

STREET CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS THEIR FUTURE,  
FAMILY AND SOCIETY AROUND THEM

112 Pages

November 2006

ABSTRACT

This is a qualitative investigation into street children's attitudes toward their future, families and to the society around them. The data gathered also covered general background data, their experience of living on the street, and the reason why they decided to live on the street.

The subjects were 4 male street children living in a foundation. The case studies were generated using various data gathering techniques: in-depth interviews, sentence completion, House-Tree-Person (H-T-P) projective drawings, and some participant observation and collateral information from their teachers in the foundation. The data were gathered over a 3-month period, every weekend, in a team of two researchers (for safety reasons and to appear less threatening). The data collection period was extensive because it took a lot of time to build rapport and enough trust in the street children to participate.

The findings across cases were that all had come from broken homes, had a background of poverty and limited, if any, schooling. The street children feel disassociated from other people and have relationship problems. They have trouble keeping their attention on tasks or play activities. When confronted with uncomfortable topics, they use avoidance tactics; at other times they tend to be attention-seeking. They show feelings of inferiority (low self-esteem) and they have a high need for love and belonging. They live life on a day-to-day basis.

In addition, the findings suggested 3 symptom clusters that indicate a risk for three possible mental disorders: Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Childhood Depression,

and Reactive Attachment Disorder. Findings that support this include the following: the street children were fearful of strangers; avoided thoughts or conversations that were associated with their past home experiences; detached themselves from other people; showed had a restricted range of feelings; had no vision for their futures; were not able to follow instructions during their interview; acted out in school to call for attention; skipped classes for online gaming, drug and/or alcohol abuse; played violently at the open home; had low self-esteem or feelings of worthlessness; stole; were destructive to self, others, animals, and material things; were accident prone and showed a lack of impulse control and cause-and-effect thinking; were superficially engaging and "charming"; avoided eye contact (except when lying); lacked the ability to give and receive affection; and had poor peer relationships.

Recommendations for helping the street children by providing interventions for their parents, the community and society were given. Implications for future research were also addressed.

