the respondents. Majority of the respondents were aged between 10 and 15 years.

Table 4.9: Education levels of street respondents

Education levels of respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Not attended school	60	52%
Lower primary	45	39%
Upper primary	10	9%
TOTAL	115	100%

Table 4.2: Age of rehabilitation centers respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
10-12 years	20	20%
13-15 years	45	45%
16-17 years	35	35%
TOTAL	100	100%

The data was collected from a sample of 115 children living in the streets and 100 children living in the rehabilitation centers within the municipality. The data shows that the respondents found in rehabilitation centers were aged between 10-17 years. Twenty children found in the rehabilitation centers were aged between 10-12 years according to 20%, 45 children were aged between 13-15 years totaling to 45% and 35 children were aged between 16-17 years totaling to 35%. This indicates that the target group is most vulnerable and victim of the factors such as poverty, family status and child abuse due to their age. At this stage they are dependent and their well-being is influenced by the factors of this study.

Twenty children living in the streets were aged 5-9 years that is 17% , 30 children were aged 10-12 years that is 26%, 40 children were aged between 13-15 years that is 35%, 25 children were aged 16 years and above that is 22%. The respondents in the streets were older than the respondents in the rehabilitation centers. This can be accounted for by the age limit imposed by the rehabilitation centers since children over 18 years are reconciled with their families/relatives/well-wishers. The findings on the age of street children were in agreement with the conclusion of the study of street children in Botswana major urban centers Mogome-Ntatsi (1993). The discussion also agrees with Onyacha (1999) study based on street children in major urban centers in Kenya since they fall in the same age bracket.

4.2.6 Education levels of the respondents.

Responses obtained in relation to their education levels revealed that 60 respondents from streets had never been to school; 45 left school in lower primary and only 10 respondents from the street left school in upper primary.

This is a clear indication that majority of street children have not been sent to school by their parents or care givers. These findings agree with Khamala's (2000) that most of street children take to streets to look for a job because there is no money for education, uniform and activity fee.

Respondents from rehabilitation centers are continuing with education although they had dropped out of school before joining rehabilitation centre.

4.2.2 Gender of street respondents

The gender of the respondents was noted and recorded in table 4.3

Table 4.3 Gender of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Males	90	78%
Females	25	22%
TOTAL	115	100%

In terms of gender a small number of girls were found in the streets. It was worth noting that girls were not seen in the streets during day time. They appeared from 8.00pm respondents confessed they engage in prostitution and that was why they did not appear during daytime. However only 5 girls out of 25 sampled were seen during day time that is 20%, 20 girls appeared at night that is 80%. Majority of boys were seen in the streets during daytime. They engaged in activities such as fetching water, car wash, collecting scribes for sale and carrying luggage. The total number of boys was 90 accounting for 78% in relation to the total number of street children sampled. Girls presented 22% of the same.

The findings on gender of the respondents seem to agree with the conclusion of the report on street girls (NCBDA 2001) that girls remain invisible or at the periphery in many studies. A study carried out in Abuja, in Nigeria, (1993) differ with this study since in Nigeria 51% represented boys in the streets while 49% represented the number of girls. The discrepancy might be due to the type of setting of the interview. Further research is therefore needed to explain this discrepancy.

4.2.3 Current residences of street children.

A small number, only 5% of the street children respondents reported that they slept at home and came to the streets during the day. The rest spent the nights out there in the street corners, car parks, under bridges or in buildings under construction. These results show that the children not only work in the streets but also live there. This finding is therefore in agreement to the findings of Alianza (2000), who estimated that out of 100 million children living in the streets 75% work and live in the streets while only 25% work in the streets but sleep at home or with relatives.

Table 4.4: Residence of street children

Residence	Frequency	Percentage
In the street	109	95%
At home	6	5%
TOTAL	115	100%

A question was also put across to gather information on the streets where children were located. According to the responses, 50 respondents accounting to 43% reported that they were based at Makutano Kaithe; 25 accounting to 22% reported that they were based at Mosque road; 40 respondents' accounting to 35% reported that they were based at Gakoromone next to the municipal sewage. The locations mentioned above are streets within Meru township and this verifies increasing numbers of children in those streets.

To establish how respondents got into rehabilitation centers, a question was posed. Sixteen percent indicated that they were taken to the rehabilitation center by relatives; 35 which accounted to 35% were led by social worker; 30 accounting to 30% were led by police; 19 which is 19% volunteered.

