Effect of Economic Hardship, Deprivation and Peer Influence on Street Children in Khartoum, Sudan

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Abstract

Many children have fled their households to find employment and shelter in Khartoum, Sudan. The absence of the basic needs has forced the children to take to the streets where they feel they have better opportunities to survive in their impoverished state. This situation

may have made these children vulnerable to risks such as exposure to vice activities as well as victimisation. One of the ways to survive challenges of the street life is to make friends with other street children and in some instances, the children become part of a larger group or syndicate. To address the challenges faced by street children, the study investigates the influence the street peers may have on the children's behaviour. A total of 12 marketplaces in Khartoum State and its three municipalities, namely, Khartoum, Omdurman, and North Khartoum (Bahri), were selected in the current study as these localities have large numbers of street children. Using geographical clusters of the areas, followed by a systematic sampling technique, 330 street children were chosen as the sample size of the study. The questionnaire survey was used to obtain data from the respondents, the data collected in 2017. The data analysis tool used SPSS 22. The study reveals that street children in Khartoum take part in varying kinds of maladaptive behaviours and peer influence is found to be the determinant of these behaviours. The study suggests that targeted interventions by social welfare agencies and non-profit organisations should be made to ensure the safety and future of these children.

Keywords: Street children, risk behaviour, deviant behaviour, crime, peers, poverty, schooling, Sudan

JEL: I3, Z1, A1

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduce the Problem

Sudan is a hub for hosting refugees, adults and children from neighboring countries like the Eritrea, Congo, Chad, Ethiopia and Uganda (Marchand et al., 2017). Consequently, the street children amount in Sudan was and still is increasing substantially because of factors such as poverty, civil war, political instability, drought and famine (Abdelmoneium, 2017; Wisal Ali El Tahir, 2015). In 2015, there were approximately 700,000 street children in Khartoum, Sudan of ages 7 to 18 years old.[1] Refugees in the Khartoum area are not found distinctly in camps but are instead assimilated into local communities. In consequence, it can be challenging to distinguish the street children as they have almost the exact features as the local Sudanese street children. The migration of foreign children has exacerbated the trend of homeless and street children in Sudan (Awad, 2003; Plummer et al., 2007).

Street children are continuously faced with the hard reality of life due to their separation from their biological families and poor access to necessities. They do not have access to education and health as a portion of parents believe that education was less significant and a mere discard of energy and finances. Education is just for those individuals who can afford to pay for it. Hence, street children are illiterate. In Sudan, street children can be categorised into three groups, namely (a) children at risk –who live with their families but partake in street work to assist their family's income; (b) street children with have some form of family support but working on the street; and (c) street children living and working totally on the

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[1]https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/700-000-street-children-in-sudan-s-capital#:~:text=There%20are%20about%20700%2C000%20street,the%20Sudanese%20Homeless%20Child%20Association.

streets with no family support whatsoever (Panter-Brick, 2004).

Collecting data from street children is considerably challenging as this population is very difficult to reach, and access to the areas where the street children reside is restricted (Sydor, 2013). Thus, there is a need for more research to be conducted on the street children to discover the condition of these children, their challenges and their street activities. This study examined these matters further by investigating the influence of their on the street children's behaviors and activities. The study's contribution would be in providing updated data that would contribute to the literature and policymakers of Sudan.

This paper is divided into five sections, introduction, literature review, method, result, discussion and conclusion. section one is an introduction including the background of the study and the problem statement was highlighted to provide specific reasons why this study is necessary. Section two, literature review findings from previous studies and theories related to the study. Section three is the research methodology used in this study. Section four, presents the findings obtained from data analysis. Section five, includes a discussion of result, recommendations and limitations.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Challenges Encountered by Street Children

Street children faced both fear and anxiety due to the public's ill-perception, badgering by bosses, metropolitan specialists, and police (Khwairakpam & Sukhminder, 2013; Kombarakaran, 2004; Moshood et al., 2021; Reza, 2017). For example, according to the studies conducted by Nwabah and Uko-aviomoh (2006), street children are perceived as a threat to the regular citizens' security. Strictly speaking, perceiving them as destitute is equivalent to viewing them as troublemakers, social misfits, or criminals by nature. In addition, they opined that these children should be the responsibility of the government and parents. Treating the street children as mere deviants contributes to stigmatisation and the development of laws and programs that can create more harm than good (Moshood et al., 2021; Orme & Seipel, 2004).

On the other hand, Wheeler et al. (2013) explored the occurrences of child abuse highly reported in Egypt by families and society. The study found that children are usually beaten or even severely abused in their homes by parents or stepparents. Although there are laws that protect children from the physical abuse of parents, these laws are not heeded by anyone. Even worse, these children also experience abuse from their teachers. Egyptian children for instance experience sexual and physical abuse on the streets even with the existence of laws designed to shield them from this very same abuse. This is a common phenomenon among street children in many countries, as highlighted by (Kudrati et al., 2008; Ribeiro, 2008). They assert street children are often undergoing verbal, physical, and sexual abuse by police who consider them criminals and attempt to remove them from the streets.

Surviving on the streets is not an easy task. To pull through, children work for long hours and perform dangerous tasks that pay little. They do not make sufficient money to acquire food, medication, and school. Regularly the children are annoyed by more seasoned road children, also indeed by the authorities. Young girls are especially more defenseless to sexual

badgering, and a modest bunch of them have undesirable pregnancies/contract sexually transmitted diseases, such as HIV/AIDS (Orme & Seipel, 2007). Street children who grew up in poor households with no family stability and no educational opportunities are exposed to sexual issues, drug addiction, depression, and suicide (Moolla et al., 2008; Oppong Asante, 2016).

