

# FAMILY SUPPORT AND CHILD STREETISM IN DAR ES SALAAM AND DODOMA

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## ABSTRACT

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### **Keywords:**

*Family Support; Child Streetism; Parenting Styles;*

Street children are becoming common in the developing countries despite the implementation of several interventions. Family support as one of the interventions to address street children and considered to be the leading one. However, there is a dearth of literature on the influence of family support on child streetism. In this regard, the article explored the influence of family support on child streetism in Dodoma and Dar es Salaam. This article adopted the cross sectional descriptive design whereby the informants were selected using purposive and snowballing sampling techniques and data. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and documentary review and thematic data analysis technique was used to analyse the qualitative data. The findings revealed that family support influences child streetism. Children are not likely to live in the street when the families support them. Specifically, substance use and abuse of parents and guardians, single parenting

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families, child-headed household, child neglect and family violence contribute to street children. The article among others recommends that parenting skills and style of the community members must be enhanced to provide favourable environment within the family setting for children to cherish their future.

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## INTRODUCTION

Street children phenomenon is considered to be one of the main social challenges facing the developing countries including the African countries meanwhile children are vulnerable to the exploitation and abuse of different forms (Le Roux, 2016). It is argued that parental alcoholism and family violence are one of the main motivating factors for children to move in the streets (ibid). World Bank (2019) shows that in the period of two years, 10,000 children went into the streets in Tanzania which indicates a rapid increase in the number of street children in Tanzania. The challenge of street children in Tanzania is more historical since then. Saramba (2002) attests that 30,000 children are in Tanzania while Dar es Salaam was leading with 10,000 street children. Mwinanyi (2004) reveals that the population of street children increased to about 40,000. One of the factors that may have contribution to increased number of street children is inadequate family support. Family support is the leading functional social support that may influence child streetism (Ozban, 2015). For instance, Sorre and Oino (2013) argue that family stability reduces the possibility for children to be in the street. Olivetti and Jacobson (2011) states that the family with a male household head who is in poor health is more likely to push children into the street (Mia, 2022).

In recognition of the family roles in addressing the challenge of street children, Tanzania developed number of national documents to guide its interventions. These documents include the National Guidelines for Economic Strengthening of Most Vulnerable Children Households; The Law of the Child Act of 2009; The Child Protection Regulations of 2013; the Child Development Policy of 2008. Other documents include Safe Family Reunification Guidelines for Child Victims of Trafficking in Tanzania (2016); and Standard Operating Procedures for Protecting, Assisting and Referring Trafficked Children in Tanzania (2016). This indicates that Tanzania is not short of the National Frameworks that protect and promote Children's Welfare (Mia, 2021).

Despite aforementioned initiatives, street children are still increasing and are being vulnerable to abuse and exploitation which may be contributed by the deterioration of the family as the functional social support. However, there is dearth of the literature on the family role in child streetism. Most prior empirical studies (such as Corsaro, 2011; De Benitez, 2011; Lemoyan, 2015) focus on poverty as the main cause of

child streetism. But it is likely for the rich family to push children into the street. It is supported by Olivetti and Jacobson (2011) who argue that employment status of the family head has little impact on the likelihood of children to go to the street. It is therefore the intention of this article to explore the influence of family support on child streetism

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This article adopted two theories namely the Sociological Rational Choice Theory and Liberal Feminist Theory. The Sociological Rational Choice (SRC) Theory is the theory which explains how individuals behave and it was first introduced by Antony Downs in 1957 and reviewed by Hinich and Munger in 1997. The Theory has five assumptions including individualism, optimality, structures, self-regarding interests and rationality. Individualism means that it is the individual who takes decisions. It also assumes that individuals choose a certain action given his/her preferences and opportunities than an individual faces. According to Abell (2000), optimality does not mean that the action is the best and results to the rational outcomes rather it is chosen given the circumstances an individual is being faced with. Abell (2000) also argues that selection of individual actions is influenced by structure and norms and the individual actions are more focused on his/her welfare. In the case of rationality, an individual takes an action that benefits him or her more. In this case an individual chooses an action as the best possible when it is in his or her advantage (Mandopi, 2016). The theory is relevant in examining the influence of family environment in child streetism. When a child feels to be abused and neglected may go to the street because they may consider being a rational choice. The theory is however criticised on several grounds including lack of adequate information to make rational choice; human social action and, interaction which are complex to easily make a rational choice. Alike, norms and habits may influence the choice of an action while it is argued that not all choices made by a human being are rational. However, there is a misconception of the rational choice. Hechter and Kananzwa (1997) states that the theory does not explain what a rational person will do in a particular situation. The theory is concerned with the social outcomes and not individual outcomes. However, children may also go to the street not only because they are directly abused and feel unsafe but also when the family members especially their mothers experience different forms of abuse. In this case, the Liberal Feminists Theory was used to explain such scenario.

