

Children in the Streets of Koronadal City, South Cotabato, Philippines: A Situational Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in Koronadal City, South Cotabato. It aimed to look into the current situation of street children in the city. A quantitative descriptive research design was used to determine the respondents' profile, contributing factors that led them into the streets, challenges encountered, and suggestions and recommendations to alleviate the respondents' situation. The data gathered was analyzed through descriptive statistics. Data revealed that demographic, health, economic, and psychosocial conditions, the experience of abuse, and awareness of child rights have an impact on the situation of the respondents of the study. The family and peers of the respondents significantly affect their behavior and are considered to be the contributing factors that pushed them to the streets. There are also health issues among the respondents; they may be at greater risk of sexual and other violence and exploitation. Some of the respondents were harmed by adults, other children, and even their own families.

INTRODUCTION

Street children are a global phenomenon, with Asian, African, and South American countries more affected by the problem. The phenomenon of street life which an everyday social reality in many countries as far apart as Brazil in Latin America, Nigeria in West Africa, and the Philippines in Asia. It is a distinctive urban feature to be as old as the cities themselves. Street life is a living condition and an adaptive response to the stress experienced by all vulnerable populations or people living in poor conditions in any country (Cassaw, 2019). There are 150 million street children in the world, and these numbers are rising daily. In the Philippines, 3% of the approximately 40 million children are living on the streets in 2020 (Davis & Miles, 2019).

Article 3 of the Presidential Decree 603 or the Child and Youth Welfare Code of 2003 in the Philippines states that “Every child has the right to a balanced diet, adequate clothing, sufficient shelter, proper medical attention, and all the basic physical requirements of a healthy and vigorous life. Every child has the right to be brought up in an atmosphere of morality and rectitude for the enrichment and the strengthening of his character.” The Philippine Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006 categorizes street children as children at risk who are vulnerable to and at the risk of committing criminal offenses because of personal, family, and social circumstances. Republic 2 Act no. 7610 or the Special Protection of Children against Abuse and Discrimination Act includes living on streets among circumstances that gravely threaten or endanger the survival and normal development of children. R.A 7610 also considers it criminal to use, coerce, force, or intimidate a street child or any other child to beg, among other illegal acts.

Street children are often excluded from policy priorities, with little recognition that their very situation is a violation of their rights as expressed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCRC). Too many policies and interventions fail to provide a holistic approach—most policies notably lack mechanisms that take into account the views and perspectives of street children themselves (Joubert, 2018). The phenomenon of street children is an increasing social problem causing the vulnerability. The poor children, with or without family, living in streets, train stations, and other business centers make a portion of studying this phenomenon may prevent social problems from happening. The street children are threatened by the bitter experience of being separated from their families and losing hygiene and education. They are exposed to poverty and other dangers that harm their well-being. They face hunger, malnutrition, hygiene problems, lack of mental health, delayed development, and less achievement in education (Zarezadeh, 2013).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (2009) reported that the Philippine Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) led the national development of policy guidelines in 2008 for local government units and Non-Government Organizations (NGO) regarding the implementation of services and programs aimed at street children. Despite some efforts being undertaken by the government of the Philippines to address the three needs of street children and to improve their

situation, the UNCRC has repeatedly expressed concern about the large number of street children in the Philippines and the protection and fulfillment of their rights. In its Concluding Observations (after consideration of the Philippines' most recent CRC reports), the Committee made several recommendations and noted a large number of street children, the violence and abuse they experience, the existence of rescue operations, and a "continued lack of a systematic and comprehensive strategy to address the need for the prevention, reduction of the number and protection of children living in the streets.

The Social Welfare Development Office of Koronadal City has no data and concrete or specific programs for street children. Hence, this study was conducted to understand the current situation of street children in Koronadal City. This study may serve as a database to create or establish programs and services for street children. These concrete programs and services may help tap the needs and potentials of the children to make them contribute to the solution of their problems and to contribute meaningfully to society.

This study aimed to analyze the situations of street children in Koronadal City. Specifically, it sought to determine the street children's profile in Koronadal City in terms of demographic, health, psychosocial, economic, experience of abuse, and awareness of child rights; the contributing factors that pushed the children to the streets; the challenges encountered by the street children; and the suggestions and recommendations of street children that may help alleviate their situation.