Table 4.6: Persons who led children to the rehabilitation centers

Person	Frequency	Percentage
Relatives	16	16%
Social worker	35	35%
Police	30	30%
Volunteered	19	19%
Total	100	100%

In addition, all respondents in rehabilitation centers mentioned lack of food and lack of school fees as being major factors that drove them to the centers. 98% percent of children in rehabilitation centers reported that they lacked the basic needs at home due to extreme levels of poverty.

4.2.4 Main services offered in the rehabilitation centers.

The question of what the centers offered was relevant in probing why children would prefer to be in the center other than home. 50% of the children had no other place to call home. The rest lacked basic needs at homes.

In relation to services offered in rehabilitation centers, respondents were given open headed questions and they had the following to say. Eighty respondents indicated that education was provided, 100 respondents indicated that feeding services were offered, 40 respondents indicated spiritual guidance is given; 15 respondents indicated counseling services were given. Only 5 respondents talked of health services provision.

During face to face interview, 9 respondents felt that the center where they belonged cared about their formal education only they indicated that apart from formal education many more things were left out. This indicated that most children in rehabilitation center were offered formal education and feeding services. This further suggests that counseling is not given prominence in rehabilitation centers.

It was worth noting that respondents returned to the streets from rehabilitation centre since counseling services were inadequate.

All the respondents indicated that they received feeding services at the rehabilitation center. Education was rated second highest service offered followed by spiritual guidance. Fifteen percent indicated that counseling services were offered while only 5% of the respondents reported that health services were also offered.

4.2.7 Marital Status and nature of parents' marriages of street respondents.

A question was put across to gather responses on the status of the respondents' parents and the following were the findings. 68 respondents reported that they came from single parent families headed by their mothers. They also confessed that they were not aware of their fathers. 7 respondents had both parents alive and living together. 20 respondents indicated that their parents were alive but they were separated with their fathers remarrying, 10 respondents indicated that their mothers are dead and they lived with grandparents, 10 respondents had their father's dead and lived with their mothers. When the same question was asked respondents from rehabilitation center they had the following; 57 respondents belong to single mothers, 13 respondents have both parents alive and living together, 8 respondents indicated their mothers are dead and they lived with their grandparents, 12 respondents had their fathers dead and they lived with their mothers, 10 respondents indicated they lived with grandparents after parents separated and fathers remarried.

The above is a clear indication that majority of street children come from households headed by single mothers. It is also worth noting that no respondent was a total orphan. Therefore these findings do not agree with the statement in the ANPPCAN (1995) report that orphan hood is a significant contributing factor to street life. The discrepancy might be due to the change in the social structure during the seventeen years that have elapsed since the findings.

4.2.8 Occupations of parents' respondents.

A question was put across to gather responses on the street children parents' way of earning a living. The responses were as follows; 30 respondents were not aware of what their parents do for a living, 40 respondents indicated that their parents brew chang'aa, 10 respondents indicated that their parents were in prostitution, 15 respondents indicated that their parents work in the farm, 17 respondents had their parents as hawkers and only 3 respondents indicated that their parents were in employment. Respondents from rehabilitation centers had the following to say, 20 respondents did not know what their parents did for a living, 30 respondents indicated their parents brew chang'aa, 20 respondents indicated that parents work in the farm, 15 respondents said that their parents were hawkers, 15 respondents indicated their parents depended from

begging from friends and relatives and only 5 respondents had their parents in employment. Parents or guardians who brew chang'aa were more likely to abuse their children leading them to the streets.

Table 4.10: Occupation of parents of respondents from the streets

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Not a ware	30	26%
Brew chang'aa	40	35%
Prostitution	10	9%
Work in the farm	15	13%
Hawking	17	15%
Employed	3	3%
TOTAL	115	100%

Table 4.11: Occupation of parents of respondents from rehabilitation centers.

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Not a ware	20	20%
Brew chang'aa	30	30%
Work in the farm	20	20%
Hawking	15	15%
Employed	5	5%
Begging	15	15%
TOTAL	100	100%

The above findings agree with (Undugu society1987) that majority of street children parents have low and irregular incomes since they are not employed. The findings are also in agreement with (Njeru1989) that majority of street children families have income from illicit in chang'aa brewing and petty businesses.

4.3: Factors contributing to increase of street children why this section now?