The theory was propounded by John Stuart Mill in his publication titled "Subjection of Women" in 1869. The theory is based on the idea that gender-based violence (GBV) is perpetuated by gender inequality that exists in the society. He further advocates that the prevailing patriarchy system in the society place women within the lower category of people in the community hence increasing of insubordination, harassment as well as violation of their rights (Mandopi, 2015).

The theory is relevant to this article since it tries to depict the causes of GBV in various societies as well as suggesting the way forward to resolve the problem. Among the causes of GBV as revealed by the theory includes pervasive gender inequality and prevailing outdated cultural practices in the family to national level. The theory suggests that rights to education to both male and female, increasing equality in ownership of property, minimizing gender gap and enlarging human freedom stand as the solutions for eradicating GBV in the society (Bowman, 2017). In this case, the theory was used to explore the influence of family support on child streetism focusing on family violence.

### **EMPIRICAL LITERATURE REVIEW**

Strobbe, Olivetti and Jacobson (2010) in their study titled as family structure and street children in Zambia, explored the roles of family structure in caring for vulnerable children. The findings revealed that older, male children especially orphaned children are more likely to be in the street. Moreover, it was realised that families with a male household head who is sick are more likely to end up to the street. On the contrary, it found that educational level, age and employment status of male head of household has insignificant influence on the likelihood of children to go to the street. The finding show that a child may choose to be in the street not only because of the economic conditions but also due to lack of family care and love. It was more evident when the social and economic status of the household head does not relate with child streetism. Likewise, the empirical study enhances researcher's understanding on the fact that child streetism is beyond income poverty. Adrioni (2018) conducted a study with the title street children at the interface with social reality using a literature review. The article explored factors that lead into street children. The findings revealed that family environment and child neglect and abuse contribute to child streetism. This article enhances researcher's understanding and informed this study on the roles of family support on child streetism. Diriba (2015) studied the family problem as a contributing factor for street children. The main study objective was to justify family problem as the contributing factor for streetism in Nekerite Town adopting a mixed method approach. Data were collected from 100 street children using questionnaire, interviews and focus group discussion. The findings revealed that most street children were coming from unstable families and majority of their parents engage in low-income generating activities, which limits their ability to provide their children with sufficient materials and financial requirements.

Likewise, other factors such as family breakdown, parents'/guardians' deaths, peer pressure, abuse of step parents, family conflicts, labour exploitation and poverty are also the contributing factors to street children. It was further revealed that poverty is the main cause for child streetism. The findings of this study are quite relevant in the sense that they provide adequate understanding on how social and economic factors or challenges lead to child streetism.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This article adopted the descriptive cross sectional design and data were collected only once. It was adopted because it can well describe a population or a subgroup within the population with respect to child streetism and family support (Levin, 2006). The article adopted both snowballing and purposive sampling techniques. Snowballing sampling technique was used to reach children living in the streets of Dodoma and Dar es Salaam. Snowballing sampling technique was used to reach children living in the streets of Dodoma and Dar es Salaam. The research areas were Dar es Salaam and Dodoma. Dar es Salaam was chosen because it makes up over one third of urban population in Tanzania (UN – Habitat, 2009) and leading in terms of the number of street children in Tanzania (URT, 2018). According to the URT and USAID Kizazi Kipya Project (2018), Dodoma is one of the regions which consist of a large number of children living and working in the streets (CLWS). Seni (2017) also argues that the begging among street children in Dodoma is the common phenomenon. The population of this article therefore includes street children who are living in the streets of Dodoma and Dar es Salaam regions. Purposive sampling, on the other hand, was used to sample social welfare officers, ward executive officers, and children who were under children homes or care centres but once lived in the streets. In addition, purposive sampling technique was used to select informants working with children’s homes or care centres both public and private. Semi-structured and documentary interviews were conducted to collect data. Thematic data analysis technique was used to analyse data.

