

Possible ways of improving perception of Business Operators towards street children in Harare Central Business District.

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Abstract- This part of a broad study that sought to investigate the psychological effects of the presence of street children in Harare Central Business District to business operators. This particular study focused on possible ways of improving the perception of Business Operators towards street children in Harare Central Business District. The study sought to identify ways that could be employed by society at large so that there is mutual coexistence between the street children and the Business Operators. The study used the qualitative approach to get business operators' experiences with street children. The research used questionnaires as research instruments. Forty (40) questionnaires were distributed to gather data from business operators in Harare Central Business District. Twenty seven (27) business operators responded to the questionnaires. Since street children are not found all over the Harare Central Business District (CBD) but specific areas dotted around the Central Business District (CBD), the study used convenience sampling. The study found out that street children were involved in stealing from both the operators and their customers. The street children also begged from the operators and their customers. Street children were also engaged in touting which disturbed customers and in urinating and defecating publicly which was a menace to customers. At times the street children smoked marijuana and consumed alcohol in the public. The study recommended that it is imperative for the government through the Ministry of Public Service and Social Welfare to put policies that cater for social welfare of disadvantaged children. The Government and NGOs should plan and implement public awareness campaigns on the importance of the public's contribution to assist street children have a better life. The corporate sectors should also be urged to contribute to the alleviation of the street children life style. This can be done through the promotion of corporate social responsibilities. The government should make effective legislation and ensure strict implementation of the laws for example execution of Child Protection and Adoption Act. The government should undertake measures to provide free primary level education to street children in Zimbabwe and to provide for the associated costs of education for such disadvantaged children.

Index Terms- street children, business operators, Harare Central Business District, touting and begging.

I. INTRODUCTION

The sight of street children near business enterprises is a cause of concern especially to the operators. This has an impact on the quality of clients who visit their business enterprises. It is difficult for the street children not to visit the sites of business operators as they view them as places where they are most likely to get assistance. The business operators view them as a sore as they drive away potential customers. This naturally leads the business operators to have a negative perception towards the street children. It becomes imperative for the study to be conducted so that ways can be found out for identifying ways of improving the perception of business of business operators towards street children.

Research Question

How can the perception of business operators on street children be improved?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Phenomenon of street children

Regardless of definition, the phenomenon of street children is not new and neither is it restricted to certain geographical areas (Connolly, 1990). The phenomenon of street children is an alarming and escalating worldwide problem. The problem of street children in Africa may not be new as related by Grier (1996). According to Le Roux (1998) the phenomenon of neglected children, an offspring of the modern urban environment represents one of humanity's most complex and serious challenges. According to Munyacho (1992) as quoted by Kudenga and Hlatwayo (2015) noted that some children in the streets had fled from problems at their homes to come to the streets where they made their own rules. In addition Terwase (2013) pointed out that social, political, familial, religious and economic forces, all tied to poverty, have continued to push children to the streets of urban centres in Third World countries, especially Africa and particularly, Nigeria Cities.

However, according to Kudenga and Hlatwayo (2015) the problem of children living or working on the streets of our urban areas appears to be a recent phenomenon in Zimbabwe. Prior to Independence (1980) it was almost impossible for children to work in the streets as vendors, car-washers, beggars, or parking boys as Municipal by-laws were very strict and were brutally enforced. With Independence, such enforcement of the

restrictions became slack and unpredictable thereby making it possible for the problems to surface.

Possible ways to improve perception of street children by business operators

According to Plotnik and Kouyoumidjian (2008) perception refers to personal interpretations of the real world. Business Operators need to know that street children are defenseless victims of brutal violence, sexual exploitation and abject neglect. Also these children are target of local business owners who force them to vacate their place of living (occupied by the children illegally) for having space for the purpose of buildings. However, for Business Operators to have a change of heart and view street children as people who need help in terms of vocational schools for rehabilitation. Most importantly, street children need to be steered back to the mainstream of social life through proper education opportunities, reformation, care and rehabilitation.