In studies by Ribeiro (2008), Nada and El Daw (2010), and Millar (2014), street children or destitute children are being confronted by numerous challenges in life, particularly in getting nourishment, protection, and cash; they also persevere steady savagery and sexual badgering. For these children to survive on the streets, they involve in dangerous activities that pose significant risks to themselves. Moreover, most street children's strength in their coping skills comes from the survivors of abuses, neglect and other adversities (Kaiser & Sinanan, 2020). According to Gakuru et al. (2002), activities in which these children are being involved reflect their battle to meet fundamental needs, look for enthusiastic bolster and receive the care they have been denied by their families. These children are habitually addicted to drugs and alcohol so that they can forget the hostility their life offers them. McAlpine et al. (2010), Sharma and Lal (2011) found that children smoke tobacco, consume alcohol, and develop habits of substance abuse such as glue and petrol-sniffing, marijuana, heroin and valium. Plummer et al. (2007) found that sniffing glue supported the transition from intending to just work to end up living on the street.

The standard of living for the majority of Khartoum street children includes work to gain cash and nourishment, amusement and mingling with their peers, substance manhandling, and now and then physical or sexual savagery (Kudrati et al., 2008). For example, in June and July 2011, 77 street children in Khartoum, Omdurman and Bahri died from an overdose of methanol while another 15 became blind and were admitted to Omdurman General Hospital, as reported by Sudan's Ministry of Interior (Sudan's National Council Child Welfare, 2011). In the same year, some street children were raped by shelter guards inside Suba's Shelter in North Khartoum, and the trauma caused the children to distrust shelter staff and public authorities in general, pushing them to flee to the streets again where they felt safer (SNCCW, 2011).

2.2 Street Children's Behaviour

Nearly all street children are from poor households, live in the slums or low-cost housing, have large family sizes, have a strained relationship with parents or/and stepparents, and come from broken families (Endris & Sitota, 2019; Genemo, 2018; Khaoya, 2014; Mohammed et al., 2020; Pannilage, 2017; Senaratna & Wijewardana, 2012; Wairimu, 2013). Furthermore, children who are left to be on the streets are left with little choice but to find employment to survive. This situation has exposed the children to doing illegal acts like drug abuse, theft and prostitution (Abdelgalil et al., 2004; Demartoto, 2012; Mohammed et al., 2020). Years of experience on the street have made them socially incompetent, untrusting of others especially public authorities and to a certain extent show aggressive behaviour. Anti-social and aggressive behaviour could also be termed as maladaptive behaviour (Chang, 2004). In the present study, maladaptive behaviour is categorised as risky and deviant

behaviours. Risky behaviour implies being involved in activities such as smoking, drinking alcohol, prostitution, and drug addiction (Gruber, 2000). Deviant behaviour refers to behaviours that violate social norms, such as stealing, begging, and using foul language (Clinard & Meier, 2015).

Genemo (2018) stated that the children's family backgrounds such as those coming from broken homes, alcoholic parents and parents with criminal behaviour are likely to encourage antisocial behaviour in children even before they went to the streets. Endris and Sitota (2019) some of the reasons that force children to flee homes include parental punishment, abject poverty and hate of stepparents to parent's addiction to alcohol. In Bangladesh, Sarker et al. (2016) state that the low socioeconomic status (SES) and poverty result in children begging for money in Sylhet city of Bangladesh. As a result, street children use substance abuse such as glue sniffing, smoking and chewing chat to reduce their stress levels. Some reported that they have already turned to hashish and marijuana which, they believe, help them resist hunger and cold weather.

2.3 Peers Influence

Friendship among street children is related to the support and comfort they offer each other. These functions as "collaboration", "reciprocity", and "correspondence", although these terms are considered new in compositions. Even though street children still need sufficient care and assurance from numerous parties, particularly from their families and parents, the majority of children obtain no guidance or assurance, thereby making them live and/or remain autonomously on the streets (Mizen & Ofosu-Kusi, 2010). According to Murray et al. (2012), the friendship of street children results in negative consequences when they become associated with the wrong friends who motivate them to become thieves to assist their "friends", be involved in drugs, and ignore their parents. Street children can be constrained to alter complex circumstances on the boulevards. In any case of the results of the companionship, friends can moreover be their source of support, bravery, inspiration, and assurance for survival, especially for those who have been deserted and ignored by their families. Through the bond with other road peers, they share work and income. A few of the children, particularly the new arrivals, are clueless, and they have to befriend other road children for survival aptitudes and assurance from road criminals. To support their lives on the roads, correspondence and participation are the procedures utilised by the street children (Abd Hamid et al., 2017).

Shahabudin and Low (2013), the study highlights the mediating effect of parent stressors, peer stressors and teacher stressors on the relation between SES and maladaptive behavior, respectively there are various levels of interaction between an individual and the surrounding. The most significant is the first level of interaction, the Microsystems, where children with their characteristics interact with people who are closest to them and these people have the strongest influence on the child's development. In this context, parents have the nearest link to their children, teacher and peer. In the Ecological Systems Theory, Bronfenbrenner et al. (1994) create the all-embracing theoretical basis of the study. It emphasises the interactions amongst individuals, in this particular case, street children with the people in their

environment such as their families, peers and the public. For Khartoum's street children, the push factor for a child's conclusion to enter the streets is primarily due to economic hardship and their parents' inability to supply the family's necessities (Awad, 2003; Kudrati et al., 2008; Mohammed et al., 2020; Plummer et al., 2007). Some of the children are forced by their families to work on the street to contribute to the family's income. Subsequently, there are also interactions between children, their peers and the public population/general public. Peers play a big role in the child's life as they bring them information on the way to survive on the streets. Resultantly, these same children get caught up in risky behaviours such as theft, taking drugs and sexual acts. The street children also interact with the public in their environment, usually with strangers who can pose threats to the children.

