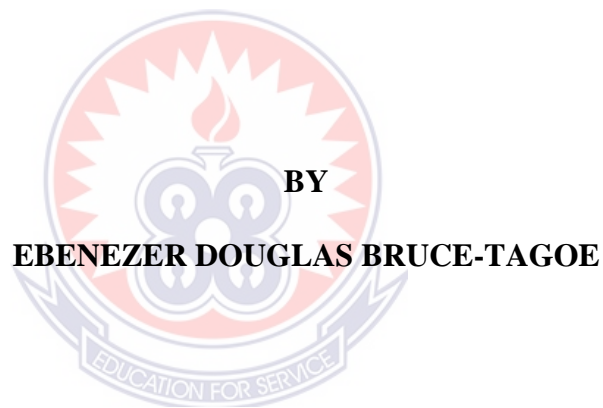


**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**Lived experiences of street youth in Ashiaman Municipality of Greater  
Accra Region**



**A thesis in Department of Counseling Psychology,  
Faculty of Applied Behavioral Sciences in Education, submitted to the  
school of Graduate Studies, in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the award of the degree of  
Master of Philosophy  
(Counseling Psychology)  
in the University of Education, Winneba**

**JULY 2024**

## DECLARATION

### Candidate's Declaration

I, Ebenezer Douglas Bruce-Tagoe declare that this dissertation, except for citations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and that it has not been submitted either in part or whole for a degree elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature: ..... Date: .....

### Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this dissertation was supervised in accordance with guidelines on supervision of dissertation as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

Prof. Theresa Antwi (Supervisor)

Signature: .....

Date: .....

## **DEDICATION**

To my wife, Mrs. Gladys A. Bruce-Tagoe  
and children, Samuel, Selma, Simone and Selwyn.



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I am sincerely grateful to Prof. Theresa Antwi, my supervisor for making time off her busy schedules to see me through this work. The necessary guidance, patience, commitment and useful suggestions they gave me contributed in making this thesis a great success.

I am much indebted to Dr. Lilian Ama Afun, Prof. Patricia M. Amos and Mr. Prosper Cephas Cudjoe Hiagbey for their immense support towards the successful completion of the work. I am equally grateful to Rev. Frank Quainoo for the encouragement and support. May God richly bless you all.



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## ABSTRACT

Ashiaman, one of the Municipal Assemblies in Greater Accra is being beleaguered by the problem of street youth. This study explored the lived experiences of street youth: paying particular attention to factors accounting for the phenomenon, experiences, risk factors of street life and the coping mechanism and resilience of street youth. The interpretive research approach was adopted and data were collected from 25 selected street youth through purposive sampling technique. Thematic analysis was conducted to explore the lived experiences of streetism. The phenomenon of streetism is thriving in Ashiaman due to social acceptance given to street youth. Many of the youth are also forced to the streets due to poverty so as to provide for their basic needs. Youth streetism has also gained grounds because these youth come under peer-influence. Recreational adventure also compels youth to the street to experience street life. The experiences of street youth in Ashiaman are full of challenges on meeting their basic needs of life. The risk factors of street living poses harm to street youth serving as a breeding ground for violent behaviors. Street youth are making efforts to address their challenges and risk factors. It is recommended that vocational training, reunion initiatives, and advocacy activities can help address the problem of street youth in Ashiaman.



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Background of the study

The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF, 2009; 2018) describes young people who dwell on the streets as “*children and youth in difficult circumstances.*” Globally, these groups are regarded as highly vulnerable (Oppong-Asante, 2016). Streetism, sometimes referred to as street living, denotes the lifestyle of children and youth who earn their livelihood on the streets, spending much of their time there while being deprived of essential needs such as security, nutrition, and hygiene. Crombach and Elbert (2014) describe streetism as a lifestyle where individuals spend most of their time living on the streets, struggling to survive while being denied basic needs such as food, hygiene, and safety. Appiah and Osei-Poku (2022) also affirm that streetism includes youth who live and work on the streets to sustain themselves.

Concerns have been raised in both academic and policy circles regarding the increasing number of children and adolescents adopting street life, particularly in developing contexts such as Ghana (Dankyi & Huang, 2022). Estimates from UNICEF (2018) suggest that more than 10 million young people across developing and developed nations live on the streets. Within Africa alone, close to 30 million youth were reported in 2019 to be street-dwelling (UNICEF, 2019). In Ghana’s urban centers, figures vary between 30,000 and 900,000 (AMA, 2014; MyJoyOnline, 2019; Oppong-Asante, 2019).

Large cities typically act as a magnet for disadvantaged youth — those experiencing family neglect, violence, displacement due to conflict, unemployment, or substance dependence (Obeng-Odoom & Jang, 2016; Chauke & Mudau, 2019; Quainoo, 2020). Life on the street often entails roaming, begging, or doing menial work to meet daily survival needs (Speak, 2019). These young people are usually concentrated in areas such as lorry stations, marketplaces, unfinished buildings, under bridges, and abandoned structures, where they live with minimal supervision (World Bank, 2012; UNICEF, 2018).

Streetism is a complex and escalating global problem, with affected youth facing exploitation, violence, incarceration, and in extreme cases, death (Salihu, 2019). For governments and social welfare systems, this issue presents one of the most difficult policy challenges (UNICEF, 2018; Oriji, 2018). Despite legal and institutional frameworks established in countries such as Ghana, enforcement has often been weak, leading to limited impact (Awudu, 2022).