Information on factors attributed to increase of street children in Meru municipality.

4.3.1: Poverty

The interview schedule for the street children in Meru municipality was also used to elicit the following information about their families before they left home to streets measuring poverty. A question was asked in relation to number of meals provided to respondents in a day and responses were as follows; 43% of respondents indicated one meal was provided, 26% of respondents indicated two meals were provided, 18% of respondents indicated 3 meals were provided and only 12% of respondents indicated no meal was provided hence they were forced to borrow from friends and well wishers.

Table 4.12: Number of meals taken in a day

Number of meals	Frequency	Percentage
No meal	14	12%
One meal	50	43%
Two meals	30	26%
Three meals	21	18%
TOTAL	115	100

Respondents were asked how many pairs of clothes they had before they left home. Thirty two percent respondents indicated they had one pair of clothes, 29% of respondents indicated they had two pairs of clothes, 39% of respondents indicated they had three pairs. The researcher noted that majority of the respondents had indicated three pairs of clothes since they included even tattered clothes. The researcher also noted most of the clothes worn by the respondents were second hand clothes, tattered clothes or over size an indication that clothes were given by well wishers to the respondents. The researcher noted that respondents who owned more than one pair of clothes wore them at the same time to prevent them from cold. The researcher also noted that respondents clothes were very dirty and when respondents were asked why their clothes were dirty they said that washing would make their clothes wear out fast an indication that replacing old clothes was not possible because of poverty.

Table 4.13: Pairs of clothes owned by respondents

Pairs of clothes	Frequency	Percentage
-------------------------	------------------	-------------------

One pair	37	32%
Two pairs	34	29%
Three pairs	45	39%
TOTAL	115	100

When respondents were asked about number of years they spent in school they had the following to say, 52% of respondents had never been to school, 26% of respondents spent 3 years, 9% of respondents spent 2 years, 4% of respondents spent one year and 9% of respondents spent 4 years. It is worth noting that the highest level the respondents attained was standard four. Most respondents indicated they did not attend E C D classes since there was no money to pay for school fees.

The researcher also noted the excuses respondents gave as reasons that made them drop out of school as follows; 55% complained they went without meals hence could not concentrate at school. 35% complained of chronic absenteeism due to parents not able to pay school levies in time which led them to being sent away from school most of the time and therefore could not concentrate. 10% complained of harshness from teachers who did not seem to understand them. The above findings agree with Ratti (2005). He observed that many Kenyan families cannot put food on the table due to overwhelming poverty and consequently children suffer most.

Table 4.14: Number of years spent in school by street children

Number of years	Frequency	Percentage
0 years	45	52%
1 year	22	19%
2 years	20	17%
3 years	15	13%
4 years	13	11%
Total	115	100%

The table above indicates that street children are unlikely to attend school. The highest percentage (52%) of street children interviewed never attended school at all with the rest having attended school for less than 4 years.

Table 4.15: Reasons why respondents left school

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of food	63	55%
Lack of school levies	40	35%
School environment	12	10%
Total	115	100%

Street children were interviewed about their shelters before they left home. The researcher noted that majority of street respondents lived with their parents in single rooms with an average size of 10ft by 10ft. Respondents said that their structures were built of mud walls and wood collected as waste material from construction sites. Since these small rooms host families with as many as seven members or even more, respondents said it was not possible to put up beds and thus they slept on the floor at night and converted the space as kitchen and dining room during the day while the beddings hung on the wall until nightfall, to be used during the night. The researcher noted that children were unnecessarily exposed to the type of social knowledge that is emotionally harmful. Some of them were aware and had full view of their parents as they had sex

at night. When the same interview was conducted among rehabilitation respondents, the findings were the same.

Interviews on respondent’s health before they left home revealed that interviewees had no past records of their sickness. Out of the sampled figure from both street and rehabilitation there was only one boy who suffered from epilepsy even before he went to the street. This respondent had physical injuries which had resulted from fire and when asked about the injuries he reported that his mother use to lock him up in the house and when he had attacks, he could fall any where even in cooking food or fire. He also reported that he could not recall his parents taking him to any hospital when he was at home. It was worth noting that street children describe their health status as fine, they view the types of illness or diseases they experience as minor or normal as long as they can move, work and run. Sickness to the respondents means inability to move or work. From observation the researcher noted that a big number of street respondents had skin infections, respiratory diseases like coughing and they were always dozed. The researcher associated these diseases with respondents ‘current environment.