The exposure to various threats on the streets worsens the children's condition as they continue to live on the streets. Wairimu (2013), parental investment in children in terms of time and capital in education and training, health and nutrition and general care is strongly related to the kind of lifestyle children will adopt in the future. The extent to which the contemporaneous adverse, social and economic effects of parental lifestyle on children lead to long-term physiological and socio-economic damage which may include the development of criminal activities. In this study, she draw the conceptual framework from Chamber (1983) model, which suggests that the lengthier the period of poverty, the more problematic it is for the distressed individual to effectively escape from it. This is supported by Yaqub (2002) who highlighted that being poor for a period longer than four years increases the probability of partaking in deviant behaviour up to 90 percent. The current study examines children who have undergone economic adversity and deprivation leading them to deviant attitudes and behaviour. Even if the children are not removed from the clutches of poverty, such kind of behaviour can continue.

3. Method

The study used is a qualitative research approach. Khartoum as a state is divided into seven localities: Omdurman, Khartoum, Ombada, Jalab Awliya, Sharg El Nil, Bahri and Karay. This particular study covered street children in three of these specified localities: North Khrtoum (Bahri), Khartoum, and Omdurman see Figure 1. The sampling frame, which gave list of 25 markets in the state, was acquired from the General Administration for Social Welfare Department (2013). The markets listed were then reorganised in ascending order according to size and numbered from 1 to 25. Systematic sampling was adopted as previously used in a study by Azumah (2019). Even-numbered codes were assigned to each of the markets. In total, a sample of 12 markets was established. Once completed, the respondents in each market were approached and then asked for voluntary participation. By so doing, a total of 330 working street children offered to contribute to the survey conducted in five months (2017). The researcher was helped by two trained assistants capable of speaking the local dialect. The survey was conducted in Arabic and then transcribed into English.

Figure 1. Khartoum State (Khartoum, Omdurman, Khartoum North-Bahri)

3.1 Study Indicators

A questionnaire was used as the key instrument for the study. The question was adapted mainly from Wairimu (2013). The validation of the questionnaire was conducted through a pilot study and the internal reliability of the measurement was satisfactory.

3.2 Questionnaire and Variable Measurements

3.2.1 Respondents' Profile

The instrument required information concerning their age, birth order, number of siblings, reasons for being on the streets, the type of jobs they do, and their income. They were also asked about their parents' occupations, income, educational status, and employment status. The responses were scored based on 0 = No, 1 = Yes; a four-point Likert-type scale was adopted: Not at all = 1, Rarely = 2, Sometimes = 3, Most of the time = 4.

3.2.2 Maladaptive Behaviour

The next section of the questionnaire presents questions related to various categories of delinquent behaviour. Due to the sensitivity of the title of this section, the term 'delinquency' was replaced by the word 'maladaptive behaviour' among street children to avoid negative connotations. The respondents were asked: "How often are you involved in such behaviour?"; "Have your colleagues influenced you to be involved in a smoking cigarettes?" and "Do you face similar challenges as your colleagues in the street?".

The rating scale consisted of a five-point rating scale: "0 = Not even once", "1 = Once or twice", "2 = Several times", "3 = Quite a several times" and "4 = Many times". The measurement, a 5-point Likert scale, was put to use, ranging from 1 = "Strongly disagree" to 5 = "Strongly agree".

http://jpag.macrothink.org

3.3 Data Analysis

The collected data was analyses via SPSS and the outliers were removed to obtain the reliability of the data. It was, then, converted via SPSS version 22 to perform the necessary analysis. The reliability of instruments is crucial as it indicates the quality of the measurement method, which is the internal constancy of the scale being used (Kimberlin & Winterstein, 2008). One of the most commonly used indicators of internal reliability in quantitative measurement is Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient.

3.4 Ethical Approval

The study obtained total approval for the research to be accomplished on such children from Universiti Malaya's Research Ethics Committee (UMREC) ref.no.UM.TNC2/RC/H&E/UMREC-157. UMREC made it compulsory that some data of the respondents, like their pictures, contact numbers, address of residence or names should not be disclosed. Furthermore, the National Council of Child Welfare, Ministry of Social Development, and Child and Family Protection Unit of Sudan delivered the endorsement to carry out the study on-site. Parental consent was not sought because most of these children do not live with their parents, and some did not want to inform their parents about the study.

4. Results

4.1 Street Children Profile

Although 350 sets of responses were obtained, only 330 sets could be used for analysis as the remaining had some important sections unanswered. Figure 2 reveals the demographic profiles of the respondents. The respondents were males whose ages ranging 10 to 17 years. The majority of the respondents (47.7%) were between 13 and 15 years old, and slightly more than half of the total respondents have more than six siblings. As regards birth order, 21.5% was made up of the eldest in their families and those who are the second child in their families accounted for 27.0%. Altogether, these accounted for almost half of the birth order.

