Schooling for Street & Non-Street Children in Kenya:
Showcasing Nakuru City-County

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Abstract

The research article examines the effects of street and non-Street Children's characteristics on their schooling in Nakuru City-County of Kenya. A cross-sectional research design was adopted for the survey since it offers a thorough snapshot of the population at a particular time. Questionnaires and interviews were used to gather data. Both qualitative and quantitative data analysis was done. While quantitative data was analysed using logistic regression, qualitative data was analysed thematically. Using the test-retest method and Cronbach's alpha with coefficients ranging from 0 to 1, reliability was established, thereby assessing the internal consistency of learners' values development. Based on the results of the logistic regression, suggests that family traits like poverty, neglect, and instability make it difficult for non-Street Children to get into and remain in school. The researcher in Nakuru, Kenya, concentrated on how the features of non-Street Children affects their choice of remaining in school or joining the streets.

Keywords: Characteristics of Street Children, Factors favouring street life, Non-Street Children, Street Children

Introduction

The number of Street Children is increasing globally, especially in large cities (Consortium for Street Children, 2021). As de Benítez (2011) explains, there are numerous causes behind the phenomena of children living on the streets, and these causes differ according to the location and the individual. Several factors, including socioeconomic status, natural disasters that force families to relocate, and internal family disputes, are responsible for the rising number of Street Children throughout various regions. Le Roux (1996) also emphasized several push-and-pull variables that worsen this tendency and demonstrate the intricate web of conditions that push kids to the streets.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 1992) divides Street Children in the Philippines into two primary categories: Children on the street and Children off the street. The umbrella term children on the street refers to children who work on the streets during the day and go home at night. On the other hand, Children of the street refers to those who are abandoned, abused, or cut off from low-income families for a variety of reasons, such as disease, negligence, or incapacity of their parents.

Japan is known for having an excellent educational system, distinguished by rigorous academic requirements and a strong focus on discipline (OECD, 2019). Still, socioeconomic position has a big influence on how different people's educational experiences are. According to Ashton et al. (2019), children hailing from affluent families generally have greater access to resources and extracurricular activities, which may result in improved academic outcomes.

Furthermore, crucial are family relations. Research indicates that children's academic progress is positively impacted by parental involvement and stable family structures (Sakurai & Jia, 2018). Furthermore, there may be differences between urban and rural areas, with metropolitan areas typically providing better educational resources than rural ones (Kaneko & Shinozaki, 2017). Being a huge country, India has a huge population of people, the majority of who live in abject poverty (Railway Children Report, 2021). This has culminated in many of them lacking formal employment. They therefore engage in menial jobs for daily wages, to foot their bills like rent and food. This desperation often pushes their children onto the streets in search for food and shelter. Due to this, the children end up dropping out of their various learning institutions to find refuge on the streets.

In 2018 it was estimated that 300,000 children live and work on the streets in Kenya, with over half of them concentrated in and around the city of Nairobi. The worst-ever drought has recently hard-hit the North-western parts of Kenya, including Samburu, West Pokot, Turkana, and Elgeyo Marakwet. The children from families in this area have since dropped out of school to help their parents find food and take care of their heads of cattle. This challenge has led many of the children to flock to Kitale town, due to its proximity to the affected regions (Khaoya, 2014). In addition to the drought challenge, banditry has led to the deaths of some of the parents from the region, leaving their children hopeless. These children then drop out of school to join the streets.

A study conducted by the Save the Children Fund in 2013, estimated that approximately 1,000 Street Children are in Nakuru town and that this number will increase significantly if nothing is done to curb the situation (Save the Children, 2013). In the 2018 Street Children census, it was estimated that Nakuru City-County has 2,005 Street Children (Jiang, 2018). The report, however, pointed out that the children were not in school. They had either dropped or were on the verge of dropping. Nakuru town east, covering nearly the entire Nakuru CBD has an estimated 1,002 Street Children (Jiang 2018).

Kenya has just had its longest dry season on record, which has been made worse by incidents of banditry, which is more common in the country's north. Children's schooling was severely affected by this difficult condition; according to Kamais and Mosol (2022), a considerable portion of children—roughly 40%—were unable to attend school because of hunger brought on by the drought.

Many homesteads lost animals as a result of the protracted dry weather, forcing parents to relocate with their kids in search of food. As a result, a considerable number of schools in the impacted areas were compelled to close, estimated at 60%. Due to this closure, a sizable portion of children and young people nearly 30%joined banditry groups, moved to surrounding cities in search of work, or engaged in activities associated with living on the streets. Only a small percentage of the impacted students roughly 20% returned to class when the schools eventually reopened, demonstrating the crisis' long-lasting effects on the region's enrolment and educational access.