In lower and middle-income contexts, factors such as dependency on external aid, economic challenges, and weak policy implementation have worsened the problem (Dutta, 2018). Governments and non-governmental agencies sometimes misrepresent the phenomenon by portraying street children only as victims of family failure or as threats to public order (Howard, 2017; Faulkner & Nyamutata, 2020). While streetism is often presented as evidence of poverty, institutional weakness, and erosion of family values (Van Raemdonck & Seedat-Khan, 2018), such perspectives

rarely reflect the actual lived realities of the youth themselves (Bessell, Siagian, & Bexley, 2020).

According to UNICEF (2018), there is limited research examining the daily lives of young people who live outside traditional family structures, indicating a strong need for additional empirical investigations. Their real-life experiences can provide a clearer and deeper understanding of streetism, contributing to effective policy and intervention strategies (Gabriel, Mirza, & Stewart, 2022). This study, therefore, explores the lived realities of street youth in Ghana, specifically within Ashiaman, to contribute to knowledge and policy directions.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Globally, scholarship on street youth has examined vulnerabilities, resilience, and the social dynamics that push them to the streets. De-Benitez (2011) conducted a global review of the causes and effects of youth homelessness, identifying poverty, family breakdown, and systemic neglect as key drivers. However, the study relied heavily on secondary sources, limiting its ability to capture the nuanced, localized realities of different cultural contexts.

Across Africa, streetism is closely linked with rapid urbanisation, economic inequality, and weak social support systems. In Nigeria, for example, youth are often compelled into informal labour due to unemployment and weak education systems. In South Africa, legacies of apartheid still restrict access to opportunities, pushing many into cycles of deprivation. In Kenya, the expansion of cities has resulted in overcrowding, poor housing, and exposure

to violence for street-dwelling youth. Studies such as Aptekar and Stoecklin (2014) highlight resilience among these populations but do not fully assess long-term interventions. Similarly, reports from the Consortium for Street Children (2020) emphasize the diversity of youth experiences across Africa, yet they offer limited detailed accounts reflecting the voices of the young people themselves. In Ghana, urbanization, poverty, and family disintegration remain major drivers. Kwankye, Anarfi, Tagoe, and Castaldo (2007) investigated unaccompanied child migration from northern Ghana to cities such as Accra and Kumasi, finding that poverty and lack of educational opportunities were major motivators. However, their work concentrated more on migration pathways than on the long-term lived experiences of youth once in urban environments.

Accra, being the nation's capital, presents unique risks for street youth. The city's rapid growth has created congested informal settlements where access to water, sanitation, and housing is poor. Youth face frequent harassment from law enforcement in marketplaces and bus terminals, while those from other cultural backgrounds struggle with integration. Despite laws and child protection policies, there is a shortage of localized interventions that respond to Accra's distinct urban dynamics.

Ashiaman, as a rapidly urbanising municipality close to Accra, mirrors these challenges. Yet, little empirical work has explored how street youth in this context navigate survival, cope with risks, and find resilience. This study therefore seeks to bridge that gap by examining their lived experiences, amplifying their voices, and informing policies rooted in their realities (Amoah et al., 2019; Oppong-Asante, 2019).

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

Existing research on street youth has predominantly focused on their engagement in risky behaviours, often portraying these actions as the defining characteristics of their lives. This narrow focus tends to reduce the complexities of their experiences to mere negative behaviours, overlooking the broader social, economic, and personal factors that shape their lives. Such an approach not only misrepresents street youth but also reinforces harmful stereotypes, which can lead to their marginalization in both society and policy-making. In the context of Ghana, where street youth face a range of challenges, including poverty, lack of access to education, and limited employment opportunities, these stereotypes can perpetuate exclusion from crucial public services, resources, and interventions aimed at improving their circumstances.

The current study aimed to address these gaps by offering a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the lived experiences of street youth in Ashiaman, Ghana. Rather than merely focusing on their behaviours, this research sought to explore the broader context of their lives, the underlying reasons for their street involvement, and the meanings they attach to their experiences. By doing so, it emphasizes the need for a more thoughtful and empathetic approach to evaluating street youth, one that recognizes their humanity and resilience rather than reducing them to their circumstances or actions.

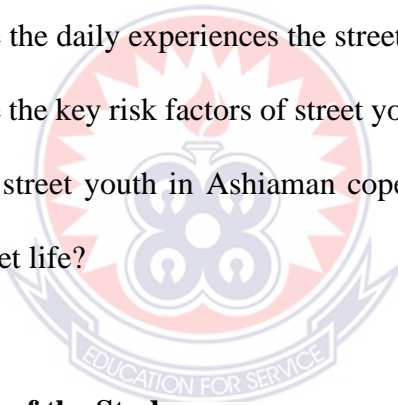
The aim of this study is to explore the lived experiences of street youth in Ashiaman in the Greater-Accra Region of Ghana. Specifically, this study sought to delve into the following:

1. To find out factors accounting for the phenomenon of street youth in Ashiaman.
2. To ascertain the lived experiences of street youth in Ashiaman.
3. To explore the risks and contributing factors that lead young people in Ashiaman to live on the streets.
4. To identify the coping mechanisms resilience of street youth in their street life

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

The following specific questions were examined.