Awareness campaigns to educate Business Operators

According to Kudenga and Hlatswayo (2015) the phenomenon of children living in the streets implies neglect on the part of parents or guardians of these children who are found in the streets. There is need for advocacy campaigns to be conducted so as to enlighten the Business Operators on the plight of street children.

As reported by the Herald (8 May 2013) business operators hire street children to off load or load goods into their trucks and pay them small wages. Business Operators take street children as cheap labour and there is need to conscientise them that hiring street children to do menial jobs is unlawful under the Child Protection and Adoption Act. According to Newsday (11/06/2015) the International Labour Organization (ILO) defines child labour as work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally harmful to children and that interferes with their schooling. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2001) defines child labour as work performed by children who are under the minimum age legally specified for that kind of work which because of its detrimental nature or conditions is considered unacceptable and is prohibited (Newsday, 11/06/2015). When they employ these children in a way Business Operators are encouraging the phenomenon of street children.

In addition, the role of electronic and print media is pivotal for awareness of the Business Operators and sensitizing them. If media play proactive role, the wrong perception against street children will reduce to a considerable extent. Business Operators stigmatize street children assuming that they are all the same and classify them in the same category, yet upon closer analysis one can conclude that they are not the same. They all have different behaviors, attitudes and personalities based on their different backgrounds and the pull factors to the streets.

According to http://progressio.org.uk/blog_01/06/16 normally people would view street children as victims or criminals because of their way of life but the thinking should be examined closely because there is hope. According to http://progressio.org.uk/blog_01/06/16 street children are neither survivors nor criminals nor victims because they show so much resilience and unexplainable coping mechanisms in midst of harsh life conditions. Therefore, business operators have to

advocate and promote their rights, there is no need to doubt the possibility that these children can own their lives again if the community is sensitive to the needs of these street children and work together with them to make a positive change.

It is the intention of this study to find possible solutions to improve perception of Business Operators towards street children.

Addressing needs of street children

According to Bose (1992) many scholars believe that fixing the problems of street children depend on addressing the causal factors of their situations. Scholars and agencies have suggested various strategies to help street children, many of which focus on the use Non-Governmental Organisation (Bose, 1992). Benitez (2007) suggest that the main responsibility of assistance should be given to NGOs which should be backed financially by the government. Business Operators should donate to such Non Governmental Organization that deals with street children so as to alleviate the problem of street children. Non Governmental Organization have the ability to be more flexible than the government, they are better able to meet the needs of street children in varied circumstances (Chatterjee, 1992).

The Government has enacted good laws and put in place polices for the protection of child rights for example the Child Adoption Act. Street children being children also fall within these laws such as Children's Act 2002, Chapter 5:06 prohibit child participation in economic activities, prostitution and other hazardous employment activities. The constitution of Zimbabwe amendment (No 20) ACT 2013 states that the State must adopt policies and measures to ensure that in matters relating to children, the best interest of the children concerned are paramount. The constitution further state that the State must adopt reasonable policies and measures, within the limits of the resources available to it, to ensure that children enjoy family or parental care, or appropriate care when removed from the family environment.

The constitution of Zimbabwe states that the State must take all practical measures, within the limits of the resources available to it, to provide social security and social care to those who are in need. Government should encourage public awareness campaigns for curbing street children economic exploitation. Government efforts should be made to prosecute perpetrators of economic exploitation of street children, who employ children and engage them in child sexual exploitation to gain income also strengthen the Police force patrol on the streets. Business owners should also take heed and desist from offering money or material support to street children as this is a major factor in influencing their continued stay in the streets.

Involving other stakeholders

Relevant government departments and NGOs should invest on street children's education on Health care, child labour, sexual reproductive health and HIV and AIDS matters. Street children should be informed about the importance of attending trainings which are offered by the government and other stakeholders in child protection. They should also be encouraged to attend children's formal gatherings and meetings such as Children's Parliament by sending their representatives.