## RESULTS

The study managed to interview 56 informants from Dodoma and Dar es Salaam regions. In Dar es Salaam, 33 informants were interviewed including 4 social welfare officers, 6 staff of children’s homes or care centres and 23 street children. In Dodoma, 23 informants were interviewed including 3 social welfare officers, 5 staff of children’s homes or care centers, and 15 street children. In Dar es Salaam, female social welfare officers were 3 while only one (1) male social welfare officer was interviewed. Moreover, 4 staff of children’s homes or care centres were female while male staff were only two (2) person. Among 23 street children in Dar es Salaam, 17 children were boys and 6 were girls. In Dodoma, 2 social welfare officers were females and only (1) social welfare officer was male. Furthermore, 3 staff of children’s homes or care centres were females and the remaining two (2) were males. In the case of street children, 9 children were boys and the remaining 6 children were girls.

Considering educational level, all social welfare staff and staff from children’s homes or care centres had a Bachelor Degrees particularly in the three fields of social work, community development and sociology. In

addition, out of 38 street children, only 11 children managed to accomplish the primary school education while 7 children had no formal education at all and 20 children attended the primary school education but failed to accomplish it. In terms of age, 11 street children aged between 15 and 17 years old; 25 street children aged between 10 and 14 years old and 2 children aged between 7 and 9 years old.

### **Family Support and Child Streetism**

Family support is also one of the factors which contribute to child streetism in Dodoma and Dar es Salaam. This study analysed the influence of family support on child streetism focusing mainly on access to food, shelter, clothes, educational and health services, parenting style and family environment in general (Nisar, 2017). The aforementioned indicators of family support were found to largely influence on the children's decision to live and work on the streets. Specifically, the study revealed the following specific findings on the influence of family support on child streetism which were categorised into three groups i.e. (a) family support on child access to basic needs and other social services; (b) parenting style and (c) family disintegration.

*Family Support on Child Access to Basic Needs and Other Social Services*  
The findings of this study revealed that economic status of the family may not guarantee access to basic needs and services by a child. Parents/guardians may have adequate income to sustain their families with good job but still their children may be deprived, neglected and excluded from satisfying their basic needs and services. One of the informants attested that he had no access to basic needs including health services and further added that it was better going to the street rather than waiting dying at home (Street Child, 14 years ago). The social welfare officer added that "in societies that have free access to health and educational services, the magnitude of child streetism is relatively low despite the fact that the family is extremely poor" (Social Welfare Officer, Female)". This implies that in areas that public services which are necessary for the survival of human beings are available, the challenge of street children is minimal but it was determined by the parents'/guardians willingness to support their children in accessing education services. In this regard, most of street children in Dar es Salaam streets are not only originated from poor families and coming from poor regions. For instance, street children simply migrated from other regions in Tanzania especially from Southern Highlands, Southern part of Tanzania and West Zone where there is limited awareness of parents and guardians on the need for their children to go to schools. Similar experience was evidenced in the Coastal region which is closer to Dar es Salaam but street children from the Coastal region could hardly be found. Few of them were coming from the Northern Parts of Tanzania which are more advanced in terms of an availability of public services but also parents and guardians are more exposed to importance of education for the better future of their children.