1. What factors account for the phenomenon of streetism in Ashiaman?
2. What are the daily experiences the street youth face in Ashiaman?
3. What are the key risk factors of street youth in Ashiaman encounter?
4. How do street youth in Ashiaman cope and maintain resilience in their street life?



#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study contributes on multiple levels. At the policy level, it offers recommendations for context-sensitive interventions tailored to the needs of street youth. At the practice level, it provides guidance for social workers, counsellors, and NGOs working with marginalized youth populations. Academically, it fills a gap in Ghanaian literature by presenting qualitative data that capture lived realities often absent in survey-based studies.

Beyond these, the study empowers street youth by amplifying their voices and legitimizing their experiences. Participation in research may affirm their

sense of agency and strengthen their resilience, while the findings can inform advocacy to challenge prevailing stereotypes (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

### **1.6 Delimitation of the Study**

The study focused exclusively on the Ashiaman Municipality. The target population was street youth aged 15–24 years who had lived on the streets for at least six months. This criterion ensured that participants had enough experience of street life to provide rich and reliable insights. A total of 25 youth participated, the majority maintaining ties with parents or guardians, while a minority were fully detached from family support.

### **1.7 Definition of Terms**

The definitions of the key terms, as they are operationalized in this study, are provided below:

Homelessness refers to a situation where individuals lack a stable and permanent place to sleep at night. It covers those who reside temporarily in shelters, transitional facilities, or in spaces that are unsuitable or unsafe for human habitation (HUD, 2009).

**Lived Experiences:** refers to the firsthand, direct experiences of individuals as they go through events and situations in their lives.

**Risk Factors:** are conditions or variables associated with a higher likelihood of negative outcomes. For street youth, these can include family conflict, substance abuse, and exposure to violence

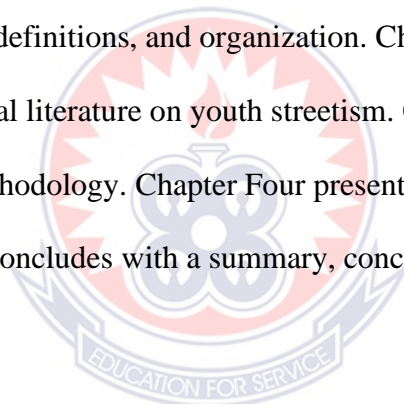
**Street Youth:** These are young people in their late adolescent or early adulthood, ranging in age from 15 to 24 years. Street-involved youth devote

most of their daily activities to life on the streets, using it as their primary space for work, social interaction, and survival. They may be homeless, runaways, or otherwise marginalised, and they frequently engage in street-related activities to survive.

**Survival Strategies:** are the methods and means by which street youth cope with their living conditions. These strategies can include begging, informal work, substance use, and engagement in illegal activities.

### **1.11 Organization of the Study**

The thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter One provides the background, problem statement, objectives, research questions, significance, delimitations, definitions, and organization. Chapter Two reviews theoretical and empirical literature on youth streetism. Chapter Three describes the research methodology. Chapter Four presents and discusses the findings. Chapter Five concludes with a summary, conclusions, and recommendations



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Overview

This chapter reviews key theories and scholarly works on youth streetism, focusing on its definitions, categories, contributing factors, and challenges. The discussion provides both theoretical grounding and empirical evidence to contextualize the lived experiences of street youth in Ashiaman.

#### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

This research utilizes Social System Theory, alternatively known as Social Function Theory, as its primary theoretical framework. This perspective, rooted in the works of Émile Durkheim and later expanded by structural functionalists, emphasizes how different institutions within society work together to maintain stability and social order (Durkheim, 1984/1997; Fisher, 2010; Harper, 2011).

According to this theory, society is made up of interconnected sub-systems, such as the family, government, religion, and the economy, which must function harmoniously for social stability to be maintained (Isajiw, 2000; Weitz, 2007). A disturbance in one sub-system inevitably affects the functioning of others. In this sense, society is likened to a living organism where each part contributes to the survival of the whole.

In the Ghanaian context, two key sub-systems are particularly relevant: the family and the governance system. The family serves as the foundational setting where individuals first acquire social values, norms, and behaviour, nurturing, and protection. The family is tasked with providing fundamental

needs such as food, clothing, shelter, and education, as well as teaching social values and discipline. This responsibility is emphasized in Ghana's Children's Act 560 (1998), the Child and Family Welfare Policy, and the Child Rights Protection Act (2015), which outline the family's role in protecting children and youth.

When families fail to meet these expectations, the government is expected to intervene by creating protective policies and social welfare structures (Republic of Ghana, 1992 Constitution, Article 28). The governance sub-system provides legal and institutional frameworks to ensure that vulnerable youth are not left to survive on their own.

At the same time, Social System Theory acknowledges external factors — especially the economy — as critical influencers of sub-systems. For instance, poverty and unemployment weaken both family structures and state interventions, often driving children into street life (Harper, 2011).

Thus, within Ashiaman, the effective functioning of family, governance, and economic sub-systems is crucial to addressing youth streetism.

## **2.2 The Social Capital Theory**

The study also draws on Social Capital Theory, widely associated with Coleman (1988, 1990). Coleman defined social capital as “*resources embedded within relationships that facilitate certain actions or outcomes that would otherwise be unattainable*” (1988, p. S98). Unlike financial or human capital, social capital is relational — it resides in networks of trust, reciprocity, and obligation.