4.3.2: Family status contributing to increase in children

Family status was another factor attributed to the increase of street children in Meru municipality. A question was asked from both street respondents and rehabilitation respondents about family set up. Their responses are captured in the table below.

Table 4.16: Street respondents ‘family set up

Family set up	Frequency	Percentage
Single headed family	55	48%
Polygamous family	25	22%
Nuclear family	15	13%
Extended family	20	17%
TOTAL	115	100%

Table 4.17: Rehabilitation respondents’ family set up

Family set up	Frequency	Percentage
Single headed family	50	50%

Polygamous family	20	20%
Nuclear family	15	15%
Extended family	15	15%
TOTAL	100	100

The researcher noted that the findings above agree with Onyango (1999) that the high number of female headed households is a testimony of family separation with the majority of the street children originating from single parent households. These findings were also supported by research findings in Kanataka village in India by Mariojose (1999) that majority of children in polygamous families are not educated and are forced to work which lead children to street in such of freedom.

4.3.3: Child abuse

Child abuse was the third factor attributed to the increase of street children in Meru municipality. Researcher came up with following from respondents.

Majority of the respondents rated child neglect as the leading factor contributing to the increase of children in the streets. This was followed by emotional abuse of children by parents. Child labor was the third leading factor to the increase of children in the streets. Physical abuse and sexual abuse were other factors contributing the increase of children in the streets. No respondents indicated that child abandonment had contributed to their being in the streets.

Majority of the children from rehabilitation centers indicated that child neglect was the leading factor to the increase to of children in the streets. The researcher noted that the second leading factor was child emotional abuse. Child labor was the third leading factor followed by physical abuse while a minority indicated that sexual abuse contributed to the increase of children in the streets.

The researcher noted that respondents who were physically abused had scars on their bodies. Some of the respondents were beaten by their parents because of petty crimes such as stealing food, not returning balance when sent to the shop, eating sugar and disobedience of any nature. The researcher noted with a lot of pain two respondents who had scars from burns and indicated they were burnt by parents.

The above findings agree with earlier findings of Bose (2007) that when husbands favor one wife and her children in a polygamous family, other children are neglected they lack fatherly love and become subjected to rejection and abuse. The findings are also supported by study carried out in India (2007) that because of poverty children are abused emotionally, physically and are forced to work to provide for themselves and sometimes provide for family needs.

4.4 Summary

This chapter comprises the presentation and discussion of the findings from the research. The researcher collected the data using various data collection instruments notably; questionnaires, interviews and observations. The data were analyzed and reported in narrative form. The work was organized according to the research questions with the first section of the chapter comprising the introduction and the presentation of the demographic data.

4.5 Conclusion

The quest for this field research was to establish factors that lead to increase of street children in Meru municipality. This chapter provided information on the possible factors contributing to the increase of street children within Meru town. Data collected revealed that respondents were deprived their rights by both government and their families. The researcher observed that there was a significant relationship between poverty, family lifestyle, child labor and number of street children in Meru town. It is noteworthy to mention that from the observation made and data collected the government has not done much in Meru in relation to increasing number of street children.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This field research was to establish factors contributing to increase of street children in Meru municipality. The researcher was inspired to carry out the research by the fact that Meru central is rich in food ,busy area where you cannot idle yourself due to lack of work and very many churches and mosques are found within Meru municipality a clear indication that people are believers with good morals. The study was divided into five chapters. Chapter one dealt with the background information to the study, statement to the problem, objectives of study, research questions, the significance of study, limitations of the study delimitations of the study and assumptions of the study. Chapter two comprised of review of relevant literature while chapter three focused on research design and methodology. Chapter four consisted of data presentation and discussion. In chapter five, a summary of the key research findings is provided. Recommendations and conclusions are drawn based on the findings of the research. Finally, gaps that emerged in the course of study are identified for the purpose of future research.