This shows that the family support level in the specific family in terms of accessing public educational, social and health services determined the extent of child streetism. It is also justified by the following case:-

**CASE I: Family Support and Child Streetism**

*Eunicea is a girl aged 15 years old and coming from the rural areas of the Southern part of Tanzania. She is now residing in Dar es Salaam as a street child since 2018. Limited access to education, health services and electricity drove her decision to migrate from a rural area to the urban area of Dar es Salaam as a street child. She contended that life is so hard in the rural areas and sometimes you have to walk more than 20 km to access health services. Schools are still far from where they live in their rural village. It even took her 60 km (go and return) every day to go to school.*

*These rural hardships pushed her to migrate to Dar es Salaam as a domestic worker with the hope of enjoying the development which she was normally told by their colleagues. However, she ran on the streets after encountering several abusive actions from her bosses.*

In support of the findings of this study, several prior empirical studies reveal that access to public educational, social and health services determine child's decision either to go to a street or not. The findings of this study mainly focused on the family development in terms of ability of family members in accessing public services. On the contrary prior empirical studies mainly focus on parents' behavior and actions, and their influence on child streetism. For instance, Le Roux (2016) reveals that family violence is one of the factors that contribute to child streetism. Mandoyu, *et al* (2018) attest that parental disintegration leads to child streetism. On the other hand, Sofya, *et al* (2019) argue that abusive parental punishment, hate of step parents and parents' alcoholic behavior are the contributors of child streetism. On the contrary, Diriba (2015) contends that most street children come from unstable family with inadequate ability to handle children demands/basic needs and provision of harmonious environment for child development. The children's basic needs include an access to education and health services while harmonious environment is determined by parents' behavior and perceptions towards their children. Specifically, Diriba (2015) argues that lack of opportunities for education among children contributes to children streetism.

*Substance Use and Abuse of Parents and Guardians*

Substance use and abuse of parents and guardians contributed to the problem of street children in Tanzania. The findings revealed that some of the street children went to the street after the failure of their Parents and Guardians to take care of them. Substance abuse and use for mood-altering purposes included the use of drugs and excessive alcohol. For instance,

one of the informants said that *“my parents did not have time for us .....they came home very late and did not know whether we had eaten or not. I had to go to the street for help”* (Male informant, 14 years of age, street child). Likewise, the use and abuse of substances also led to family separation and divorce hence single parenting. The findings showed that single parenting contributed to child streetism. Interview with some of the Street Children indicated that their mothers left their fathers because of the excessive use and abuse of substances, which later shift a family burden to a single parent with a limited income. In this regard, substance use and abuse led to family disintegration and hence child streetism. It is supported by one of the informants who argued *“we had good life before my father engaged into the substance abuse which led my mother and I to run away from home and become homeless.”*

Moreover, the substance abuse by parents and guardians influenced children’s lived experiences in the street. Children were likely to adopt the same behavior of their parents or guardians in the street. This means that children whose parents or guardians had engaged into substance abuse were also likely to be the same. Likewise, some of them were taught by their parents or guardians on how to engage in substance abuse. The situation was more common when there was excessive use of alcohol and even sometimes drugs.

#### *Single Parenting Families*

Children in a single parenting families characterised by low-income level were prone to child streetism. Single parenting families resulted by the death of one parent or guardian, divorce, family separation and spouse failure to perform their roles. It was evident that spouses may live together but the family qualified to become a single parenting family. For instance, one of the informants argued that *“most families that street children are coming from were headed by a single parent despite the fact that both parents are living together.”* Moreover, it was found that, due to family disintegration, some of street children were sent to their grandparents with limited sources of income and ability to guide their grandchildren. Grandparents were considered as the backup plan when the family is disintegrated and in most cases, they were widows with relatively huge parenting burden. Excessive single parenting burden of widow grandparents pushed children to go the street to fetch for their needs. It was justified by one informant who stated that *“I have to join my colleagues in the street when my parents sent me to my village grandmother who had no means of survival”* (Female informant, street child, 12 years of age). Nevertheless, there were also circumstances in which orphans who were taken care by grandparents joined in the street life. This implied that these were a close connection between a grandparent headed household and street children. A family that led by a grandparent with inadequate income to carter for the needs of his/her grandchildren was likely to be pushed to the street. A social worker argued that *“the challenge was so rampant in the rural areas, which forced*

*children to go to urban areas to look for the means of survival”* (Male informant 35 years of age).