Within the family, social capital describes the nature of interactions between parents and children, including the time, attention, and guidance provided (Coleman, 1990). Strong parental involvement fosters trust, discipline, and the transfer of human capital (education, skills). Conversely, when family ties are weak, social capital diminishes, making children more likely to leave home and live on the streets. Hagan and McCarthy (1997) further applied this theory to delinquency, arguing that deficits in family and community social capital are linked to youth homelessness and criminal behaviour. Later, Wright, Cullen, and Miller (2001) showed that families that invest time and effort into their children build intergenerational trust, reducing the likelihood of deviant behaviour.

In the Ghanaian setting, Social Capital Theory helps explain why some youth choose the streets. A lack of family or community support, combined with weak institutional safety nets, leaves young people with minimal resources to rely on. Streetism can therefore be understood not only as a result of poverty but also of inadequate social capital.

### **2.3 The Concept of Lived Experience**

In phenomenological studies, the expression *lived experience* is frequently employed to describe knowledge derived from individuals' direct encounters with their world to describe knowledge gained through *direct, first-hand engagement* with life situations, rather than through secondary reports (Chandler & Munday, 2011). Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) note that lived experiences are both objective (based on factual events) and subjective

(based on personal interpretations), meaning that two individuals may interpret similar experiences differently.

For marginalized groups, lived experience provides critical insights into how they navigate survival, relationships, and identity (van Manen, 1990). In the context of street youth, lived experiences capture more than just the risks; they include how youth perceive their own challenges, strategies, and moments of resilience.

UNICEF (2005) introduced the term “*youth at risk*” to refer to disadvantaged urban youth likely to end up in street life, exposed to vulnerabilities such as substance abuse, violence, and school dropout. Understanding their lived experiences goes beyond identifying problems — it uncovers how they make sense of their circumstances and how those circumstances shape identity, agency, and resilience.

#### **2.4 The Concept of Streetism**

Streetism, according to Ennew (2003), refers to the ways young people adapt and sustain themselves within the street environment. Aptekar and Stoecklin (2014) argue that streetism is not just about homelessness, but also about survival strategies, coping mechanisms, and informal economic activities.

Street youth are typically categorized into two groups:

Youth on the street those who work or spend much of the day on the street but return home to families at night.

Youth of the street those who both live and work on the street, with the street serving as their permanent home (Ayuku et al., 2004).

Both categories highlight the complex realities of streetism, which often involves unstable family ties, poverty, and exposure to social risks.

## **2.5 The Concept of Youth Streetism**

In the Ashiaman municipality, the persistence of youth streetism can be understood through the interaction of three key social subsystems: family, governance structures, and civil society organizations. Families are the primary unit of protection and nurturing, responsible for education, care, and basic needs. When they fail in these roles, young people are more likely to turn to the streets for survival. Governance systems play a central role by establishing and enforcing child protection laws such as the Children's Act (1998) and international conventions ratified by Ghana. These provide a framework for ensuring youth welfare, although weak enforcement remains a challenge.

Civil society groups, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), advocacy organizations, and faith-based institutions, act as intermediaries when families and government systems fail. They provide humanitarian support, training, and advocacy to reduce vulnerabilities. As an "open system," Ashiaman is also influenced by external factors such as economic hardship, unemployment, and national policy gaps, which affect the functioning of these subsystems.

## **2.6 The Youth in the Ghanaian Context**

In Ghanaian society, the family continues to serve as the central and most essential social institution, even though it is increasingly challenged by rapid social transformations. While family structures differ across ethnic groups, there are shared cultural values that shape the Ghanaian family system (Salm & Falola, 2002). The structure is hierarchical, with elders occupying the highest position of authority and the youth at the base. Roles and responsibilities are assigned according to age, gender, and social standing, which determine the contributions expected of each member (Nukunya, 2003). As individuals transition through the stages of childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age, their roles and social expectations evolve accordingly (Salm & Falola, 2002).

The process of socialization places important cultural and economic demands on the youth. Young people are expected to learn from adults by observing and engaging in activities that reinforce communal values and moral norms, which contribute to their intellectual, social, and physical development (Nukunya, 2003). Economically, adolescents aged 15–16 are encouraged to support the household by taking on responsibilities such as domestic chores, livestock rearing, and running errands. By the time they are between 17 and 23 years, they begin to participate in adult roles, though often in limited ways, as part of the preparation for independent livelihood (Nukunya, 2003).

Beyond these cultural expectations, Ghana has demonstrated commitment to safeguarding children and youth by ratifying several international conventions, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. In line with these obligations, Ghana has enacted legislation such as the 1992 Constitution, the Penal Code, the Children's Act (Act 560), the Juvenile Justice Act (2003), as well as national family and child welfare policies. These frameworks are designed to uphold the welfare, development, and protection of children. Moreover, state institutions with trained personnel have been established to safeguard children's rights, health, and overall well-being, thereby ensuring their growth and security.

## **2.7 Categories of Street youth**

Researchers seeking to understand youth streetism have often classified street children into categories such as “youth-on-the-street,” “youth-of-the-street,” generational street youth, and those who are entirely abandoned or neglected. These categories are explained below.

### ***2.7.1 Youth -on-the Street***

Youth-on-the-street are those who spend their days working on the streets but return home afterward. They maintain connections with their families, though they often display behaviors considered inappropriate by society. Some attend school and retain a sense of family belonging; however, they may turn to street life due to factors such as economic hardship, truancy, and peer pressure (Hatloy & Huser, 2005).