Three-quarters of total respondents (73.3%) stated that they had no guardian or individual to provide for their school fees and other materials. Thus, it is essential to state with whom they were staying. The findings showed that 51.0% stayed with their families, 11.5% stayed with relatives, and 14.8% were of the group that stayed with friends. Only 11.5% lived alone. Approximately half of the total respondents (50.3%) lived on the streets for less than a year, meaning this is the cohort of a new arrival to the streets. Whereas 30.6% have been on the streets for up to 4 years, and 19.1% have been on the streets for more than 4 years. Leaving this issue untapped without addressing the source of the issue would mean that new entries into the streets will continue to take place daily. Exactly 79.1% (approximately 8 out of every 10) of the children remained on the streets the whole day whereas the remaining children went on the streets only after school hours, occasionally, or during school holidays.

About two-thirds of the entire respondents (66.0%) did varying odd jobs like being tea boys, waste disposers, cleaners, waiters, or selling plastic bags, candy, nuts, fruits, mineral water and fruits and vegetables. A further 14.0% of the children did work as shoe shiners. A large

majority of respondents (91.5%) made less than SP 50 a day (1 USD = 60 Sudanese Pounds). It is also noted that 48.0% of respondents supplied money to their family income a lot of the time whereas 42.7% did not do so. The responses indicated that 36.1% of respondents did not have individuals who rely on their income while 47.7% specified that their families were contingent/dependent on their income.
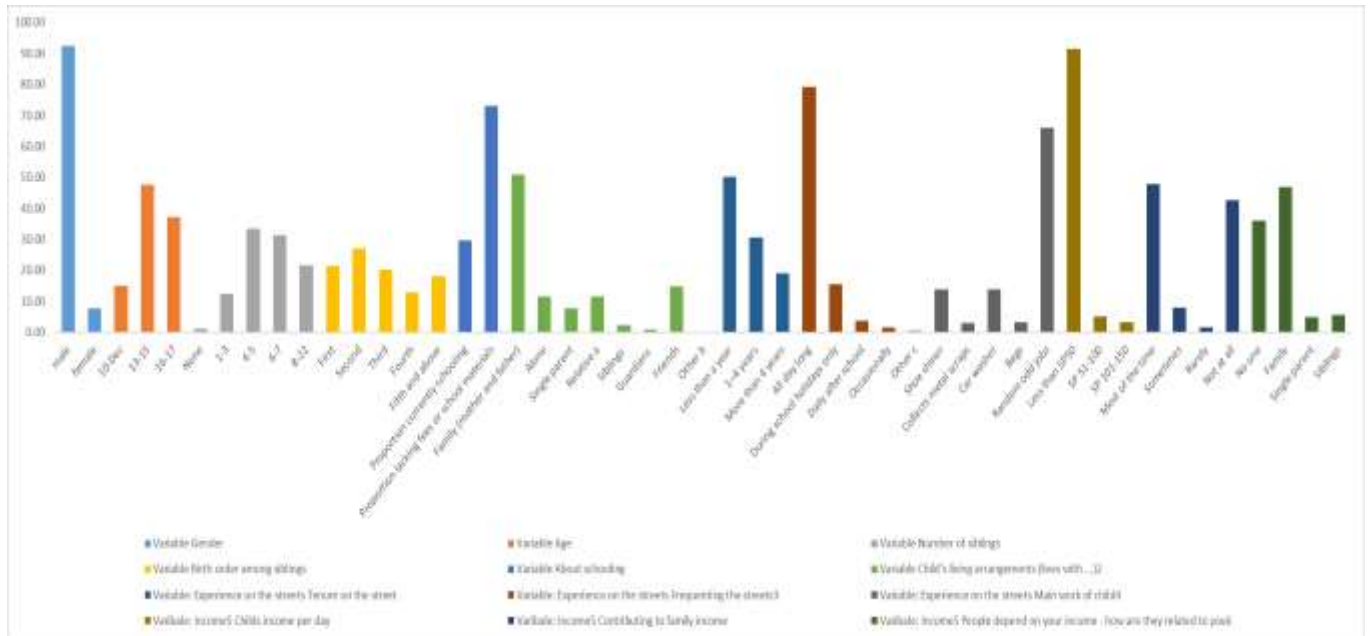

Figure 3. Profile of street children and their parents (n = 330)

Figure 3 reveals parents' educational achievements, family income and occupation(s). There were more mothers (53.3%) who reported to be illiterate compared to fathers (43.6%). In terms of education, 32.7% of the fathers and 29.2% of the mothers received primary schooling alone. Those that obtained religious education made up 13.4% of the fathers while 10.3% made up the mothers. In regards to occupation, 49.0% of the fathers were casual workers whereas 19.4% are unemployed. Approximately half of the mothers (49.0%) are housewives and 26.7% were casual workers. The family income for most of the respondents (63.3%) was between SP 501 and SP 1,500. while 20.4% made less than SP 500 14.0% made between SP1,501 and SP3,000 a month.
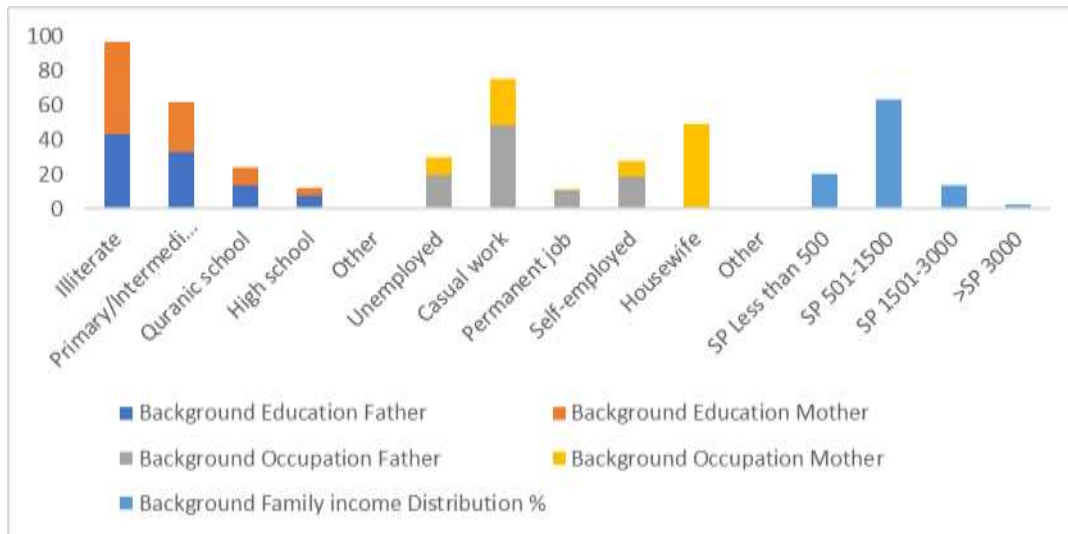
Figure 3. Parents' education, occupation and family income (n = 330)