This study may help raise awareness about the plight of street children in Koronadal City, Philippines. This study may serve as a guide for a better understanding of the situation of the street children and provide them information for the development of programs and services that will cater to the needs of the said individuals. This study conducted a situational analysis of street children in Koronadal City. It was anchored on the Ecological Systems theory of Urie Bronfenbrenner (1977). The parameters of the study were limited to six variables namely demographic, health, economic, psychosocial, experience of abuse, and awareness of child rights. The contributing factors and challenges encountered by the street children were also analyzed. The conduct of the study was limited only to the street children in Koronadal City, who are 10-17 years old. The findings of this research are conclusive only to the participants of the study and cannot be generalized to other people or groups.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (2009) reported that the Philippine Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) led the national development of policy guidelines in 2008 for local government units and Non-Government Organizations (NGO) regarding the implementation of services and programs aimed at street children. Despite some efforts being undertaken by the government of the Philippines to address the three needs of street children and to improve their situation, the UNCRC has repeatedly expressed concern about the large

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METHODOLOGY

Locale of the Study

This study was conducted in Koronadal City, South Cotabato, Philippines. As the city's economic status is growing, it has been observed that there is still an increasing number of street children begging for food or money. Moreover, there is still an occurrence of cases that violate the child labor law. On the other hand, the researcher is quite familiar with the local conditions, thus, it will make the acquisition of relevant data and information from the street children easier.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study were the Street Children in Koronadal City. They were selected based on the inclusion criteria such as, willingness to participate in the conduct of an interview; considered as children on the street, children in the street, or children with street families and; been in the streets for 3 years and above; must be 10-17 years old. According to the Psychosocial Development Theory of Erik Erikson, during this stage, children begin to develop a sense of pride and accomplishment in their schoolwork, sports, social activities, and family life, or they feel inferior and inadequate because they feel that they don't measure up. Those who are 13-17 years old begin to search for a sense of self and personal identity, through an intense exploration of personal values, beliefs, and goals. With that, they are the most appropriate participants of the study and answers would be reliable. The non-probability sampling technique was used to determine 50 street children as respondents of the study. In selecting the respondents, convenience sampling was used because of its accessibility and proximity to the researcher.

Research Instrument

This study used a quantitative-descriptive design. This study utilized a survey questionnaire in gathering the data. The questionnaire contains three (3) parts. The first part comprises the profile of the street children. The second part contains the contributing factors that lead the children into the streets and the challenges they encountered. The third part is a checklist of suggestions or recommendations that would help them alleviate their situation. The survey questionnaire was formulated by the researcher and validated by experts. It was subsequently subjected to a pre-test.

Data Collection Procedure

Data was gathered upon approval of the conduct of the study by the City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO) of Koronadal City. The consent and assent of the parents or guardians of the respondents were secured before the questionnaire was administered to them. A social worker from CSWDO served as the guardian, who consented and assented, for the respondents who did not have their parents with them. The questions were translated and relayed in vernacular to the respondents to obtain their answers in the presence of the social worker from CSWDO. The respondents were given enough time to answer every question. The data gathered were tallied and statistically analyzed. Health protocols were strictly implemented throughout the data gathering process.

Data Analysis

The data gathered was analyzed through descriptive statistics. Frequency and percentage were used to determine the distribution of different responses. Weighted Mean was used to analyze the scale of the responses of the respondents.

Ethical Considerations

A cover letter to conduct this study was submitted for approval to the CSWDO. Health protocols were strictly followed during the gathering of data. The researcher secured safety nets in dealing with street children. Assistance from a Social Worker was asked if needed in cases where there might be triggers for a breakdown of respondents. This study respected every participant and treated everyone equally. There was no discrimination in terms of gender, religion, or region of origin. The informed consent and assent of the parents or guardians of the respondents were obtained before the administration of the questionnaires. A social worker from CSWDO served as the guardian, who consented and assented, for the respondents who did not have their parents with them. It was clarified to the respondents and their parents or guardians that their identity will be kept completely confidential.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION*Profile of Respondents*

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
10	13	26
11	10	20
12	6	12
13	6	12
14	1	2
15	8	16
16	2	4
17	4	8
Sex		
Male	32	64
Female	18	36
Educational Status		
In-school all the time	21	42
Out-of-school all the time	23	46
Mostly	4	8
Mostly out-of-school but sometimes in-school	4	8
Grade Level		
1	2	4
2	6	12
3	7	14
4	1	2
5	3	6
6	4	8
7	1	2
8	2	4
10	1	2
Out-of-school	23	46
Child Category		
Child on the street	31	62
Child with street family	19	38
Living Arrangements		
Living with immediate family	47	94
Living with extended family	3	6
Parents' Civil Status		
Married	33	66
Widowed	8	16
Live-in	5	10
Separated	4	8
6	10	20
7	3	6
8	2	4
9	1	2

The table 1 provides valuable insights into the characteristics of the street children in Koronadal City. The data highlights their age distribution, gender representation, educational status, family structure, and other relevant factors.