### ***2.7.2 Youth-of-the street***

Youth-of-the street are the category of street youth who live, eat and sleep in the street. The street is practically the home of these categories of street children (Ayuku et al., 2004).



### ***2.7.3 Generational street youth***

Youth-of-the-street are those whose parents live and work on the streets, leading them to grow up in the same environment. Hatloy and Huser (2005) note that children born on the streets often continue to live and survive there, sometimes engaging in activities such as begging and theft to meet their basic needs. Apt (2004) adds that this group of street youth typically enters street life at a very young age, sometimes as early as three or four years old.

### ***2.7.4 Abandoned youth***

According to Patrick-Brick (2002), abandoned street youth are those who have been completely neglected by their families. They survive on the streets without any support, relying entirely on themselves. Research shows that abandoned street youth often form close bonds with one another, and over time, they may transition between categories such as adolescent-on-the-street and youth-of-the-street, and vice versa (Malindi, 2014; Bhukuth & Ballet, 2015).

## **2.8 Conceptualizing youth Streetism in the Ashiaman Municipality**

The causes of streetism are often described in terms of push factors (forces that drive children away from home) and pull factors (conditions that attract them to street life).

Family-related causes: Parental death, neglect, abuse, and family breakdowns are major drivers (Adeyemi & Oluwaseum, 2012; Kopaka, 2000). UNICEF (2006) reported that children subjected to neglect or physical and verbal abuse are more likely to leave home. For some, teenage

pregnancy or substance use leads to rejection by families, forcing them onto the streets (WHO, 2000; Aptekar, 1988).

**Poverty:** Economic hardship compels many families to push their children into informal work such as carrying loads, begging, or hawking (Muchini, 2001; Hecht, 2003). As the World Health Organization (2000) noted, children are frequently forced to earn income in urban centers as a direct result of household poverty.

**Peer influence:** Adolescents often follow friends into street life, drawn by the appeal of freedom or opportunities for income (Hatloy & Huser, 2005).

**Urbanization and migration:** The growth of cities such as Accra, Kumasi, and Tamale offers perceived opportunities, pulling children and youth from rural areas. However, the lack of affordable housing and jobs leaves many stranded in precarious conditions (Abotchie, 2012; Adeyemi & Oluwaseun, 2012).

**Service-based pull factors:** Mangesha (2001) observed that NGOs sometimes unintentionally draw more children to the streets by providing free food, shelter, and health care, which make street life appear more sustainable.

**Large family size:** Studies indicate that when households are large and income is unstable, children may be forced onto the streets to contribute to survival (Abebe, 2009).

## **2.9 Factors Contributing to Streetism**

Street youth face multiple risks that undermine their physical, social, and emotional well-being:

**Health challenges** — Poor access to sanitation, healthcare, and nutrition exposes them to infections, drug abuse, and sexual exploitation (Vuvor & Mensah, 2019).

**Violence and abuse** — Many experiences physical assault, sexual harassment, and exploitation either from peers, older adults, or even law enforcement (Aptekar & Heinonen, 2003).

**Stigma and discrimination** — Street youth are often labelled as delinquents or criminals, making reintegration into schools or communities difficult (Cavazzoni, Fiorini, & Veronese, 2023).

**Economic marginalization** — Without education and skills, they are confined to informal jobs such as truck pushing, begging, or hawking, which provide little security (Motazedian et al., 2020).

## **2.10 Coping Mechanisms and Resilience**

Despite these challenges, many street youth develop survival strategies to cope with their circumstances. These include:

**Social networks:** Relationships with peers provide support systems, though they may also encourage risky behaviour (Malindi & Molahlehi, 2020).

**Adaptation and resilience:** Some develop strong independence, entrepreneurial skills, or self-protection mechanisms as ways of navigating urban life (Nyumayo et al., 2022).

Engagement with NGOs and authorities: Although sometimes inconsistent, NGOs and social workers often provide critical assistance such as temporary shelter or vocational training.

Spirituality and faith: Many rely on religious practices for psychological comfort and a sense of hope (Gabriel, Mirza, & Stewart, 2022).

UNICEF (2017) observes that street youth typically lead unstable and transient lives, lacking access to food, healthcare, safe shelter, and education. They are often forced to live in degrading conditions, exposed to physical violence, and deprived of the protection and services that should safeguard their well-being. Society frequently treats them as *outsiders* rather than as young people in need of nurturing and support. As a result, they experience both spatial and social exclusion, facing multiple forms of marginalization, powerlessness, and social control. Many are also victims of trafficking, sexual exploitation, and forced labour by unscrupulous adults.

Ojelabi and Oyewole (2012) explain that street youth remain among the most marginalized populations because they are casualties of poverty, weak economic growth, declining traditional family values, and exposure to domestic violence and abuse. According to their findings, the harsh environments and lifestyle choices of street life increase vulnerability to substance use, which negatively impacts physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Discrimination, denial of social services, and health risks are daily realities for this group.

Street youth are also subjected to **violence at the hands of law enforcement and community members**. Reports highlight extrajudicial killings, beatings, torture, and harassment by both state and private security agencies (Aptekar & Heinonen, 2003). These experiences leave them with deep physical injuries and psychological trauma. Exposure to unsafe environments increases vulnerability to sexual abuse, drug dependence, and in some cases, involvement in crime as a means of survival (Motazedian et al., 2020).