Note: a – includes two intermediate; b - includes "don't know", or father has deceased; c - includes a doctor, one who has deceased, and one "don't know"; d – includes adult education, a mother has deceased, and "don't know"; e - includes a mother who has deceased and "doesn't know". 'SP'- Sudanese Pound (SP100 = USD 0.23).

4.2 Respondents' Maladaptive Behaviour

The study examined the types of activities that the street children's peers were partaking in as a proxy for the street children's activities. Figure 4 shows the distribution of the activities of their peers in the street. In terms of substance abuse, 86.0% strongly agreed/agreed on smoking, including cigarettes. Besides, 52.2% of the total respondents strongly agreed/agreed on being associated with alcohol. Furthermore, 77.2% of the total respondents strongly agreed/agreed with sniffing glue.

It was also shown that 60.0% of the respondents strongly agreed/agreed on being involved in highly risky fights using weapons. It was also found that 91% of the respondents strongly agreed with using foul language. The study's findings showed that 84.3% of the respondents strongly/agreed on having the experience of physical fighting involving a weapon. Furthermore, the data analysis showed that 29.0% of the respondents were in agreement (agreed) while 54.3% strongly agreed/agreed on being engaged in begging. Besides, the results of the study showed that 49.7% strongly agreed/agreed with partaking in stealing. Finally, 59.1% strongly agreed/agreed with being partaking in sexual activities.
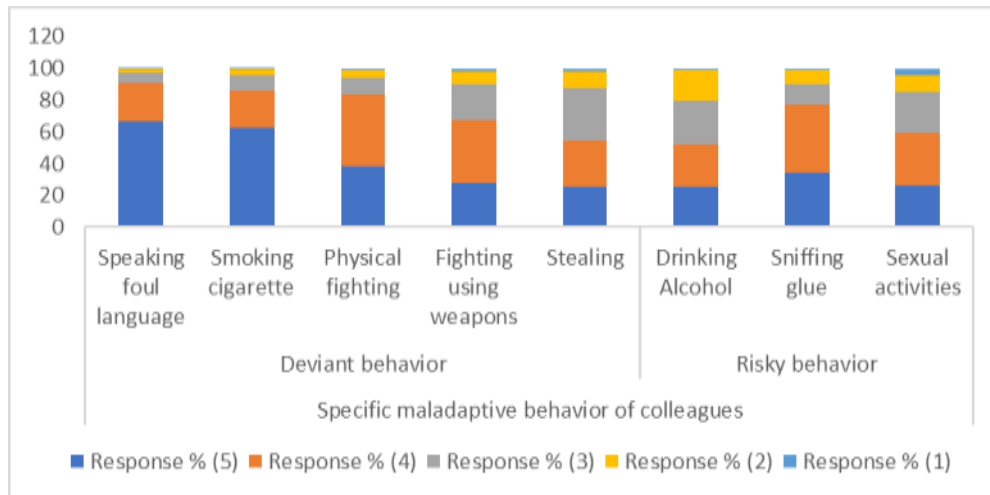
Note: Strongly disagree = (1), Disagree = (2), Neutral= (3), Agree = (4), Strongly agree = (5)

Figure 4. Distribution of behaviour their colleagues do in the street (n=330, %)