5.2 Summary

This study sought to examine the factors contributing to the increase of street children in Meru municipality. The study was carried out in Meru municipality and focused on major streets within the municipality and three rehabilitation centers in the municipality. The objectives guiding the study were as follows; to establish how poverty contributes to the number of street children in Meru municipality, establish how family lifestyle contributes to the number of street children in the area of study, to assess how child abuse contribute to the number of street children in the area of study. The research questions were; how does poverty contribute to the number

5.2.1 Discussion on findings

When data was collected in relation to the first objective on establishing how poverty contributed to increase of street children in Meru. The researcher noted that many respondents had come from poor families where basic needs were not provided satisfactorily. 55% had no meal at all from their homes and depended on well wishers before taking to the street .35% of the respondents could not raise school levies such as activity fee which was roughly 150 shillings per year .The researcher noted that 52% of the respondents had never been to school since their parent| could not afford the requirements which included school uniform. Majority of the respondents left school at lower primary level and only 11% of respondents got to class four which means most years spent at school by respondents were 4 years since none of the respondents had joined ECD before joining standard one. Respondents lacked good clothes they wore tattered and dirty clothes. 32% of respondents complained they had only one pair of clothes before they left home a clear indication to show level of poverty among the respondents. This discussion is supported by study done by Ratti (2005) in Kenya 56% of Kenyan population lives on fifty shillings a day and that at least one of every two Kenyans are poor. This study indicated that many families cannot put food on the table with children suffering most and in most cases some children take to streets with hope of getting enough from begging and scavenging in the dumping sites in the towns. Another study that supports this discussion was done in Kenya by Nayaran (2005) and indicated that children from poor families in Kenya find themselves in desperate situation that they did not create and have no power to overcome the situations. Nayaran further noted that despite grueling labor, many poor people go to bed each night with their basic needs unmet.

Objective number two of the study was to establish how family lifestyle contributes to the increase of street children of in the area of the study. 68% of the street respondents were from single female headed families57% of rehabilitation respondents were from single female headed families.20% and 8% of the street respondents and rehabilitation respectively were from polygamous family. 55 %and 48% had their parents engaged in drinking or brewing of chang'aa or both. 6% from street respondents and 13% from rehabilitation respondents had their parents engaged in domestic violence oftenly.23% of street respondents and 18% of rehabilitation respondents had domestic quarrels in their families before they took to streets. The researcher

noted from observations that respondents were not happy with home environment and preferred street for home. This discussion is supported by research findings from (David et al,1991) that lack of responsibility on part of the parents, family conflicts and parental behavioral problems such as substance use and gambling leads children to the streets. Nzioka (2002) pointed out that most street girls come from single families as a result of divorce and separation. He further noted that most of street children were from impoverished social economic back grounds. Another study that supports this discussion was done by Onyango (1999) that the high number of female headed households is a testimony of family separation with the majority of the street children originating from these single parent environments. Onyango further noted that the children on the street come from single parent family mainly single mothers with limited support network. This discussion is also supported by Kilbride and Kilbride (1993) that in cases where mothers are serious drunkards children are left alone for many hours and are not provided with adequate nutrition.

The third objective was to assess how child abuse contributed to the increase of street children in the area of study. The researcher noted that 90% of street respondents and 68% of rehabilitation respondents were emotionally abused. 90% and 88% of street respondents and rehabilitation respondents suffered child neglect respectively. Respondents suffering child labor were 55% from street respondents and 56% from rehabilitation respondents. This discussion is supported by Forastleri (1997) study on factors leading to child abuse in Africa, He noted that the causes underlying child abuse are poverty, insufficient or unbalanced economic growth and structural adjustment program.

5.3 Conclusion

The core business of the researcher was to find out factors contributing to the increase of street children in Meru municipality. A sample of 115 respondents was drawn from the streets within Meru town. Another sample of 100 respondents was drawn from three rehabilitation centers within the municipality. The study gathered very valuable and relevant data that informed the research objectives and questions and provided vital information without which the study would have been incomplete. The study concludes that poverty, child abuse, family status form the bed rock of increase of street children within Meru municipality.

5.4 Recommendations

- 1 The government should come up with ways of protecting street children rights
- 2 The government should address with seriousness the issue of brewing chang'aa
- 3 Church as the national conscience of the society should not remain silent but should address the high rate of separation and divorce
- 4 The government through ministry of education should ensure there is effective free and compulsory primary education
- 5 The government should work closely with NGOs to provide feeding programs in schools
- 6 The government through Meru municipality should work out plans to start up a transit center where street children can be taken for rehabilitation and later reconciled with their families
- 7 There is need to have guidance and counseling as a subject in teacher training colleges to prepare teachers to handle children with different needs
- 8 The government through the constituencies ought scale up infrastructure in the rural areas and empower people at grassroots level in order to curb poverty in rural areas
- 9 The researcher recommends that the ministry of gender, children and social services spearhead massive education on the rights of children. This would reduce the rampant of children rights brought about by ignorance

5.5 Areas for further research

The researcher identified and therefore recommends the following areas for further research.