Besides all the provisions, many children continue to drop out of school, as the majority opt to live and work on the streets. This menace is blocking the attainment of the United Nations Declaration on Education for All as well as the Kenyan government's policy on compulsory basic education. The increasing number of children who are often seen wandering about in town streets as well as in several slum areas in urban settings is worrying. It is estimated that there are approximately 2,005 Street Children in Nakuru City-County (Jiang, 2018). Nakuru town alone has an estimated 1,002 Street Children. This population is of school age, and they ought to be in schools. This study, therefore, aimed at determining how the Street Children's characteristics affect their chances of schooling, with a comparison to the school-going children, whose findings would help in alleviating this perennial problem hence fostering peace and economic prosperity in Nakuru city and the entire country at large.

Family income, parents' level of education, and urban jobs have a significant influence on the number of children joining the streets. Recent studies in Iran have confirmed that low family income, lower levels of education, high prevalence of adults working on the streets as well as poverty contribute to the high influx of children to the streets (Vameghi et al, 2010). These children, the study shows, drop out of school to make ends meet for themselves and their families. There is a 60% connection between the Street Children and their families. Vameghi et al (2010), concluded that overcrowding at home results in competition for limited resources such as food, water, shelter, parental attention, and parental care. Congestion in families may be caused by inadequate family planning because of a lack of proper education. In the same study, Vameghi et al (2010) also noted that there was a high prevalence of divorce or separation for parents among the Street Children at 50% of the respondents (n=721) and that the parents' divorce increases the risk of becoming a street

child by 5.7 times. While touching on pertinent matters on the relationship between Street Children and the type of their families in Iran, the researcher made a conclusive generalization to represent all Street Children in the world. However, Africa particularly Kenya has a different context and index of poverty. Most of the families may not even be in existence. Some Street Children are abandoned by able parents. Sometimes, parents' negligence may be a causative reason for their influx to the streets, and by extension, they miss opportunity to attend schools. This study sought to determine the extent to which these family factors affect schooling among the Street Children.

In a comparative study to determine the social correlates and coping measures among the street and non-Street Children in Nigeria, Aderinto (2000) found that many Street Children are mainly males, have low levels of education and come from families with five or more siblings. The researcher also found that the parents of Street Children have a low level of education compared to those of their non-street counterparts. It was also established that many children leave home for the streets because of parental/sibling conflict and that many of them have unmet expectations. The Street Children thereafter resort to street life by engaging in income-yielding activities. Non-street counterparts, on the other hand, reside in their homes. They attend school regularly and have their expectations met by their parents (Aderinto, 2000). There is also minimal conflict within the non-street families, and their parents and siblings live in harmony. The findings by Aderinto (2000) were expected to align with those of the current study. However, the current researcher sought to delve deeper by associating these family factors to schooling, for both the street and non-Street Children, comparatively.

Another study was conducted in purposively sampled streets of Lagos, Nigeria to establish the characteristics, street life and sexual behaviour of homeless children and to find out their causes, and policy implications to homelessness (Edewor, 2014). With a sample size of 447 Street Children, the researcher established that many of the respondents were from low-income families. More than half of them came from families with a high number of children. The results also showed that parental neglect, discontent at home, parental marital instability, and peer influence, were the main reasons for their resolution to street life. The study also revealed that most of the respondents had low levels of education, for they could not read and write.

The findings of this research portray a real African society environment in which Street Children operate. With a sample size of 447, the results are ideal to inform a policy decision that can control and probably reverse the plight of Street Children. Equally, the current study focused on a similar context of Street Children but with more emphasis on educational matters. Many Street Children abandon their homes and school for street life due to involvement of their parents in illicit drug abuse. If a parent is a drug addict, it is highly likely that the parent may have little or no control over their children. Children tend to emulate what their parents do. A study conducted in Manila city in Philippines to establish magnitude to which illicit drugs are abused amongst the Street Children compared to non-Street Children found that Street Children abuse tobacco, alcohol and inhalants compared to their non-street counterparts (Njord et al, 2010). The study showed that Street Children are introduced to drugs by their peers, close relatives living with them on the streets and majorly as a measure of coping with 'dangerous' street life. This vice has made Philippines to be one of the countries with highest number of Street Children having low access to education (Ruiz, 2006). Constant usage of drugs lures the users into criminal activities, truancy, and general indiscipline. On the other hand, children who do not consume illicit drugs tend to have a high desire for education and will always attend school.

In Kenya, family-based factors have led to an influx of children onto the streets in urban areas. A study conducted by Sorre & Oino (2013) to establish the dialectic relationship between Street Children and their family structure in Kenya revealed that not much has been done at the policy level to address the deteriorating family conditions, yet it is the main push factor for the influx of Street Children in urban centres in Kenya. It was established that stability in the family is significant in enhancing socio-economic sustainability. Sorre & Oino (2013) noted that the country should fast-track national moral and value systems that would help mend the deteriorated family institutions.