The results related to how often their colleagues were involved in maladaptive behaviour are presented in Figure 5. A total of 75.0% of the respondents very often speak foul languages; substance abuse registered the highest proportion, with smoking cigarettes being often/several times garnering 93.6%. Besides, alcohol consumption was found to be the activity they have done several times (47.0%) and very often (22.7%). Furthermore, 75.7% of the respondents carried out sniffing glue at the rate of very often/several times. The data analysis also revealed that physical fighting is often carried out by the participants (33.0%) while 47.0% was recorded as the highest percentage of the participants who carried out fighting several times (36.4%) was also shown that gang fights were done very often/several times (76.5%). Furthermore, fighting using weapons occurred several times/very often as indicated by 48.1% of the respondents. Moreover, 70.0% of the respondents were involved in begging several times/very often. The findings of the study showed that stealing was not committed at all. Finally, it was found that 61.7% of the respondents had sexual activities times/very often. All other types of behaviour involved only a small proportion of street children.
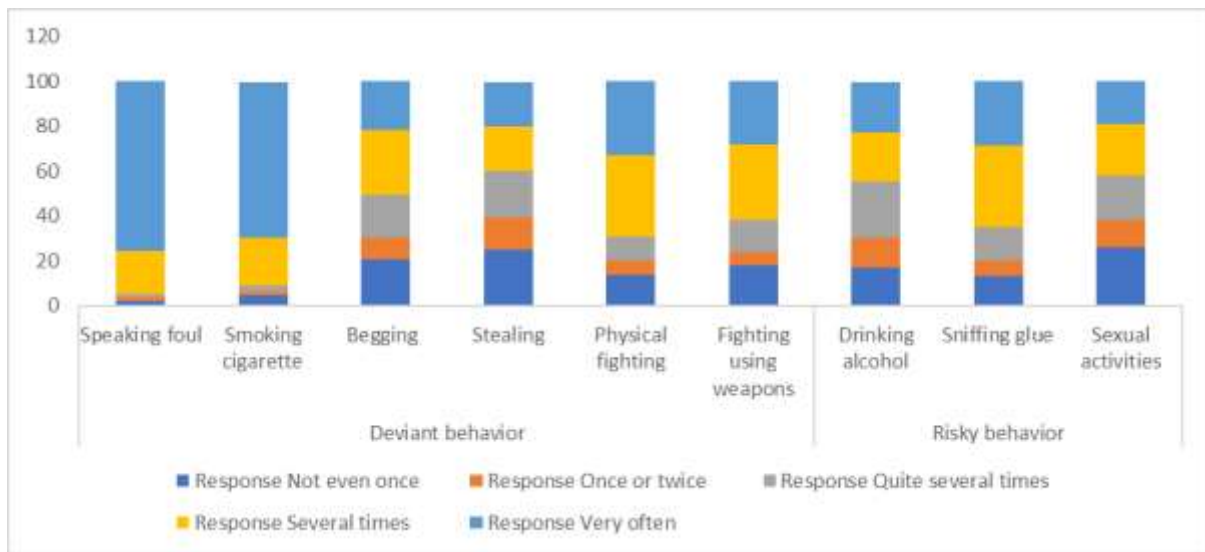
Note: Not even once = (1), Once or twice = (2), Quite several times = (3), Several times = (4), Very often = (5)

Figure 5. Frequency of colleagues are involved in maladaptive behaviour (n=330, %)

Figure 6 shows that the respondents faced similar street challenges as colleagues. A total of 52.4% of the respondents agreed on this while others (24.0%) strongly agreed. This brought it to a total of 76.4% of those who somewhat agreed on this matter.
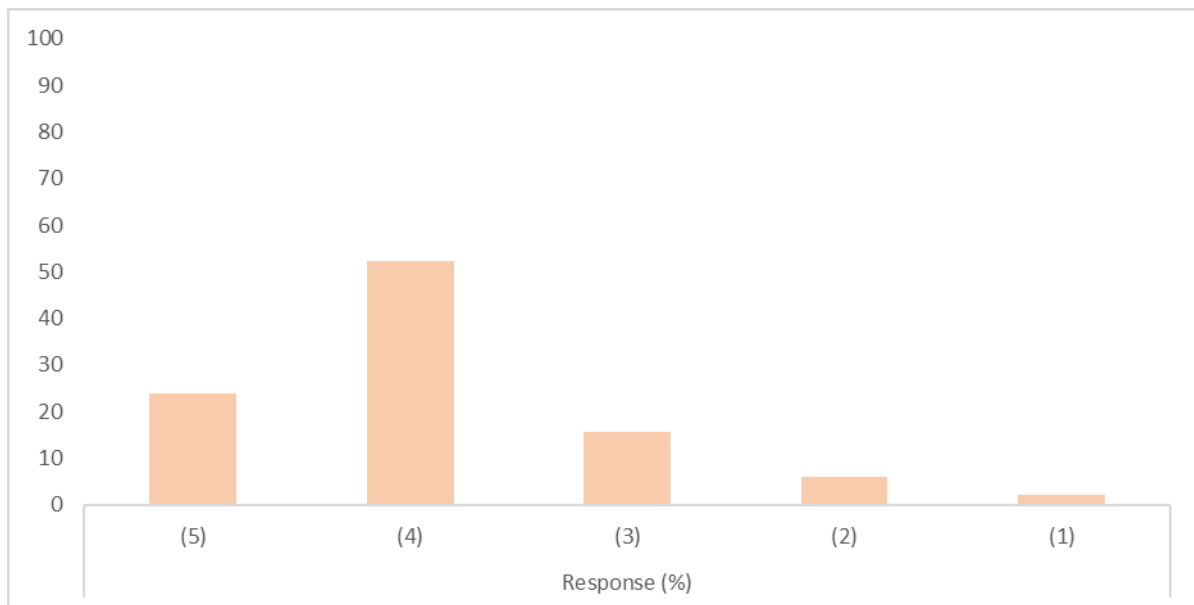
Note: Strongly disagree = (1) Disagree = (2), Neutral= (3), Agree = (4), Strongly agree = (5)

Figure 6. Whether respondents faced similar challenges as their colleagues in the street (n=330)

4. Discussion

The results obtained from the participants' demographic information reveal that the majority of the respondents are males. Female street children are hard to find because it is difficult for Sudanese families to send their girls to the street. Most of the children present on the streets are between 10 and 17 years old; such ages are considered susceptible to adolescent deviant behaviour. The data shows that the number of children who have dropped out of school is high. Around 71.0% of the children have abandoned school because of economic adversity/hardship, due to the fact their families are unable to pay school fees along with other educational materials. It is also reported that these difficulties denied the families access to education due to their family size. The respondents of this study claim that their family members face difficulties in providing education for them and their siblings. In this respect, a survey carried out in 2004 on children in Khartoum State by NCCW displayed that a major factor that prevented 35.0% of the children from enrolling in formal schooling was the incapacity to pay/afford their school fees.