Regarding age, the results show that 26% of the respondents are 10 years old, 20% are 11 years old, 16% are 8 years old, 12% are 12 and 13 years old, 8% are 17 years old, 4% are 16 years old, and 2% are 14 years old. These findings indicate a diverse age range among the street children, with a concentration in the 8-13 age group. In terms of gender, the data illustrates that 64% of the respondents are male, while 36% are female. This aligns with the general trend observed in many countries, where a higher proportion of street children are boys (UNICEF, 2012).

Regarding educational status, the findings indicate that 46% of the respondents are out-of-school all the time, 42% are in school all the time, 8% are mostly in-school but sometimes out-of-school, and 8% are mostly out-of-school but sometimes in-school. These numbers highlight the educational challenges faced by street children, with a significant proportion being out-of-school, which can have long-term implications for their future opportunities and well-being.

The data also provides information on the grade levels of the respondents, with 26% in grade 3, 12% in grade 2, 8% in grade 6, 6% in grade 5, 4% in grade 8, and 1.2% in grades 4, 7, and 10. These findings suggest a wide range of educational attainment among the street children, indicating disparities in their academic progress and potential learning gaps.

In terms of family structure, the data indicates that 62% of the respondents are children on the street, while 38% have a street family. This delineation highlights the distinction between children without any immediate family support and those who have some form of family presence, even if living on the streets. Regarding living arrangements, 94% of the street children are living with their immediate family, while 3% are living with extended family. This suggests that the majority of the respondents still have some connection with their biological or immediate family members, although they may be experiencing homelessness or living on the streets.

Examining the civil status of the parents, the data shows that 66% are married, 10% are in a live-in relationship, 8% are widowed, and 4% are separated. These figures provide insights into the marital status of the parents, indicating the range of family circumstances experienced by the street children.

Finally, the data presents the family size of the respondents, with 24% having four members, 20% having six members, 10% having three members, 6% having seven members, 4% having eight members, and 2% having nine members. These figures give an indication of the varying family sizes among the street children, which may have implications for resource distribution and support within the family unit.

Table 2. Economic Profile of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Source of Income (Father)		
Construction Worker	3	6
Laborer	3	6
Driver	11	22
Begging	6	12
Fisherman	12	24
Vendor	2	4
None	9	18
Deceased	4	8
Source of Income (Mother)		
OFW	5	10
Maid	1	2
Begging	16	32
Laundrywoman	3	6
Vendor	4	8
Housewife	20	40
Deceased	1	2
Begging	23	46
Source of Income - Street Child		
Vending (selling items often in the market)	2	4
Selling sampaguita	25	50
Number of years earning in the streets		
3 - 4 years	40	80
4 - 5 years	8	16
6 years and above	2	4
Daily Working hours		
1-3 hours	12	24
4-6 hours	22	44
More than 6 hours	16	32
Daily Earnings		
Less than 50 pesos	4	8
50 - 100 pesos	8	16
100 pesos and above	28	56

Table 2, provides insights into the sources of income for both the parents and the street children themselves. The data highlights the occupations of the fathers and mothers, the income-generating activities of the respondents, as well as the duration and amount of their earnings.

According to the findings, 24% of the fathers of the respondents are fishermen, 22% are drivers, 18% are non-working fathers, 12% are engaged in begging, 6% are construction workers and laborers, and 4% are vendors. These figures indicate the diverse range of occupations among the fathers, with fishing and driving being the most common sources of income. Regarding the mothers, 40% are non-working or housewives, 32% are engaged in begging,

10% are Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW), 8% are vendors, 6% are laundrywomen, and 2% are maids. These findings highlight the various economic roles and activities undertaken by the mothers, including informal street-based occupations and overseas employment.

The data also reveals the income-generating activities of the respondents themselves. It shows that 50% are involved in selling Sampaguita (a type of flower), 46% are engaged in begging, and 4% are vending or selling items, often in the market. These findings indicate the primary means through which the street children generate income for themselves. In terms of the duration of their earnings, 80% of the respondents are earning for 3-4 years, 16% are earning for 4-5 years, and 2% are earning for 6 years and above. This suggests that a significant proportion of the street children have been engaged in income-generating activities for an extended period, indicating long-term involvement in street-based economic activities.