#### *Child-Headed Household and Child Streetism*

The findings also revealed that most children who led the families and lived in the child-headed households were likely to be in the street. Child-headed households were characterized by income poverty, inadequate care and accessibility to social and educational services and, child protection, which pushed children to be in the street. One informant argued that *“I had to become a street child in order to serve for my siblings who depend on me... we don't have parents”* (A boy, 16 years of age). A child-headed household was caused by several factors including death of parents, family disintegration, and sickness of a single parent or guardian. The most common contributor was death of parents associated with the confiscation of family properties by parent's relatives. One informant argued that *“children are left with nothing after the burial of their parents especially male parents... family properties are taken by relatives and become completely poor”* (Female Informant, Social Worker).

#### *Child Neglect and Child Streetism*

The findings revealed that parenting style influenced children's decisions to either live in the street or not. It was evident in the collected data that when children are shown care and love are less likely to become street children. On the contrary, when a child is abused in any form i.e. whether psychological, physical or sexual abuse s/he may decide to run away from their homes and become street children. The findings showed that not necessarily that income level of the family may influence child streetism. A wealth family which characterised by abusive parenting and child neglect may push a child to go to the street which in most cases they were considered as the safe place to run to. Abusive parenting associated with inadequate social support network services was one of the factors pushed children to be in the street. One informant stated that *“some of the admitted street children in the children's home were abused and neglected by either their parents, guardians or relatives”*. Abusive acts that were mentioned included severe punishments, psychological abuse and sexual abuse. Moreover, absence of care and love to children were among the factors mentioned to influence child streetism. For instance, one informant argued *“the reason that made me run away from home and, live and work on the street, is the behavior of my aunt. She never loved me and always beat and burnt me with hot water.”* The parenting style in most cases was connected with child abuse at the family level as supported by Social Workers who said *“Parenting style is one of the main contributors of child streetism”* (Social Worker, Female). Case II provides more details on the link between parenting style, child abuse and child streetism:-

#### **CASE II: Parenting Style, Child Abuse and Child Streetism:**

*Monkay Vinta5 is a street child aged 16 years old in Dar es Salaam and his parents live in Mwanza Region. He had no an opportunity to meet his*

*biological mother apart from seeing her in a picture. His father married another woman (his step mother) who treated him like no body and when he found no food at all when he returned from school. She normally gave him the leftovers while his father was always busy with his work and had no chance to talk to his child. Due to the prevailing situation, he quitted the primary school education and began to engage into begging and collecting iron steel.*

The results revealed that single parental care and poverty contributed to the involvement of youths in the criminal activities including mob violence. The results revealed that 30% of the arrested children were living with a single mother while 5% were living with a father only. In addition, 25% of the arrested children were under the guidance of other family members. Surprisingly 20% of the arrested children were living with both parents while youths who were under children's homes and informal guardians were only 10% each. The relative high percentage of arrested youths who were living with single mothers was contributed by lack of women economic engagement due to gender inequality by their spouses. In this case, when a father passes by, the mother does not have an ability to accommodate the basic needs of her family. Secondly, the accelerated poverty due to adverse cultural beliefs on property ownership by women contributed to such an increase in the rate of mob violence. It was revealed that when the husband dies, the relatives possess all properties and the family is left with nothing. For instance, one of the informants explained the following: -

*“My late husband and I had a very good life and the family members were so happy. We had three wholesale shops, one hardware, a house, two cars and many more. Furthermore, our children were enrolled in the private secondary school. I was the housewife though, because my husband did everything for the family. He did not want me to struggle or face any sort of difficulty. But the life changed when my beloved husband died. [With full of tears] when my husband died, his relatives came and took everything and leave us to the extreme poverty. We cannot even accommodate a single meal, and pay for the school fee. With this situation, my son and daughter dropped the school and my son engaged into the mob violence. For the sake of sustaining the family. I am not happy with it but he keeps on saying that he cannot stay home watching her young sister and me dying because of poverty.....”*