According to Van Rooyen and Hartel (2002), street youth face a wide range of risks including malnutrition, exploitation, social deprivation, lack of education, and exposure to hazardous work environments. Ironically, institutions expected to protect them — such as families, communities, and police — sometimes contribute to their abuse. Girls in particular may be coerced into prostitution, leaving them vulnerable to sexual violence and sexually transmitted infections (Van Rooyen & Hartel, 2002).

West (2003) adds that street youth are often stigmatized, labelled as criminals, and ostracized by communities. This rejection creates an environment of hostility, leaving them fearful of being arrested or forcefully returned to the same families or communities they originally fled. Without addressing the conditions that drove them away in the first place, reintegration efforts often fail, leading to repeated cycles of escape and return. Anarfi (1997) also found a strong association between streetism and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), noting that many street youth are sexually active yet lack awareness of safe sexual practices. Girls, in particular, often engage in transactional sex as a means of survival.

Similarly, Hecht (2003) highlights that the breakdown in relationships between street youth and major social institutions — family, education, and health systems — further deepens their marginalization. Continuous exposure to harsh environments increases the likelihood of drug use, undermining social, physical, and mental well-being. Flynn (2008) and Guernina (2004) reinforce this by noting that street youth live with daily threats including violence, rape, sexual exploitation, drug abuse, HIV/AIDS, hunger, and even death.

### **2.11 Coping Mechanisms and Resilience**

Street youth respond to these harsh conditions with various coping strategies. Many engage in risky practices such as drug use, which may provide temporary relief but worsen health vulnerabilities and increase exposure to abuse (Agnelli, 1986; John, Philip, & Taru, 2019). For others, working on the street through menial jobs or informal trade becomes the only way to sustain themselves and their families.

Resilience goes beyond mere survival. According to the Preventing Violence Across the Lifespan (PreVAiL) Research Network (2010), it is a dynamic process in which psychological, social, environmental, and biological factors work together to help an individual, at any stage of life, develop, sustain, or restore mental health despite facing adversity.” Similarly, Condly (2006, p. 213) stresses that resilience should be understood as *“the interaction of a person with trauma or a toxic environment in which success, as judged by*

*societal norms, is achieved by virtue of the person's abilities, motivations, and support systems."*

Riley and Masten (2005) argue that resilience must be viewed as contextual, changing across time and circumstances. Instead of oversimplifying resilience as a fixed trait or merely the absence of deviant behaviour, researchers are encouraged to study **how resilience occurs** that is, the social and psychological mechanisms that allow youth to cope with adversity and attempt improvements in their lives.

For street youth in Ashiaman, resilience may manifest in peer support networks, resourcefulness in finding daily income, reliance on spirituality, or the capacity to endure rejection while still maintaining hope for better opportunities. These mechanisms highlight their agency, even within conditions of extreme vulnerability.

## **2.12 Chapter Summary**

This chapter presents a thorough review of the literature, drawing on a range of secondary sources, including books, government documents, published reports, academic journals, and news articles relevant to the research topic. The review centers on examining key concepts such as streetism in Ghana, the broader understanding of streetism, and youth streetism in particular. Additionally, the review explored the different categories of street youth.

Additionally, the literature review explored youth streetism from a global standpoint, considering cases in Latin America, Africa, and

specifically Ghana. This chapter investigated the root causes of youth streetism, the challenges faced by young people living on the streets, and the coping strategies they employ to survive. Additionally, the review looked into international efforts aimed at addressing the phenomenon of youth streetism. It also examined the national policies implemented in Ghana to tackle youth streetism. Moreover, the chapter discussed the common strategies utilized to address youth streetism.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Overview**

This chapter describes in detail the methodology used in this study. First, the philosophical paradigm underpinning this study was explained and the research and strategies for inquiry and data analysis were described. The population, sampling technique, sample size and data collection methods were clearly spelt out. The chapter ends with a discussion on the ethical considerations upheld in this study.

#### **3.1 Research Paradigm**

Research paradigm is the worldview of the researcher. There are many research paradigms that can underpin a study; however, the relevance of a selected research paradigm depends on the research questions and the data to be collected (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The paradigm that underpins this study was the interpretative research paradigm. Interpretive philosophical paradigm argues that reality can be socially constructed (Spencer et al., 2014). This is based on the notion that reality is shaped by the social interactions, relationships, and experiences of social actors (Berryman, 2019). According to the authors of this paradigm social reality is not singular or objective, but rather multi-layered and complex based on the position of the social actor (Creswell et al., 2017).

#### **3.1 Research Approach**

Based on the philosophical paradigm employed in this study, the researcher adopts a qualitative approach. A qualitative research approach

focuses on gathering and interpreting descriptive data in order to gain insight into human behaviour and social contexts. In qualitative research, in-depth interviews are excellent tools to deeply explore participants' feelings, beliefs and meanings on a subject (Saunders et al., 2017).

Qualitative approach is usually linked to fields such as philosophy, anthropology, history and sociology, with the aim of focusing on the systematic explanation and analysis of phenomenon, however in recent times it has been attracting more attention in the field of psychology. This is because qualitative helps the researcher to understand a phenomenon that has not been widely explored.