According to Lemba (2002) Communities and families need to be sensitized and understand their roles and responsibilities with regard to taking care of children in society, especially vulnerable children. In addition to sensitization, efforts to build the capacity of communities and families to care for children for example through business training, support for income generating activities and other developmental support need to be undertaken so that communities and families are empowered to provide the basic needs of children under their care (Lemba, 2002).

According to www.sos-zimbabwe.org.in (07/07/16) Zimbabwe, SOS Children's home in Waterfalls run a programme, family strengthening programme since 2002. The programme aims at providing holistic care for children who have lost one or both parents or are living with terminally ill parents. Business Operators who wish to donate cash or in kind to assist street children can send money to such organization as SOS Children's Home than giving handouts in the streets which promotes the phenomenon of street children.

According to <http://www.streetsahead.org.zw> , (8/08/16) Street Ahead Welfare Organization of Zimbabwe strives to assist underprivileged children who are living and working on the streets of Harare. One of the Street Ahead's mission is to uphold the rights of children living and working on the streets, giving them emotional, social and practical support, meeting their needs and providing encouragement and assistance to those who wish to have the streets, working in partnerships with all relevant stakeholders and others who share the same vision (<http://www.streetsahead.org.zw>, 8/08/16). However, this organization closed business in 2013 because of financial constraints. It is these Organizations which Business Operators can support to revive their noble activities of looking after street children.

Encouraging street children to go to school

Street children have rights to be protected like any other child. Since they stay alone on the street with no proper guidance from the adults they need to be educated about their rights. According to the constitution of Zimbabwe amendment (No 20) Act 2013 every citizen and permanent resident of Zimbabwe has a right to basic State-funded education, including adult basic education. The Constitution of Zimbabwe further state that the State must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within the limits of the resources available to it , to achieve the progressive realization of the right to education.

According to <https://www.usaid.gov> (8/08/16) the Presbyterian Children's Club (PCC) program provides free education, basic meals, psychosocial support, health care and clothing to street children with USAID funding.

Providing street children with recreation facilities

According to the constitution of Zimbabwe amendment (No 20) ACT 2013 states that the state must take all practical measures to encourage sporting and recreational activities, including the provision of sporting and recreational facilities for all people. According to <https://www.theguardian.com>, (08/08/16) Amakhosi cultural Center is a popular Bulawayo theatre house founded in 1980. Amakhosi engages in humorous and perceptive portrayals of the struggles of ordinary people for mentoring and

supporting critical voices and empowering people to shape their own future, for extraordinary resilience in upholding the value of art in society, for putting the needs of the community at the heart of their activities, and for creating courage, reflection and laughter in a difficult context (<https://www.theguardian.com>, 08/08/16).Some of the street children might have hidden talent which needs tapping and development through such cultural centers like Amakhosi Theatre Centre.

According to <http://www.theatretimes.com> (08/08/16) the likes of Kapfupi (Freddy Majalima) emerged from the streets together with his group that included Marabha and the late Bhonjisi. Today Kapfupi is a household name.

The escalating problem of street children in Zimbabwe is also blamed on inadequate recreational facilities in most townships. Business Operators can assist the government by sponsoring sports and help build recreational facilities.

III. METHODOLOGY

The researchers chose to use a qualitative research methodology. According to Burns (2000), qualitative research is an effective way of helping the researcher in obtaining information on the individual's experiences such as the one under study which is the psychological effects of the presence of street children to business operators in Harare Central Business District. Qualitative research also helped the researchers understand the participant's viewpoint on common challenges faced by business operators because of the presence of street children in Harare Central Business District. In addition, qualitative research uses different ways of gathering information thus providing rich data to be gathered for example in-depth interviews, questionnaires, observations and document analysis in which business operators are free to air out their views as compared to closed ended questions in which one cannot express her feelings towards the given questions (Mutch, 2000).