With a sample size of 238 Street Children, Khaoya (2014) conducted a study to establish the factors contributing to the influx of Street Children in Kitale town, Trans-Nzoia County. The researcher found that 66.4% of Street Children in Kitale municipality are either total orphans or partial orphans, and 87.8% knew about the whereabouts of their parents. The researcher also established that 68% of the Street Children interviewed earned at least Ksh. 400 per day. These findings showed that most children end up on the streets due to family structure-related issues and that many of them had full information concerning the whereabouts of their families. The findings also suggested that children get a substantial amount of money as payment for the services discharged while on the streets. These socio-economic factors are highly related to the possible reasons that limit Street Children from going to school.

According to Kieni (2015), Kenyan urban areas have witnessed a high influx of Street Children. In a survey conducted in Meru town in central Kenya, Kieni (2015) established several reasons that drive children onto streets, from a sample of 90 respondents. They include Sexual abuse by father at 3%, born in the streets at 9 % death of parents/parental neglect at

9.4%, family Separation at 5%, search for food and money at 32.9%, Seeking employment at 13.5%, peer influence at 13.5%, truancy and Indiscipline 9.4% and abandoned in the streets 2.4%. These findings reveal that many Street Children flock to the streets in search of food and money, followed by peer influence. This is an indicator of a dire economic situation back at home. Poverty and hunger drive these children from their homes to the urban areas in search of income.

Schooling and general education were the main casualties in the entire process. However, the researcher only focused on factors leading to the influx of children to the streets but failed to include how the factors above would affect schooling, with a comparison to their non-street counterparts. While pursuing street life, the children quit schools and join others onto the streets. These factors should be studied well to find out the extent to which they affect their chances of attending schools. This formed the ground of the current study, where the researcher shall establish the extent to which family factors affect schooling among Street Children.

Research Methodology
The study employed a mixed Method. This design allowed the researcher to gather and analyze both numerical data (quantitative) and non-numerical data (qualitative) to explore research questions from different angles. By combining these methods, the researcher gained a deeper understanding of complex phenomena, validated findings, and provided an interpretation of the research findings.

Target Population and Sample Size
A study commissioned by the Consortium of Street Children (CSC) estimated in 2007 that there were 250,000-300,000 children living and working on the streets across Kenya, with more than 60,000 of them in Nairobi. The study of street families in Nairobi's central business district commissioned by the NCBDA in 2001 states that boys outnumber girls. From the 2018 National Census of Street Families Report, the proportion of the male population is higher (72.4 percent) compared with that of females (27.6 percent) (National Census of Street Families 2018). The following groups were targeted:

Table 1. Study Population and Sample Size

Group	Population	Sample
Street	7,000	**1,946**
Non-street	5,000	**1,390**
Total	**12,000**	**3,336**

Procedure
The study used questionnaires to gather data on the respondents. Both closed and open-ended questionnaires were used to gather more information from the respondents. The researcher also interviewed some of the street and non-Street Children included in the sample size. An interview is one way of investigating a group's attitudes and opinions. The interview guides contained items covering all the objectives of the study. Kothari (2018) reports that interviews provide more reliable, valid, and theoretically satisfactory results than questionnaires, especially in societies where interaction is highly personalized. He says that through an interview one gets better cooperation and more informative answers than a questionnaire. The interview schedules consisted of open-ended questions to probate the respondents to elicit insightful information.

Results:
Demographic Details
The results of the findings indicate that a total of 3,336 questionnaires were distributed to street and non-Street Children categorized. Out of these 3,300 were collected leading to a representation of 98.92 percent. According to the research findings, boys are 77.32 percent more likely than girls to live on the streets. This may be explained by the fact that girl children receive different attention than boy children. Children with only pre-primary education have a 53 percent chance of ending up on the streets as compared to those who have completed secondary education. Additionally, compared to those who have completed secondary education, there is a 78 percent likelihood that someone who has completed primary education will end up on the streets.