### **3.2 Research Design**

The design used for the study was phenomenology. As a qualitative research methodology phenomenology seeks to understand and describe the lived experiences of individuals from their own perspective. This method is appropriate as it aims to uncover the essence of the experiences of street youth in Ashiaman and the meanings they attach to these experiences.

### **3.3 Study Population**

The target population for this study included youth living on the streets in Ghana. Streetism has gradually caught up in cities across the country such as Accra, Kumasi and Tamale. In Greater-Accra Region, an average of 2 to 7 youth at every traffic light engage in either begging for alms, assisting the elderly or disabled to beg for money, or engage in some form of trade during school hours. Based on these reports the present study focused on Accra, particularly Ashiaman. In Accra, a large number of street

youth can be found in busy market centres such as Ashiaman. Ashiaman is a large town in Greater-Accra Region located in the Southern part of Ghana. According to the 2021 population census it had a population of 208, 060 people (Population Census, 2021).

### **3.4 Sample Size**

With total youth population of 66,673 of Ashiaman, 2,430 were street youth (Ashiaman Municipal Assembly Medium-Term Development Plan 2018-2021) and this 2,430 served as the target population. Out of the target population, about 700 were accessible because they often had some common places like around St. Peter's Methodist where they gathered to fellowship, and around the Night Market where they normally gathered after the stress of the day to have fun. Out of the accessible population, the sample of participants used for this study was 25 based on data saturation. The aim for qualitative studies is not to generalize to a population and thus reaching saturation rather than the sample size determination remains a focus for qualitative research (Castro et al., 2010).

### **3.5 Sampling Technique**

The purposive sampling technique was used for this study. The purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling that allows the researcher to select participants with a specific purpose in mind, to identify a specific sample with a particular characteristic. This sampling technique affords the researcher the opportunity to identify respondents who are particularly informative about the research questions of this study. Based on the purpose of the study the researcher selected participants based on specific criteria,

such as age (15-24 years), duration of time spent on the streets (at least six months), and willingness to participate. This allowed the researcher to select a diverse range of participants for varied experiences and perspectives.

### **3.6 Interview Guide**

A face-to-face interview was conducted for all the participants. An interview refers to a communication event in which the interviewers and participants are engaged in interaction and exchange of information through various channels of communication and codes (Creswell, 2014). The interview allows the researcher to embrace various topics since unanticipated information emerges from people's experiences rather than preconceived ideas as associated with the questionnaire (Mattingly, 2001). Unlike survey, interviews are flexible, interactive and continuous rather than already prepared answers. In this research, in order to obtain the required qualitative data for this study, participants were engaged in an in-depth interview focusing on the objectives of the study with the assistance of an interview guide and a maximum time of 20 minutes per a participant.

In addition, snowball sampling technique was used to aid the researcher in reaching subsequent samples for the study. Snowball sampling is a qualitative, non-probability sampling strategy that depends on participant referrals to identify additional respondents. In this approach, an initial group of participants introduces others within their social circles who also meet the study criteria, thereby creating a chain or "snowball" effect (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). The method is particularly valuable when dealing with hidden, marginalized, or hard-to-access populations, since it

allows the researcher to reach individuals who might otherwise remain invisible to conventional sampling strategies. Despite its usefulness, the technique has limitations. Because referrals often occur within the same social networks, the resulting sample may lack diversity, and the findings may not fully represent the wider population. Nonetheless, snowball sampling remains a practical tool for exploring groups whose members share specific traits or lived experiences.

### **3.7 Reliability and Validity**

The principles of reliability and validity are not only unique to quantitative studies but are also of significance in qualitative studies, albeit having different approaches. Qualitative studies require methodological rigor to ensure the trustworthiness of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The trustworthiness of the study was ensured through the provision of a detailed descriptions of the research context and participants to give clarity on the applicability of the findings. A detailed audit trail of the research process, including decisions made and changes to the research design were maintained. Researcher ensured that findings for the study were shaped by participants' experiences and not researcher biases. Reflexive journals were kept alongside peer debriefing after data collection.

### **3.8 Data Collection Procedure**

An interview guide was employed to collect data from youth involved in streetism. Initially, five participants were identified with the assistance of organizations addressing youth streetism. Consent forms were used to obtain permission: for participants under 18, consent was sought from relatives when accessible, and for those without relatives, the approval of guardians or leaders acting in a parental role was obtained. Participants aged 18 and above provided their own consent. The initial participants also referred others for inclusion in the study. Data collection occurred at the convenience of each participant, and any individual wishing to withdraw at any point was allowed to do so. The researcher ensured transparency and maintained participants' privacy and confidentiality throughout the process.

### **3.9 Data Collection and Analysis**

The study employed interviews as the primary method for collecting qualitative data from participants. This approach allowed the researcher to gain detailed and in-depth insights into the topic of interest. The responses from the interview were first transcribed verbatim and then themes and sub-themes generated with the use of the thematic analysis approach on NVivo. Here, transcribed data were be categorized into major themes and interpretations drawn from them.

Specifically, the responses from the interview were be promptly transcribed and sorted into various categories and labeled with various terms and themes for easy processing of the data. To ensure the confidentiality of participants, the data were anonymized through the use of codes. Each

participant's verbatim transcript was assigned a unique identifier, ranging from SY1 to SY25. These codes were then used throughout the analysis to organize responses and to trace emerging themes without revealing participants' identities. The categorization was then used to generate basic themes corresponding to the objectives of the study. This was followed by a detailed narration of all the raw field data into a coherent data report.