It was revealed that any vacuum created by the parents, guardians or communities in terms of guiding children resulted into making children falling to in appropriate mentors or focus groups. Inappropriate mentors or focus groups persuaded children to take decisions that had an adverse effect to their future. Moreover, it was found that there was no proper family guidance from the family members to the children who went into the streets which made them to look for it from either their fellow children who lived in the surrounding environment. The findings of this study are

also in line with prior empirical studies. For instance, Arikewuyo and Babatunde (2020) prove that parenting determines the future of a child in terms of his/her development and behavior. Jesse (2021) likewise attests that women are the ones who entrusted for child protection and care but in most cases fail due to multiple responsibilities which leads to child streetism. As regard to love and care, Lamont (2010) reveals that child abuse and neglect lead to child streetism.

Moreover, Sarwar (2016) argues that authoritarian parenting style leads children to become rebellious and adopt problematic behavior. The author further argues that parents who spend most of their time reduce the probability of developing delinquent behavior among their children. Banovcinova, Mydlikova and Vodickova (2018) expanded that parenting influences child development but it is determined by the family poverty level. The aforementioned authors found that parenting influence on child development was different among the poor family and a family with relatively high standard of living. However, the finding of this study revealed that it was not about the family income level but it is whether parenting style leads to child abuse or not. Regardless of the family income level, parenting style largely influences child streetism if it results in child abuse.

#### *Family Violence*

Family violence had influence on child streetism especially when a family, which is characterised by family violence, was likely to push their children to the street. Different types of family violence particularly gender-based violence's were identified. From the responses of respondents reported to have experienced violence sometimes in their lives. Majority of respondents agreed that many women experienced gender-based violence includes psychological, sexual and physical violence. Since majority of respondents agreed that many women experienced physical, physical and sexual violence and this indicates that the problem is exiting and many women have been victims of gender based violence.

More importantly, majority of informants argued that women experience physical and sexual violence more than the psychological violence. With regard to physical violence, one informant stated that: *"Some people believe that women have to be disciplined by their husbands if they do wrong. If they are not beaten, they will not respect them"* (Male informant, social worker, 40 years of age).

Moreover, majority of informants revealed that women especially the married ones and those ones who are in the intimate relationship cannot demarcate sexual violence from non-sexual violence. They perceive themselves being responsible to make sure that they sexually satisfy their partners. In this case, they have a tendency to accommodate sexual violence without taking any tangible action to address them. This was supported by ine informant who said that *"I will report my husband to the police station when he beats me. But I cannot report my husband because*

*of sexual violence, after all it is for ourselves not for others”* (Female informant, 42 years of age, housewife).

With regard to psychological violence, majority of informants did not agree that women suffer from psychological violence. It was revealed that most men suffer from psychological violence compared to women despite the fact that there is inadequate focus of such kind of violence in the women groups. One informant said that *“most men are psychologically abused than women”* (Female informant, Gender Desk Official, 36 years of age). Furthermore, few incidences of psychological violence were reported to lead into physical and sexual violence to women. In most cases, physical and sexual violence to women lead to psychological violence to men as part of revenge by abused women.

Economic violence emerged during data collection which results to the so called women economic abuse. Women are deprived from the ownership of the factors of production especially financial resources. Informants revealed that some men grab money from their spouses despite the fact that some of the financial resources were borrowed from either micro financial institutions or self-financing women groups. For instance, one informant argued that *“my husband forcibly took all the money that I borrowed from VICOPA, how can the family survive meanwhile he is not participating in addressing the family need?”* (Women informant, 29 years of age). Some of the informants also combined economic violence and physical violence whenever a woman shows resistance to economic violence. The findings also revealed that most women had an understanding of the economic rights and economic violence unlike in the case of sexual violence.

Family Violence hence reduced ability of the parents to support their children including addressing their needs. Physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence resulted to the frequent family conflicts, which led to either family disintegration or insecurity. Family disintegration or insecurity associated with low income pushed some of the street children to go to the street. One street child argued that *“I had to become a street child after failing to accommodate the psychological and physical abuse that his mother was passing through.”*

The findings also revealed that structural and functional social support networks adopted different approaches towards addressing GBV and its consequences. Structural social support networks such as family members and relatives mainly adopted for the voluntary measures in order to achieve reconciliation within the families. However, sexual violence incidences in most cases were not reported to the structural social support networks.