The data also provides insights into the working hours of the respondents. It indicates that 44% of them are working 4 to 6 hours daily, 32% are working more than 6 hours, and 24% are working for 1 to 3 hours. These figures demonstrate the varying intensity and duration of their work commitments. Regarding their daily earnings, the data reveals that 56% of the respondents are earning 100 pesos and above, 16% are earning 50 to 100 pesos, and 8% are earning less than 50 pesos. These findings indicate the range of income levels among the street children, with a significant proportion earning above 100 pesos per day.

Table 3. Health Profile of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Daily Meal Taken		
<i>Once</i>	5	10
<i>Twice</i>	19	38
<i>Thrice</i>	26	52
Handwashing before eating		
<i>Always</i>	25	50
<i>Often</i>	18	36
<i>Sometimes</i>	7	14
Whether the respondents encountered health problems in last three months		
<i>Yes</i>	9	18
<i>No</i>	41	82
Fever	4	
Parasite Infestation	5	
Diarrhea	1	
Cough and Flu	1	
Headache	1	
Stomach ache	2	

The health profile of the respondents, as presented in Table 3, provides insights into their eating habits, handwashing practices, and the prevalence of health problems among them. The data highlights the frequency of meals, handwashing practices, and the types of health problems encountered by the respondents. The table shows that 52% of the respondents eat three times a day, 38% eat twice a day, and 10% eat only once a day. This information suggests variations in their meal frequency and highlights the potential impact on their nutritional intake and overall health.

Regarding handwashing practices, the data reveals that 50% of the respondents always wash their hands, 36% often wash their hands, and 14% sometimes wash their hands on a typical day. Adequate hand hygiene is crucial for preventing the spread of diseases, and these findings indicate the varying levels of adherence to this practice among the street children. In terms of health problems encountered in the last three months, 82% of the respondents responded no, indicating that they did not experience any health issues during that period. However, 18% responded yes, indicating that they did encounter health problems. The prevalence of health problems among street children is a matter of concern and requires attention to ensure their well-being.

Among the 18% (9 out of 50) of respondents who reported experiencing health problems, the data reveals the specific issues they encountered. It is important to note that the data gathered allowed for multiple responses. The findings show that 5 out of 9 respondents had a parasite infestation, 4 out of 9 had a fever, 2 out of 9 had a stomach ache, and 1 out of 9 had diarrhea, headache, cough, and flu. These health problems highlight the vulnerabilities and risks faced by street children in terms of their physical well-being.

The findings presented in Table 3 emphasize the importance of addressing the health needs and challenges faced by street children. Access to regular and nutritious meals, promoting proper handwashing practices, and addressing common health issues such as parasites, fever, and gastrointestinal problems are crucial in ensuring the well-being of these children.

Table 4. Psychosocial Profile of the Respondents

Statements	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
<i>The feeling of children to be in the streets</i>		
I feel good because I have my friends with me	3.68	Strongly Agree
I feel good because I can earn money and I can help my family	4	Strongly Agree
It is very hard because it is not safe be in the streets	2.1	Disagree
It is hard because I want to go to school but I don't have any choice	1.4	Disagree
It is hard because I always experience bullying and discrimination	2.18	Disagree
It is hard because my parents		

always scold me every time I go home and I don't earn or bring anything for them.	1.06	Strongly Disagree
<i>Effects of being in the streets to the life of street children</i>		
Being in the streets I became independent at very young age	3.2	Agree
It made me exposed to illegal activities and Substances	1.5	Strongly Disagree
I became a victim of discrimination	2.3	Disagree
I experienced violence and other kind of Abuses	1	Strongly Disagree
It lowered my self-esteem because I always got bullied	1.78	Strong Disagree

Legend: 1.0 - 1.75 = Strongly Disagree; 1.76 - 2.50 = Disagree; 2.51 - 3.25 = Agree; 3.26 - 4.0 = Strongly Agree

The data presented in Table 4 reflects the respondents' agreement or disagreement with specific statements related to their experiences as street children. The weighted means provide an indication of the overall agreement or disagreement levels with each statement. The respondents agreed with the statement "Being in the streets I became independent at a very young age" with a weighted mean of 3.2. This suggests that the respondents perceived their experience on the streets as contributing to their development of independence at an early stage. This finding aligns with previous research highlighting the resilience and survival skills often observed in street children (Nieuwenhuys, 2016). In contrast, the respondents strongly disagreed with the statements "It made me exposed to illegal activities and substances" and "I experienced violence and other kinds of abuses," with weighted means of 3.2 and 1, respectively. This implies that the respondents did not perceive their street experience as significantly exposing them to illegal activities or substances. However, it is essential to exercise caution in interpreting this finding, as respondents may have varying degrees of awareness or understanding of what constitutes illegal activities or substances.