The street children's social and cognitive development is limited due to the lack of education that could have enabled them to make rational choices in their lives (Schimmel, 2006). Ward and Seager (2010) recommended that children remain in school to reduce the risk of taking to the street. Although school plays a vital part in the day-to-day life of street children, still there is an absence of discourses on how the teachers could help street children with how they could first identify, second describe and third characterise them and their relationship with the learners. The parents' occupation and education are found to be vital background factors behind the street children phenomenon. The study's findings show that being in a low-income family has a detrimental effect on children. The majority of respondents claim that their parents have no education or fixed occupation. In other words, they are not highly educated, and thus they could only get employment in the low-income job sector or become unemployed. This situation has forced many children to find jobs anywhere, as supported by findings by (Vameghi et al., 2014).

When parents fail to fulfill their children's needs, those children are compelled to seek refuge on the street. This influences the behavioural pattern of the children on the street. In this regard, the street children in Khartoum acknowledge that they are involved in various types of maladaptive behaviours such as drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes, sniffing glue, indulging in sexual activities, begging, physical fighting, and pickpocketing and stealing. These behaviours are congruent with those found in the literature (Mohammed et al., 2020; Saripudin, 2012; Senaratna & Wijewardana, 2012; Yu et al., 2019). The findings of this study reveal that many street children resort to substance abuse because of their interaction with other children who are also taking substance abuse. It all begins with a gradual trail that eventually leads to addiction. It is also revealed that drug traffickers exploited some children, and they work in the distribution and preparation of drugs, whether in return for money or free drugs. This is a form of trafficking in children. The findings are consistent with those of the previous studies by Boakye-Boaten (2008), Obioha (2009) and Rana and Chaudhry (2011), which found that street children were involved in both legal and illegal endeavors to meet their survival needs.

The present study found out that street children in the Khartoum area were involved in various kinds of maladaptive behaviour like drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes, sniffing glue, indulging in sexual activities, begging, physical fighting, pickpocketing and stealing, which confirms the findings of Saripudin (2012), which stated that factors making children be liable to maladaptive behaviour are the child's social environment, peers, and parents. Kidd (2003) argues that the influence of peers is the most important motivation for adopting smoking, alcohol and substance abuse.

Although most street children who took part in this study claimed to be aware of the risks and hazards of sniffing glue and alcohol abuse, they justified the use of such substances by saying that the street environment compelled them to do so. It is also found that street children adopt those bad attitudes when they socialise with peers or friends. As a result, they imitate their peers. They described their actions as ways of relaxing or socialising with friends on the street (Kidd, 2003; Kombarakaran, 2004). Peers play an increasingly important role and strongly impact the development, behaviour and attitudes of children (Erwin, 1993; Markey et al., 2004; Rebellow, 2015). Although many studies have examined the peers' influences during adolescence, mainly from 15 to18 years Smith et al. (2014), much less is known about these processes during childhood. The study's respondents were younger children between the ages of 10 and 17. It is found that even at a young age, the strong presence of peers' influence on maladaptive behaviour is visible in the overall results.

5. Conclusion

Street children are just like any other children who have the humanly right to decent shelter, childhood and access to an improved life. The responsibility towards these street children should not lie entirely on the government and non-governmental organisations but should also be the duty of the whole community. Numerous children who were interviewed admitted that it was more challenging to reside or live on the street than they had initially expected. Street children frequently do trivial occupations such as car washing, collecting scrap metal, selling coffee and tea, hawking partner and hobo's tea, shoe polishing, and selling unimportant or little things such as plastic sacks, tissue papers, and water. Other street children became involved in maladaptive behaviour such as stealing, selling drugs, and prostitution.

The findings of this study have provided new information about this population that could lead to the development of intervention methods. Interventions should consider the causes of the problems of street children, their care and protection as well as how to maintain their family's entity. Working children who head to the street to do petty jobs include children who do not go to school, and those who work during school breaks, during the weekend, and after school days. These children partake in work to get cash to purchase school necessities to take part in their families' pay and the buying of school supplies. Maladaptive behaviour is adopted by the children when they move to the street. A program should be designed to prevent children from being involved in such behaviour. For example, they should be helped to recover from addiction by giving short- and long-term mental health support to psychologists and counselors. Sometimes, this aid may be delivered by children who have

already conquered the issue with the assistance of social workers who are proficient in communicating with children. Therefore, explaining the dangers of alcohol, and sniffing glue to the children is not a solution to their problems but perhaps adds insult to injury. Providing an example of peers who have already overcome the problem gives the child motivation for a better future.

To help street children overcome their problems, particularly with substance abuse, it would be better to create a strong awareness of the consequences of taking drugs as well as nurturing a sense of filial obligations to the family, home, and community. It is vital to develop trust between children and society and street children to conquer the feelings that they are not part of the society. Therefore, to work towards such a common goal, it is crucial to identify people, peers, and relatives who will volunteer. The first step is to identify peers who have gone off the street to find a better life; the reason being these children will have more faith in their friends than other people, and that may motivate them better. Moreover, the recommendation would be to assign a reliable peer who can help the children when they need extra support in coping with problems and guidance. Peers are easier to approach and able to understand the situations faced by children because of their similar level of thinking, as supportive peers sometimes express their positive feeling towards those they mentor. Therefore, introducing proper training programs to the specially selected children will help other peers facing these problems.