But physical violence incidences were reported to and addressed by the structural social support networks. Structural social support networks were sometimes used to address physical violence cases that were withdrawn from the legal enforcement institutions or considered to be the initial mechanism to address physical violence. But mostly, it was used after withdrawing physical violence cases from the legal enforcement

institutions. One informant argued that *“when I was beaten by my husband I reported him to the police station in order to get a form (i.e. PF3) which would enable me to access health services. But later on, I decided to withdraw the case because our relatives wanted to reconcile us”* (Women informant, 38 years of age, business woman).

The findings revealed that structural social support networks organise family meetings, individual meetings with the victim and perpetrators before involving the larger group of relatives and sometimes religious leaders and respected elders within the community are involved. But, religious leaders and respected elders were involved when family members and relatives failed to reconcile spouses.

With regard to functional social support networks such as police gender desks, NGOs, faith-based organisations, government social welfare officers and alike, voluntary and legal mechanisms were used to address GBV. In most cases, legal enforcement was used in addressing physical violence especially the ones that led to the severe injury or death to the victims. The findings also revealed that in some circumstances functional social support networks reconciled couples particularly when the physical violence resulted into ‘minor’ injuries to the victims. Generally, structural social support networks were mostly used than the functional social support networks. However, functional social support services were in the better position of providing counseling services to the GBV victims unlike the structural social support networks.

Low adoption of functional social support networks was viewed by informants that gender-based violence incidences were not reported to the functional social support networks by women due to the fear of losing their marriages, the low expectations that the experienced violence would be resolved through special network. Further informants viewed that aspect of social stigma and cultural instincts among women bar them from reporting the matters to the designated authorities. This implies that there is no single factor that can stand on its own and explain why women fail to report gender-based violence issues.

Moreover, structural and functional social support networks had different factors that influence their performance in addressing GBV. With regard to functional social support networks, un-realistic budget for the network operation since they depend on donors and engagement gap among the local government authorities and civil society, politicization of gender control and protection process challenged the functional social support networks. The informants further identified the inadequate skills, human resources and physical resources such as inadequate office space and transport facilities were the additional challenges. In the case of physical resources, inadequate physical space resulted to the inadequate compliance with ethical and professional principles particularly confidentiality during an interview process and, provision of guidance and counseling services. From the victim perspective, inadequate information sharing on functional social support networks resulted into the underutilization of services offered by the said category of the social

support networks. In the case of structural social support networks, inadequate skills on handling physical and psychological consequences of GBV to the victims, conflict of interests and lack of objectivity and, cultural beliefs against women rights were the mentioned challenges. Coping strategies for addressing GBV consequences outside the structural and functional social support networks were emerged particularly in the case of sexual and economic violence. Some of the informants mentioned separation of bedrooms, hiding information from their husbands with regard to economic doings or abstain GBV incidences especially when the recommended action would endanger children's' welfare. For instance one informant argued that *"my husband initially took all the money that I borrowed from VICOBA without my consent. I decided not to tell him again..."* (Female informant, 42 years of age, business woman).

Due to overreliance on structural social support networks, women who were not adequately assisted or not assisted at all by the families, neighbours or relatives decided to shift the bedroom in order to get separated from their husbands. This coping strategy was mainly used when addressing sexual violence from their partners meanwhile protecting children's welfare. However, women who could carter for the economic needs of their children were likely and willing to quit from their homes. One informant said *"I quitted from him together with my children because I can take care of my children..."*(Female informant, 47 years of age, formally employed).