Moreover, the respondents disagreed with the statement "It lowered my self-esteem because I always got bullied," with a weighted mean of 1.78. This suggests that, overall, the respondents did not feel that their self-esteem was greatly affected by being on the streets and facing bullying. It is important to note that while this may be the general trend, some individuals within the group may still have experienced negative impacts on their self-esteem. Lastly, the respondents disagreed with the statement "I became a victim of discrimination" with a weighted mean of 2.3. This indicates that the respondents did not perceive themselves as victims of discrimination during their street experiences. However, it is crucial to consider that the perception of discrimination may vary among individuals and could be influenced by factors such as age, gender, and other intersecting identities.

Table 5. Hobbies and Interest of the Respondents

Hobbies and Interests	Frequency	Percentage
Reading	10	20
Writing	15	30
Dancing	3	6
Drawing	1	2
Singing	8	16
Playing	35	70

Table 5 shows the frequency and percentage of the hobbies and interests of the respondents. Data shows that playing got the highest percentage of 70, On the other hand, 30 % are into writing, 20 % are into reading, 16% are into singing, 6 are into dancing and 2 % are into drawing.

These findings shed light on the recreational preferences of the street children in Koronadal City, South Cotabato. The high percentage of respondents engaged in playing reflects the importance of play as a universal and fundamental activity for children, regardless of their circumstances. Play serves as a means for self-expression, creativity, and social interaction, which are crucial elements of healthy child development (Pellegrini & Smith, 2005). The significant percentage of respondents interested in writing suggests the potential for harnessing their creativity and self-expression through literary activities. Writing can provide an outlet for emotional expression, help develop communication skills, and offer opportunities for personal growth and self-reflection (Graham & Hebert, 2010). Encouraging and supporting the writing endeavors of these children may contribute to their overall well-being and provide a means for them to share their experiences and perspectives. The proportion of respondents interested in reading highlights their inclination towards acquiring knowledge, expanding their horizons, and exploring different worlds through literature. Reading can have a positive impact on cognitive development, language acquisition, and academic achievement (Mol & Bus, 2011). Promoting access to age-appropriate reading materials and establishing literacy programs can enhance their educational opportunities and empower them with valuable skills for the future.

The percentages of respondents engaged in singing, dancing, and drawing demonstrate their interest in artistic expression. In a study by Serdarevic et al. (2019), the results indicated that engaging in artistic activities, including singing, dancing, and drawing, was linked to improved self-esteem, emotional expression, and social skills. Recognizing and nurturing these talents can provide avenues for the children to showcase their abilities, gain confidence, and potentially pursue artistic endeavors in the future.

Table 6. Whether the Respondents Experience Abuse

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Whether Respondents experience abuse		
Yes	29	58
No	21	42

The data presented in Table 6 indicates the frequency and percentage of respondents who reported experiencing any form of abuse. The findings reveal that 58% of the respondents answered YES, indicating that they have experienced some kind of abuse, while 42% responded NO, indicating that they have not experienced abuse.

These figures highlight a significant proportion of street children who have encountered various forms of abuse, underscoring the vulnerability and risks they face in their everyday lives. It is crucial to address and mitigate the occurrence of abuse to ensure the well-being and safety of these children.

Table 7. Experience of Abuse

Abuses experienced by the respondents				Persons who committed the abuse			Place where the abuse was committed				
	Type of Abuse	F	%	\bar{x}	Desc.	Parent/s	Sibling/s	Others	Home	School	Street
Physical											
I was punched	11	37.93	1.46	Rarely	1	0	10	1	0	10	
My hair was Pulled	2	6.89	3.25	Often	0	1	1	1	0	1	
Psychological											
I was called Names	6	20.68	1.83	Sometimes	0	0	6	0	1	5	
I was insulted	5	17.24	2.8	Sometimes	1	0	4	1		4	
I was laughed at or made fun of inappropriately	23	79.31	3.04	Often	0	0	23	0	1	22	
Economic											
I was asked to beg for money	1	3.44	3.0	Often	1	0	0	1	0	0	

The data presented in Table 7 provides information on the frequency and percentage of different types of physical abuse experienced by the respondents, along with details regarding the perpetrators and locations where the abuse occurred. The findings indicate that a significant number of respondents experienced various forms of physical abuse. For instance, 37.93% of the respondents experienced being punched rarely, with a weighted mean of 1.46. This abuse was primarily perpetrated by their friends or other people in the streets, as well as their parents at home. Additionally, 6.89% of the respondents reported having their hair pulled often, with a weighted mean of 3.25, perpetrated by either their parents at home or their friends or other people in the streets.