- 1 There exists a need to research on causes of high rate of divorce and separation in Meru county
- 2 There is need to carry out a research on factors leading to female child prostitution within Meru municipality.
- 3 There is need to carry out a research on factors leading to high rate of drunkardness among young men and women in Meru county

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Letter of transmittal

Ngaku Susan

P.O. Box 76156 – 00508

Nairobi.

16 may 2012.

Dear Sir/ Madam,

REF: LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

I am a student at the University of Nairobi Department of Extra Mural. I am currently undertaking a Masters of Arts in project Planning and Management.

I am carrying out a Study on factors contributing to the increase of street children in the streets of Meru Municipality. The study will be useful to many people and institutions interested in reducing the increase of street children in the towns'.Your genuine response and cooperation will be of great assistance for the successful completion of this study.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully

Ngaku M. Susan

Appendix 2: Questionnaire for current street children

INSTRUCTIONS:

CURRENT STREET CHILDREN

The information that you will give will be treated confidentially.

You are requested to respond to the questions faithfully and honestly.

There will be no longer implications that can lead to prosecution resulting from your involvement in this interview.

SECTION A

1. Age _____
2. Sex: Male _____ Female _____
3. Current residence arrangement of living in the:
Street with friends _____ At home _____ base _____
4. If the answer is the street or at a base, which is your street home or base? Tick.
Mosque road _____ Kaithe Makutano _____ Tom Mboya street _____
Specify _____
5. What is your place of origin.
Specify _____
6. Level of formal education. Indicate the level you left.
Lower primary _____ Upper primary _____
Secondary _____
College _____ None _____
7. Are your parents alive or dead ?.
Both dead _____ Both alive _____ Father
dead _____
Mother dead _____.
8. If both or one of the parents are alive where do you live? specify.

9 How many are you in your family _____.

10 What do your parents do for a living? Specify

11 How many years did you spend in school?

12 How many meals did you use to take per day? Tick the correct answer

(1) (2) (3) (none) any other specify

13. How many pairs of clothes did you have before you came to the street? tick the appropriate answer

(one pair) (two pairs) (three pairs) any other specify

14. Did you suffer from any ailment before you came to street?

(yes) (no)

If yes in above specify sickness and the treatment given

15. Give a short description of your home

16. What type of family do you come from? Tick the appropriate answer

(polygamous family) (single female headed family) (single male headed family)

(extended family)

Any other specify.

17. Were your parents drunkard? (yes) (no)

For yes above specify

(mother) (father) (both)

18 Were your parents engaged in domestic quarrels?.

(yes) (no)

19 Were your parents involved in domestic fights?

(yes) (no)

If yes how often?

20 Which work were you given at home by your parents if any?

Please specify.

21 How many hours in a day did your parents spend with you?

22 Why did you come to the street? Please specify

24 Do you abuse any drug?

If yes in above which drug do you take? Please specify

25 If you take any drug why do you take?

26 Where do you sleep?

27 Where do you get food from?

28 Do you work for anybody?

If you do specify type of work you do

29 How would want to be helped by the government or well wishers? Please specify.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Appendix 3: Letter of transmittal for Children in Rehabilitation Center
IMENTI NORTH DISTRICT
MERU COUNTY.

Dear Sir/ Madam,

I am a student at the University of Nairobi Department of Extra Mural. I am currently undertaking a Masters of Arts in project Planning and Management.

I am carrying out a Study on factors contributing to the increase of street children in the streets of Meru Municipality. The study will be useful to many people and institutions interested in reducing the increase of street children in the towns'. Your genuine response and cooperation will be of great assistance for the successful completion of this study.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully

Ngaku M. Susan

Appendix 4: Questionnaire for Children in Rehabilitation Center

INSTRUCTIONS:

The information that you will give will be treated confidentially.

You are requested to respond to the questions faithfully and honestly.

There will be no longer implications that can lead to prosecution resulting from your involvement in this interview.