In summary, the findings revealed that lack of family support to children in accessing the basic needs and services abusive parenting and family disintegration contributed to children streetism. Specifically, it was revealed that family economic status did not guaranteed access to basic needs and services by a child. Some of street children came from relatively financially capable families but their parents/guardians were note willing to support them which made them to become street children. Under parenting, the substance use and abusive parenting; family violence, single parenting, child headed household with limited parenting skills and economic opportunities and child neglect shown by absence of care and love led to child streetism. Under substance use and abusive parenting, drug abuse and excessive use of alcohol reduced ability of parents or guardians to take of their children, which even led to family separation. Likewise, it was revealed that children whose parents or guardians had engaged into substance abuse and use were more likely to do the same when they were in the street.

In the case of family violence, the findings revealed that family violence was one of the push factors that contributed to child streetism. Family violence particularly GBV cases led to family disintegration and hence child streetism. Physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence made children to perceive that they were in the unsafe family environment hence decided to go to the street. Single parenting also contributed to child streetism due to the excessive parenting burden with limited financial capacity and time to care and look after the children.

Likewise, child headed household resulted from the parents' or guardians' deaths, family disintegration and sickness of a single parent or guardians contributed to child streetism. It is most associated with the confiscation of family properties by relatives, which left the family under extreme poverty. Child neglect was another contributor of child streetism. Considering absence of love and care by parents and guardians to their children, it was further revealed that a wealth family that neglected and abuse their children made the children to go to the street because they considered their family environment to be unsafe and felt in secured (Oganetse, 2022). The findings are supported by several prior empirical studies. For instance, Edris and Sitota (2019) argue that abusive parental punishment, hate of step parents and parental alcoholic behavior contribute to child streetism. With focus on family support, Alem and Laha (2021) revealed that educational level of child influences child streetism. Adrion (2018) attests that unsafe family environment and, child neglect and abuse contribute to child streetism. Diriba (2015) finds that unstable families, family breakdown, abuses of stepparents and family conflicts are the contributing factors. Other prior empirical studies (Rahman, et al 2015; Kabede, 2015; Osmani and Hossain, 2020) reveal that family disharmony, orphaned poor family and alcoholic parents lead children to join the street life.

The findings revealed that unsafe family environment and actions of parents, guardians and relatives contributed to child streetism. Moreover, family violence mainly GBV contributed to child streetism. For instance, substance abuse and use of parents and guardians, single parenting families, abusive parental punishments and child neglect made children to feel in secured and being subjected to the unsafe environment. In this case, they decided to join the street life, which was supported by the Rational Choice Theory and Ecological System Theory. The Sociological Rational Choice Theory assumes that individuals choose certain an action as the best possible when it is his or her own advantage. In this case, when a child felt that the environment is unsafe and insecure is likely to be in the street. The findings are also supported by Ecological System theory that independent and connected system and, individual environment determine both the lived experience of a person and the human development. For instance, the findings revealed that parents' or guardians' abusive acts led to child streetism. Likewise, family relatives' action of confiscating family properties left children under extreme poverty and hence join the street life.

The findings are also supported by the Liberal Feminist theory, which is based on the idea that gender inequality increase women insubordination, harassment as well as violation of their rights. The stated consequences may lead to family disintegration and hence make children to join the street life. The theory supports the findings of this study that family violence particularly GBV contributed to child streetism. Physical, psychological and sexual violence that women went through led to family disintegration that ultimately resulted into child streetism.

## CONCLUSION

The article concludes that lack of family support to children contributes to child streetism. Lack of family support to a child to access basic needs and service regardless of the employment and income status of the household head push children to join the street life. Likewise, substance abuse and use of parents and guardians, family violence, single parenting with limited economic opportunities, presence of child headed household under poverty, child neglect and abuse also pushed children to join the street life. In this case, family disintegration and separation resulted from irresponsible behaviours and practices of parents and guardians promoted child streetism. Hence, family as a system which has a responsibility to ensure children's welfare is well protected and managed, may contribute to child streetism if it is disintegrated and no proper mechanisms to unity such family. Likewise, poor orphaned families are also likely to end up to the street due to the lack of parental guidance and counseling. Moreover, family relatives thirsty on family properties left children with no choice apart from joining the street life because they are left poor with no any other means of survival. Hence, irresponsible relatives as a social system contribute to child streetism.

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