Furthermore, the data reveals that 79.31% of the respondents experienced being laughed at or made fun of inappropriately often by their friends or other people in the streets. This highlights the prevalence of verbal abuse and humiliation faced by street children. Additionally, 20.68% of the respondents encountered name-calling sometimes, with a weighted mean of 1.83, by their friends or other people in the streets or at school. Four respondents (17.24%) experienced constant insults sometimes, with a weighted mean of 2.8, from their friends, other people in the streets or at school, and even their parents at home. Moreover, the data reveals that one respondent (3.44%) was asked to beg for money often, with a weighted mean of 3.0, by their parents

at home. This highlights a form of exploitation where children are coerced into engaging in begging activities for the financial benefit of their parents or caregivers.

Table 8. Effects of the Abuse to the Respondents

Statements	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
<i>The effects of abuse in the behavior of the street children</i>		
I don't easily trust other people	1.31	Strongly Disagree
I developed fear and anxiety	2.72	Agree
I have difficulty maintaining relationships and interacting with others	1.17	Strongly Disagree
It lowered my self-esteem	1.93	Disagree
It brought me here in the streets and I would just prefer to stay here than to go home	1.0	Strongly Disagree

Legend: 1.0 - 1.75 = Strongly Disagree; 1.76 - 2.50 = Disagree; 2.51 - 3.25 = Agree; 3.26 - 4.0 = Strongly Agree

The data presented in Table 8 highlights the effects of the abuses experienced by the respondents on their behavior. The findings reveal the weighted means and interpretation for each statement. The statement with the highest weighted mean of 2.72, interpreted as AGREE, is "I developed fear and anxiety." This indicates that a significant number of respondents experienced feelings of fear and anxiety as a result of the abuses they endured. This aligns with previous research that has shown the detrimental impact of abuse on mental health, including the development of fear and anxiety symptoms (Grella et al., 2016; Karatzias et al., 2017).

The second-highest weighted mean of 2.51, also interpreted as AGREE, corresponds to the statement "It changes my behavior towards other people, I tend to be moody and easily irritated." This suggests that the respondents' experiences of abuse have influenced their interpersonal behavior, leading to moodiness and increased irritability. Similar findings have been reported in studies examining the behavioral effects of abuse, including changes in interpersonal relationships and emotional regulation (Teicher et al., 2016; Anda et al., 2006).

In contrast, the statement "It lowered my self-esteem" received a weighted mean of 1.93, which is interpreted as DISAGREE. This suggests that the respondents, on average, did not perceive a significant decrease in self-esteem as a direct result of the abuses they experienced. However, it is important to note that individual experiences and perceptions may vary, and some respondents may have indeed experienced a negative impact on their self-esteem. Research has consistently shown that abuse can contribute to lowered self-esteem and feelings of worthlessness (Higgins et al., 2019; Kendall-Tackett et al., 2003). The remaining statements in Table 8 received weighted means ranging from 1.0 to 1.31, which are interpreted as STRONGLY DISAGREE. These statements indicate that, on average, the respondents did not perceive significant effects on their behavior related to those particular aspects

mentioned. It is essential to recognize that the interpretation of the weighted means should be considered in conjunction with the specific context and the individual experiences of the respondents. The results highlight the complex and varied impacts of abuse on behavior, emphasizing the importance of providing appropriate support and interventions to address the negative consequences experienced by street children.

Table 9. Knowledge on the Rights of the Child

Rights of the Child	Frequency	Percentage
Every child has the right to be born well.	3	6
Every child has the right to a wholesome family life.	1	2
Every child has the right to be raised well and become contributing members of society.	2	4
Every child has the right to basic needs.	2	4
Every child has the right to education.	32	64
Every child has the right to be protected from danger.	1	2
No knowledge about any rights of the child	16	32

Table 9 shows the frequency and percentage of the knowledge of the respondents on the following rights of the child. Among the 50 total population, 64 % know that “Every child has the right to education.”; 6 % on “Every child has the right to be born well.”; 4% on “Every child has the right to be raised well and become contributing members of society” and Every child has the right to basic needs”; 2 % on “Every child has the right to be protected from danger.” While 32% do not know any rights of the child.