The research employed the descriptive research design. This design was used as the researchers felt it was the most ideal for the study. The descriptive survey research designs are defined by their methodical collection of standardised information from any representative sample of the population (Christensen, 1994). In addition, this research design suits the context under which the present study was taken as the descriptive survey represents a probe into a given state of affairs that exists at a given time. It therefore means that direct contact was made with the individuals whose characteristics, behaviours and issues were relevant to the investigation under study. In this case the researchers had direct contact with business operators who interacted with the street children. It allowed the researchers to choose from a wide variety of instruments and in this research it was the questionnaire. The researcher found the questionnaire to be relevant for the study because it can be used to measure opinions, attitudes, beliefs, feelings, perceptions as well as gather factual information about the respondent.

The researchers used convenience sampling in selecting research participants. This was due to the fact that street children by nature of how they operate are found at specific areas dotted around the Central Business District. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) convenience sampling involves selecting those cases that are easiest to obtain for your sample.

Convenience sampling represents a sample drawn to suit the convenience of the researcher (Wegner, 1995). The sample selection process is continued until required sample size is reached. The research participants selected will be meeting certain specifications that are required to answer the research question. In this study the research participants included only those business operators whose operations were affected by the presence street children. The sample consisted of forty business operators. Among these twenty seven were able to return fully completed questionnaires.

IV. RESULTS

Table 1: Demographic characteristics

N=27

Gender of respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	15	56
Male	12	44
Total	27	100
Age of respondents		
Below 25	8	30
25-40	10	37
Over 40	9	33
Total	27	100
Type of business		
Food	10	37
Grocery	9	33
Clothing	6	22
Banking/Finance	1	4
Education	1	4
Total	27	100
Duration of operation		
Less than 5 years	7	26
5-10 years	15	56
More than 10 years	5	19
Total	27	100

The results showed that the bulk of the respondents were females with 56 %, the remaining portion of 44% were males. Women constitute a large number of the population according to Zimbabwe 2012 census. Thus, maybe explain why the majority of them are operating businesses, working in Harare Central Business District (CBD).

The above results showed that majority business Operators were middle aged, between 25-40 with 37% of the responded followed by those over 40 years with 33%.

The results revealed that the bulk of the respondents were from food businesses that is restaurants, fast foods followed by grocery business with 33% and clothing with 22%. Banking or Finance and Education have 4% each.

The above results showed that majority business operators have been operating in their respective areas for the period 5-10 years. The period of 5-10 years represented 56% of the respondents.

Ways of improving perception of street children by business operators

Business operators were of the opinion that street children disturbed their business operations by their appearance and they need to be provided with facilities to wash and taught how they affect the operations of businesses.

Excerpt 1 *Street children disturb our business operations by driving away customers. They smell as they do not wash. They need to be provided with facilities to wash. They should beg in a dignified manner and not disturb customers doing their shopping. Some of the customers resent to come to places where there are street children.*

Excerpt 2 *These street children are filthy. They should wash their bodies and their clothes. Their sight drives away customers. They should beg in a dignified manner. Though we at times assist them by giving them some piece jobs they continue coming to beg from customers.*

Excerpt 3 *The Ministry of Social Services should mount campaigns to assist the children understand how their activities affect others. They should encourage all to combine and remove the street children from the streets and put them in homes where they are properly kept. The corporate sector should be roped in to support in improving the welfare of these children.*

Excerpt 4. *These children should be removed from the streets and put in orphanages. Corporate can then be asked to assist when they are there. When they are in the street no one makes sure they have bathed or washed their clothes. If they beg in a neat appearance they would not disturb our operations.*

Excerpt 5. *If these children were at one place it would be easy for us to assist them. There should be campaigns to assist the children to get to a central place where they will be helped. The campaigns should involve both the street children and the corporate sector.*

Excerpt 6. *It does not help to just look. Everyone needs to be conscientised on the plight of these children. We at times give them piece jobs but that not help as we need a permanent solution. The children need to be taught to be presentable.*

V. DISCUSSION

The study found out that the business operators had a poor perception of the street children as they viewed them as nuisance who always disturbed their activities. The street children disturbed their customers who were their lifeline and their mere presence had an effect of driving the customers away. The street children beg from customers who will have come to buy and their sight is uncouth and they have a bad stench as they do not wash. The business operators were of the opinion that shops where street children frequented would lose business as customers preferred shops would conduct their business in a tranquil environment.