SECTION A

1 Age _____

2 sex : Male _____ Female _____

3 How did you come here? Please tick the correct answer

(Through relative) _____ (Through social worker) _____ (Police) _____ (A friend) _____ (Volunteered) _____

6. What are the main services offered in this institution?
Specify _____

7. What is your place of origin?
Specify _____

6. Level of formal education. Indicate the level you left.

Lower primary _____ Upper primary _____

Secondary _____

College _____ None _____

7 Are your parents alive or dead?

Both dead _____ both alive _____ Father
dead _____

Mother Dead _____.

8. Where are other family members living? Please specify

9. How many are you in your family?

11. What do your parents do for a living? Specify

SECTION B.

12. Why did you go to the street? Please specify

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

13. How many meals did you have per day? Before you left home

14. How many pairs of clothes did you have before you left home?

19 Do you have any history of sickness? Specify

20. What has been your parent/family attitude towards you?

- a. Welcoming b. Hostile c. Rejection d. Sympathetic e. Loving f.
Other specify.

Section D

21. Do you agree with these statements as a reason that made you come to the streets?

Say 0=NO and 1=YES.

I went to the streets to look for food and other basic needs

I went to the streets to find peace

I went to the streets to escape sexual abuse

I went to avoid embarrassment

I went to the street to feel good constant insults/quarrels

I went to the streets to escape constant insults

I went to the streets because my father/Mother hated me

Other--- Describe

b) In the part below, indicate how much those people engage in the indicated behavior.

Check 1= Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often

My father used to beat my mother

My father used to beat all of you

Mother came home drunk always

My Father always came home drunk

My parents fought each other.

My mother could hardly cook for us

My father / mother forced me to work all day

If other, specify

c) Negative life Events:

In the last one year before you came to the streets which of those events happened to you.

Check 0 = No, 1 = Yes

Death of both parents

Death of father

Death of mother

Divorce of parents

Personal injury/ illness

Marriage of one of the parents

Parent (s) fired at work

Change in eating habits

Pregnancy

Change in health of family members

Change in school

If other, specify

SECTION E:

Write yes or No

1. I am fed up with this life
2. I wish I had other place
3. I find people not appreciating what I do.
4. I feel sad
5. I feel hopeless
6. I feel irritated by minor things

7. I wish I could be happy like other people

8. I wonder if God still cares.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Appendix 5: Letter of transmittal

IMENTI NORTH DISTRICT

MERU COUNTY.

Dear Sir/ Madam,

I am a student at the University of Nairobi Department of Extra Mural. I am currently undertaking a Masters of Arts in project Planning and Management.

I am carrying out a Study on factors contributing to the increase of street children in the streets of Meru Municipality. The study will be useful to many people and institutions interested in reducing the increase of street children in the towns' .Your genuine response and cooperation will be of great assistance for the successful completion of this study.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully

Ngaku M.

Appendix 6: Questionnaire for Rehabilitation Center Administrators

INSTRUCTIONS:

Administrator

The information that you will give will be treated confidentially.

You are requested to respond to the questions faithfully and honestly.

There will be no longer implications that can lead to prosecution resulting from your involvement in this interview.

1. What is the name of your institution
2. Type of institution / Organization: Tick where appropriate.
a) FBO b) CBO c) government institutions d) specify.....
3. For how long has your organization being operating.
a) 1-5 yrs b) 6-10 yrs c) 11 – 15 yrs d) 16-20 yrs e) 20+
4. What services do you provide to the street children/
a) Healthy b) Education c) Feeding d) counseling e) general upkeep
f) rehabilitation g) relief support h) Specify.....
5. How do you identify street children?.....
6. How do you handle street children before admitting them to the programme?.....
7. How many counselors do you have?.....
8. What is their professional level in counseling?
a) Seminars b) bachelors c) certificates d) masters e) PhD
f) Diploma
9. Do you carry out any background research before admitting the street children fully in your programme?

10. Have you come across some children who have been physically abused?
11. Are there some who are sexually abused?
12. Are there some who are emotionally abused?
13. What percentage of the street children that you admit are involved in drugs.
14. What is the commonest drug taken by them?
15. What reason do they give that prompt them to taking drugs?
16. What percentage of the street children you admit account for family conflicts.
17. What percentage of street children you admit account for orphan hood?
18. How do you handle children who have been born on the street? Do they present different from others
19. In your opinion what measure can reduce the children coming to the street?

Thank you for your time and cooperation.