Based on the results, it appeared that most of the respondents were in the 13–18 age range. They made up 61.73 percent of those who responded. Thirty-eight-point two seven percent of the total responses were between the ages of six and twelve. The age range of the Street Children alone was another topic of inquiry in the study. To determine the correlation between the educational attainment of Street Children and non-Street Children, a test was conducted to

determine their family profile. According to the results, the respondent's family traits were statistically significant in predicting their likelihood of attending school (p=0.000, p<0.05). This likelihood suggested that the independent variables had a combined role in influencing the children's attendance at school. Regression analysis was performed to determine the effect of family characteristics on street and non-Street Children on Schooling in Nakuru. The results are illustrated in

Table 1.
Table 2. Empirical Results

VARIABLES	Logit	Marginal Effects
Single parent Family	-0.172	-0.0407867
	(0.307)	(0. 07279)
Both parent Family	-1.924***	-0.4402099***
	(0.334)	(0. 06882)
Number of siblings	0.984**	0.240696**
	(0.441)	(0.10547)
Number of meals	-4.491***	-0.6789503***
	(0.532)	(0.02909)
Constant	3.562***	
	(0.680)	
Observations	3,300	3,300

The results suggested that compared to orphans, coming from a single family reduces the probability of being on the streets by 4 percent holding other factors constant. In addition, the results suggested that compared to orphans, having both parents decreases the probability of a child being on the street by 44 percent. These results suggest that a child who is an orphan or partial orphan has a higher probability of being out of school and considering going to the street. This finding could be attributed to the fact that old grandparents may not have enough income to take care of their orphaned grandchildren. These children then resort to street life to earn a living. In addition, the results suggested that the probability of a child being on the street increases by 24 percent when the number of siblings increases holding other factors constant. This finding implies that as the number of children increases in family, the parents may not have adequate income to fend for them. This makes some children go to the streets to beg for money, food, and other basic needs.

Further, the results suggested that holding other factors constant, the probability of a child being on the street reduces by 67.9 percent if the family has more than one meal. These results imply that inadequate meals may push children onto the street due to hunger. This finding corroborates the response of the children's officers who indicated that most of the children in the street are from poor families. The officer indicated that such families do not have adequate money to provide meals for the children.

Discussion

A study by Vameghi et al. (2010) in Iran confirmed that low family income, lower levels of education, high prevalence of adults working on streets as well as poverty contribute to high influx of children to the streets. These children, the study shows, drop out from schools to make ends meet for themselves and their families. The researcher concluded that overcrowding at home results in competition for limited resources such as food, water, shelter, parental attention, and parental care. Congestion in families may be caused by inadequate family planning because of lack of proper education. In the same study, Vameghi et al. (2010) also noted that there was a high prevalence of divorce or separation for parents among the Street Children at 50% of the respondents. The study also established that most of the children on the streets were from divorced or separated families.

The current study's results suggested that family factors that are parenthood, number of siblings and number of meals are important determinants of schooling of children in Nakuru City-County. This finding is in line with findings of earlier study by Vameghi et al. (2010). The results further show that an increase in the number of siblings in the family increases the chances of going to the streets by 24 percent among the children in Nakuru. This results therefore exposes the risk posed to the educational needs of the children, if a family increases the number of children. The research study's findings are also in line with Aderinto (2000) who found that many Street Children come from families with five or more siblings. The study findings agree with Khaoya (2014) which established most of the Street Children in Kitale town, Trans-Nzoia County were either total orphan, partial orphans, and those that do not have information about their parents. The

research article is also in agreement with a study by Kieni (2015) which showed that Kenyan urban areas has witnessed a high influx of Street Children who are searching for food.

Despite having similar findings with the previous studies, the current study dwelt much on the schooling aspect of children in Nakuru, concerning their family characteristics. The chances of a child dropping out of school and ending up on the streets are reduced by 68 percent if the family has more than one meal per day. Therefore, an increase in number of meals per day can increase the possibility of retaining the children in schools.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the findings of this research article sheds light on the factors that influences children's likelihood of being on the street in Nakuru City-County, Kenya. The results revealed a significant relationship between family characteristics and the probability of children being on the street. Specifically, it was found that as the number of siblings in a family increases, the likelihood of a child being on the street also increases, indicating financial strain within larger families. Moreover, the study demonstrated that access to an adequate number of meals significantly reduces the probability of children being on the street, highlighting the role of food security in preventing street involvement.

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Ethical Pledge

This is an original research which was conducted among the Street and non-Street Children in Nakuru City-County. All the research ethics were observed. The researcher obtained necessary approvals from the University, Nacosti (National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation), and the local administration in Nakuru City-County. Caregivers from Nakuru children's Department gave consent on behalf of the Street Children, while teachers in schools consented on behalf of the non-Street Children.

Competing Interests

There were no financial, personal relationships or undue interests that influenced the researcher to conduct this study. The study was initially conducted as a requirement for the award of a Master's Degree in the management of education on emergencies.

Author(s) Contributions

The researchers are the sole authors of this article.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this research article are those of the author and not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors or the Journal itself.

Ethical Considerations Statement

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects. Ethical clearance was given by Masinde Muliro University and the National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation (NACOSTI).