Furthermore, intervention programs should take into consideration the causes of the problems faced by street children to stop children from coming to the street. One of the ways is to increase the family income. To have more family income, NGOs and government at the upper level whereas communities and territories at the ground level ought to cooperate and offer welfare services. Charities and donations should be increased to support them with enterprises, small ventures, and even vocational training targeting slum areas where the majority of these children have been reported to live. Hence, education and income level management, which includes welfare, and quality of life, along with the family's capacity to meet children's fundamental needs, must be tended to halt them from moving to the street.

The majority of children reported that they have been a drop out of school because of family economic hardship, therefore, the free education approach ought to be connected, executed, and assessed within the long-run and short-run, including charge waivers and suppers without charge for destitute children. Besides, policies and laws that were initially propelled by child issues must be surveyed within the short- and long -run to see the greatness of the problem and the impact of the implementation. Thus, international and local NGOs with the government should allocate more funds and increase collaborative efforts and coordination towards elucidating their activities towards children to reduce the magnitude of the problem within a short period. Health and psychological clinics with free health cards to enable them to have access to clinics during an emergency and healthcare programs should be provided for the children's well-being as many of these children are susceptible to HIV/AIDS caused by unprotected sex.

Acknowledgments

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Appendix A

A. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1. Age: _____
2. Gender: [   ] Male   [   ] Female
3. Number of siblings: ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩ Other: _____
4. Your birth order among siblings: ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩ Other: _____

B. YOUR EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

5. Education level and occupation of your parents and yourself:

   (please use the guide below the table to provide your answer)

Status	Father	Mother	Yourself
Highest educational attainment			
Occupation			

Guide:

Education	Occupation
1. Primary	1. Unemployed
2. Intermediate	2. Casual work
3. High secondary	3. Permanent work
4. *Khalwa* (Quranic school)	4. Self-employment
5. Illiterate	5. Housewife
6. Other (please state: _____)	6. Other (please state: _____)

6. Has it been easy for your parents to get their jobs?

[　] Most of the time　　[　] Sometimes

[　] Rarely　　[　] Not at all

7. Why do you think your parents have been unable to get current jobs? (*You can tick more than one answer*)

[　] No education　　[　] Skills and training

[　] Illness　　[　] Poverty

8. Is it difficult for your family members to get an education?

[　] Yes　　[　] No

9. Are you currently in school?　　[　] Yes　　[　] No

[　] if No, go to question 10

10. Is it due to your inability to pay the tuition fee?

[　] Yes　　[　] No

C. FAMILY BACKGROUND

11. Currently, do you live with your family?

[　] Most of the time　　[　] Sometimes

[　] Rarely　　[　] Not at all

12. Whom do you stay with? (*Tick your answer accordingly*)

Family Structure	Yes	No

Live with father and mother		
Father only		
Mother only		
Relative		
Guardian		
Siblings		
Friends		
Others (please state:_____)		

13. Family income per month

[ ] Below SP 500 [ ] SP 501 –1000

[ ] SP 1001 – 1500 [ ] SP 1501 – 2000

[ ] SP 2001 – 2500 [ ] Above SP 3000

[ ] Other (please state_____)

D. EXPERIENCES ON THE STREETS

14. How long have you been in the streets?

[ ] Less than a year [ ] 1 – 4 years

[ ] More than 4 years

15. How often do you come to the streets?

[ ] All day long [ ] During school   holidays only

[ ] Daily after school hours [ ] sometimes

[ ] Other (Please state: _____)

16. What kind of work do you do?

[ ] Carry staff [ ] Selling Staff

[ ] Shoes Shiner [ ] Collecting staff

[ ] Collecting Metals [ ] Car washer

[ ] Begging

[ ] Other, petty jobs (Please state_____)

17. How much do you earn per day?

[ ] Less than SP50 [ ] SP 51-100

[ ] SP 101-150 [ ] SP 151-200

[   ] Other (Please state: _____)

18. Are you able to meet the following with the daily income you earn?

Basic Needs	Yes, Adequate	No, Inadequate
Food		
Shelter		
Medical care		
Clothing		
Education		

19. How many people depend on your income? _____

20. Who among your relatives does depend on your income per day? (*tick all that applies*)

[   ] Father   [   ] Mother

[   ] Siblings   [   ] Relatives

[   ] Grandparents   [   ] Friends

21. Do your parents expect you to contribute to the family income?

[   ] Most of the time   [   ] Sometimes

[   ] Rarely   [   ] Not at all

F. MALADAPTIVE BEHAVIOUR

22. Does your peer encourage you to involve?

i. Risky behaviour

No.	Activities	Many times	Quite a number of times	Several times	Once or twice	Not even once
3.	Drinking alcohol					
4.	Sniffing glue					
5.	Sexual Activities					
7.	Others (please stated _____)					

ii.   Deviant behaviour

No.	Activities	Many times	Quite a number of times	Several times	Once or twice	Not even once
1.	Speaking foul language					
2.	Smoking cigarette					
2.	Physical fighting					
3.	Fighting using weapons					
5.	Stealing					
7.	Others (please stated _____)					

23. Do you agree that you faced similar challenges as other colleagues in the streets?

[   ] strongly agree

[   ] Agree

[   ] Neutral

[   ] Disagree

[   ] Strongly Disagree

25. What would you like the government to do for you to get you out of the streets?

_____

_____

_____

Thank You

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