Table 10. Factors that Lead Children into the Streets

Factors	Weighted Mean	Interpretations
Streets became the place where they could have friends and peers that they can trust and do things in common	2.92	Agree
When parents become separated, children stay in the street to find comfort	1.06	Strongly Disagree
Streets become a safe haven for abuses experienced by children at home or at school	1	Strongly Disagree
Their own choice to be in the streets to beg for money or foods because of poverty/hunger	4	Strongly Agree
Being neglected by their parents/families.	1.06	Strongly Disagree
Do not have any place to stay because of natural or man-made disasters.	1	Strongly Disagree
Parents asked children to beg for money in the Streets	1.06	Strongly Disagree
Children are in the streets because they don't want to go to school	1	Strongly Disagree
Their own willingness to run away from home	1	Strongly Disagree
Conflict or family breakdown leads children into the streets	1	Strongly Disagree
Abandoned by their families/relatives	1.06	Strongly Disagree

Legend: 1.0 – 1.75 = Strongly Disagree; 1.76 – 2.50 = Disagree; 2.51 – 3.25 = Agree; 3.26 – 4.0 = Strongly Agree

Table 10 provides insights into the contributing factors that push children to the streets. The findings reveal that the statement "their own choice to be in the streets to beg for money or food because of poverty/hunger" received the highest weighted mean of 4, indicating a STRONGLY AGREE response. This suggests that a significant number of respondents attribute their presence on the streets to the need to meet basic survival needs due to poverty and hunger.

The second-highest weighted mean of 2.29 is associated with the statement "streets became the place where they could have friends and peers that they can trust and do things in common." This suggests that respondents agree that the streets provide them with opportunities for social connections, camaraderie, and shared experiences with peers. These findings align with previous research on the push factors leading to street involvement among children. Poverty, hunger, and the search for social belonging and support are commonly identified as significant factors in children's decision to be on the streets (Kuswandari et al., 2018; Cheah et al., 2018). It is crucial to address the underlying issues of poverty, food insecurity, and social isolation that contribute to children's presence on the streets. Implementing effective social welfare programs, poverty alleviation measures, and community-based interventions can help provide alternative opportunities for children and reduce their vulnerability to street life.

Table 11. Challenges Encountered by the Street Children

Challenges	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
I cannot enjoy my childhood life	1.5	Strongly Disagree
I do not have access to formal education	2.32	Disagree
I do not have access to basic needs and sanitary facilities	2.18	Disagree
I am high risk to exploitation and any form of abuses	1.7	Strongly Disagree
I was forced to work and earn money for living	1.06	Strongly Disagree
Based on my experience, being in the streets there is no parental guidance, safety and security	1.74	Strongly Disagree
I become exposed to illegal activities	1.26	Strongly Disagree
I am often a victim of discrimination and bullying	1.26	Strongly Disagree
I am prone to sickness and some health problems	2.52	Agree

Legend: 1.0 – 1.75 = Strongly Disagree; 1.76 – 2.50 = Disagree; 2.51 – 3.25 = Agree; 3.26 – 4.0 = Strongly Agree

Table 11 shows the challenges encountered by the street children. Based on the data gathered, the statement "I am prone to sickness and some health problems" got the highest weighted mean of 2.52. This is interpreted as AGREE.

The statements “I do not have access to formal education” and “I am a high risk to exploitation and any form of abuses” have weighted means of 2.32 and 2.18 respectively. Both values are interpreted as DISAGREE. The remaining statements had a weighted mean ranging from 1.06- 1.74. These are interpreted as STRONGLY DISAGREE. The challenge of the street children in being prone to sickness and some health problems can be supported by Humanium (2021), as it was reported that the health of children growing up on the streets is strongly compromised. They do not have access to sanitary facilities: they are often dirty and infested with fleas. also, because of their lack of hygiene, street children are exposed to different diseases. their health is often troubling. Lockhart, (2018), also stated that street children are also exposed to other types of diseases because of the harsh environment where they live. There are health issues for children who live and work on the streets. The lack of medical care and inadequate living conditions mean they are more susceptible to chronic illnesses.

Table 12. Suggestion and Recommendations

Suggestions/ Recommendations	Frequency	Percentage
Conduct non-formal education and recreational activities	7	14
Conduct proper parenting or responsible parenthood seminar for parents	4	8
Conduct counseling for the children and their parents	2	4
Outreach or Feeding Program	19	38
Provide temporary shelter to street children until safely reintegrated	5	10
Provide proper education and scholarship to the children	34	68
Provide access to basic services	18	36
Skills Training and income-generating activities for parents	22	44

Table 12 presents the suggestions and recommendations provided by the respondents to alleviate the situation of street children. Among the options presented, the highest percentage of respondents (68%) suggested or recommended providing proper education and scholarships to the children. This aligns with the recognition that education plays a crucial role in improving the lives and opportunities of street children. Additionally, 44% of the respondents suggested or recommended implementing skills training and income-generating activities for parents. This highlights the importance of empowering parents and caregivers to improve their economic situation, which can contribute to the overall well-being of the family.