The study found that the street children need to be provided with facilities to bath and wash their clothes so that when they come to beg they were in a clean appearance. If they do not emit the stench of dirt their customers would not worry much. There is need for them to be made aware of the effect of their appearance on people they interact with. The Ministry responsible should campaign to have the children improve their appearance.

The researcher found out that most Business Operators suggested that there is need for awareness campaigns on the importance of the corporate to assist in alleviating economic situation of street children so that they improve their perception towards street children. The efforts they did of giving the street children piece jobs were not bearing the desired results as the children would return the following day asking for more. The government ministry responsible for the welfare of children has to hold campaigns that involve the street children so that they are aware of the effects of their activities on others. The campaigns should involve not only street children but also the business operators and the corporate sector so that they are aware of the situation in which the street children are in and they can appreciate possible ways of assisting the street children. The ordinary populace have to be involved so that they contribute towards nipping the problem in the bud. These findings are in agreement with Mella (2012) who pointed out the Government and NGOs should plan and implement public awareness campaigns on the importance of the public's contribution to assist street children.

Business operators found out that Business Operators suggested that street children should be taken to properly run orphanages so that they can assist these institutions knowing that their monies will be put to good use. They were of the opinion that it would be much easier to assist them when they are at one place than to assist them individually. These findings are in agreement with Abro (2012) that before launching a project related to street children, proper work plan and identification of problems by development sector is important. Ultimately, the business community will donate in big numbers to the orphanages thereby capacitating them to cater for a large number of disadvantaged children.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

This study found that Business Operators have no good relationship with street children. They perceived them as nuisance and criminals who were there to disturb their businesses. The study also found out possible ways to improve the perception of business operators towards street children. Among the possible ways there is need for awareness campaigns on the importance of the corporate to assist in alleviating economic situation of street children. In addition, business operators suggested that Government should take these street children to orphanage houses where business operators can appreciate the need to donate in kind or cash. Tax incentives need to be given to those business entities that donate towards the welfare of disadvantaged children.

Despite these entire challenges Business Operators encounter, they continue to soldier on as it more costly to relocate from the Central Business District (CBD). Sometimes Business Operators have to give street children food, menial jobs to avoid confrontational so that they can co-exist though other researchers call it exploitation of street children.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study makes the following recommendations in view of its findings:

- Government must allocate budget and provide other necessary support for programs oriented towards street children, including capacity building for organizations involved in providing services to street children, secondment of trained personnel, and support for operational costs
- The corporate sectors should also be urged to contribute to the alleviation of the street children life style. This can be done through the promotion of corporate social responsibilities
- Communities and families need to be sensitized to understand their roles and responsibilities with regard to taking care of children in society, especially vulnerable children so that street children do not interfere with activities of business operators.
- Efforts to build the capacity of communities and families to care for children for example support for income generating activities so that communities and families are empowered to provide the basic needs of children under their care. Empowering and educating the parents would be more helpful.
- Police should be specially educated and trained on how to handle cases of street children with a view towards sensitizing police to the special needs of children and ensuring that rights accorded to children under International and Zimbabwe laws are enforced.
- Business operators should unite and create a business against crime forum. Combine business against crime forum with all sectors of law enforcement that can help the CBD become conducive to conduct business and distract street children from interfering with their operations.
- Street children should be informed about the importance of attending trainings which are offered by the government and other stakeholders on child rights so that they confine their activities to what they should do and do not infringe rights of other people.
- Street children should also be encouraged to attend children's formal gatherings and meetings such as Children's Parliament by sending their representatives
- Street children have also chances to improve their lives, they must interact themselves with those organizations who are working for them and act on their suggestions, keep away from drugs and sexual activities and use life saving measures in day to day activities.

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