Other notable suggestions or recommendations include conducting outreach or feeding programs (38%), providing access to basic services (36%), implementing non-formal education and recreational activities (14%), offering temporary shelter until safe reintegration (10%), conducting parenting or responsible parenthood seminars (8%), and providing counseling for both children and their parents (4%).

These recommendations reflect the multifaceted approach required to address the complex challenges faced by street children. They emphasize the importance of holistic interventions that encompass education, economic empowerment, basic services, social support, and parental guidance. Research has shown the significance of these recommendations in improving the situation of street children. For example, studies have highlighted the positive impact of educational programs and scholarships in reintegrating street children into formal education systems and providing them with opportunities for personal and social development (Youssef, 2016). Additionally, initiatives that offer skills training and income-generating activities to parents have been found to enhance their economic stability and, consequently, contribute to the well-being of their children (Pan et al., 2015).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are more male than female respondents in the study. Most of the respondents are out of school and can be categorized as children on the street. Most of the respondents are eating thrice a day and have not encountered any health problems in the last three months. Regarding the feelings of the respondents of being in the streets, most of them feel good to be in the streets because they can earn money and they can help their family, and “they have their friends with them. In terms of the effects of being in the streets in the life of the street children, most of the respondents became independent at a very young age. The top two (2) main sources of income of the respondents are selling sampaguita and begging. Most of the respondents work at least 4-6 hours a day and earn at least 100 pesos daily. The majority of the respondents did not experience any kind of abuse but those who experienced abuse developed fear and anxiety and it changed their behavior toward other people wherein they tend to be moody and easily irritated. Most of the respondents are knowledgeable that they have the right to education.

Results show that it is the personal choice of the respondents to be in the streets to beg for money or food because of poverty/hunger and that the streets became the place where they could have friends and peers that they can trust and do things in common. Being prone to sickness and health problems is the major challenge that the respondents encountered and most of the respondents recommended/suggested that they should be provided with proper education and scholarship.

Given the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. *Improve access to education.* Given that most of the respondents are out of school, efforts should be made to improve access to education for street children in Koronadal City. This can be achieved by establishing alternative learning programs, providing scholarships or financial assistance for school fees and supplies, and collaborating with local schools to ensure inclusivity and support for street children.
2. *Enhance healthcare services.* Although the majority of respondents did not encounter health problems in the last three months, it is necessary to

ensure access to quality healthcare services for street children in Koronadal City. Collaborations with healthcare providers, NGOs, and community organizations can help in delivering healthcare services to street children.

3. *Foster social integration and support networks.* Recognizing that street children feel good being in the streets due to earning money and having friends, efforts should be made to provide social support networks that offer alternatives to street life. It is important to establish safe spaces and community centers in Koronadal City where street children can engage in recreational activities, receive counseling or mentorship, and build supportive relationships with peers and adults.
4. *Create economic opportunities.* Poverty and hunger were identified as key factors that drove children to the streets. It is crucial to implement comprehensive poverty alleviation programs that address the underlying causes and provide sustainable solutions, such as income-generating activities for parents, social protection measures, and community development initiatives.
5. *Raise awareness and promote child rights.* While a majority of respondents were knowledgeable about their right to education, it is essential to raise awareness about the full spectrum of child rights and ensure their protection. Educational campaigns, advocacy efforts, and community dialogues can play a significant role in promoting child rights and mobilizing support for street children.
6. *Strengthen child protection systems.* Although the majority of respondents did not experience abuse, the impact of abuse on those who did underscores the need to strengthen child protection mechanisms in Koronadal City. This involves training frontline workers, such as social workers and police officers, to identify and respond to cases of abuse promptly. Establishing child-friendly reporting systems and providing psychosocial support services for those affected by abuse are also essential.

FURTHER STUDY

Addressing the challenges faced by street children requires collaborative efforts involving various stakeholders in Koronadal City and in the province including government agencies, NGOs, community leaders, and schools. A multi-sectoral approach that combines efforts from education, health, social services, and justice sectors can yield more comprehensive and sustainable solutions.

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