Analytical discussions of the research findings begun at this stage with the view to convey the detailed analysis of the data. This phase involved an in-depth discussion of the findings using the main themes identified earlier. Further, the data was organized into sections which include specific illustrations and various perspectives by other researchers that coincide with the issues under discussion. Also, appropriate quotations from research participants were cited. The final phase of the analysis focused on the presentation of personal analytical interpretation of the research findings which also included personal opinions and judgments of the meaning of the data, the lessons and conclusions drawn.

### **3.10 Ethical Issues**

In any research work, there are a number issues that must be given attention in the area of ethics. The violation of any of these ethical issues is not acceptable and may render the entire study not credible. Ethical considerations are the rules of conduct that must be applied professionally in research works. It involves the principles and guidelines that clarify the conditions under which the research would be conducted. The understanding of ethics is not a study of theoretical knowledge but includes an understanding of the applicability of

ethics to real world situations. In this study, some of the important ethical issues was in relation to the research design and data collection.

### ***3.10.1 Assurance of Confidentiality and Anonymity***

The need to safeguard and guarantee the identity of participants was assured. The researcher took the necessary steps to ensure anonymity and confidentiality by concealing the details of all participants. Such detail (names) was not collected for the study. It helped the researcher to gain the trust of the participants in the data collection process. Issues bothering on the participants' privacy are critical for the success of the study. The researcher satisfied all these requirements on the guidelines put in place for data collection. Ethically, sensitivity to all data collected and discussed at each stage of the study was prioritized.

### ***3.10.2 Informed Consent***



It is essential in research to ensure that participants are fully informed about the study in which they are invited to take part, enabling them to make knowledgeable decisions regarding their involvement. In this study, participants were provided with letters requesting their consent, which included key information such as the study's objectives, the anticipated nature of the discussions, and assurances of confidentiality. For street youth whose relatives were accessible, consent was obtained from the family before participation. In cases where relatives were not reachable, a leader among the youth was identified, and their consent was secured prior to including the participants in the study.

### **3.11 Limitations of the Study**

The qualitative nature of the study involved a relatively small sample size, which limit the diversity of experiences and perspectives captured. This could affect the comprehensiveness and representativeness of the findings. The study relies on self-reported data from street youth, which can be influenced by their current state of mind, memory recall, and personal biases. This subjectivity can impact the reliability and validity of the information gathered. The study captures experiences and perceptions at a specific point in time. Changes in the socio-economic environment, policies, or individual circumstances over time are not accounted for, which could affect the relevance of the findings in the future. Building trust and rapport with street children and youth can be challenging, and participants might withhold information or provide socially desirable responses.

### **3.12 Summary of Chapter**

This chapter described the methodology employed in this research study. Phenomenology was the design chosen as the framework for conducting the study. The target population for this study consisted of street youth and from Ashiaman where a sample size of 25 participants were used. The data collected was critically looked at and analyzed thematically. Furthermore, this chapter delved into the ethical considerations undertaken during the research.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.0 Overview**

The purpose of the study was to explore factors accounting for street living among the youth of Ashiaman, experiences of street living, and their coping mechanism. This chapter looks at the results of the fieldwork and the discussion of its implication on youth living on the streets of Ashiaman. The qualitative data was obtained from a sample size of 25 participants. The participants were street youth. These are young people living on the streets and may or may not maintain ties with their families. Demographic information was summarized through descriptive statistics, whereas the interview transcripts were examined using thematic analysis. This chapter is made up of two sections A and B. The first section is the discussion of demographic characteristics of the participants. The second section discusses issues pertaining to the research questions.

## 4.1 Demography of Participants

### 4.1.1 Background Data on Participants

The demographic data of the 25 participants who were interviewed included their sex, age, school attendance and living arrangement. The results from these bio data have been reported in Table 1. All these demographic data were considered to give readers a clear idea about the participants who were engaged in the study taking into consideration their level of maturity and experiences in street living.

*Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of participants*

SN	Variable	Frequency	(%)	Total (%)
A	<b>Sex</b>			
	Male	17	68	(25)100
	Female	8	32	
C	<b>Age of Student</b>			
	22 years old	6	24	(25)100
	19 years old	7	28	
	18 years old	8	32	
	16 years old	3	12	
	15 years old	1	4	
D	<b>School Attendance</b>			
	Yes	20	80	(25)100
	No	5	20	
	<b>Basic School</b>			
	9	7	28	
	8	16	64	
	7	2	8	
E	<b>Living Arrangement</b>			
	Home	5	20	(25)100
	Street	20	80	

Source: Fieldwork, 2024.

From Table 1, a greater percentage (68%) of the participants were males and 30.6% were females. This data is representative of the phenomenon in many parts of world where male street youth appear to be more than females (Weitz,

2007; UNICEF, 2018; Speak, 2019). This appears to suggest a growing sense of vulnerability mainly as they mature in age makes them resort to living from the street as a source of livelihood. Awusabo-Asare et al. (2006) agree that young people are easily attracted to the street when they are struggling to meet their needs. When these youth become adults, they find better livelihood than living from the street which makes them pull out of streetism (Anarfi 1997; Oduro 2012).

## 4.2 Main Data

### 4.2.1 Analysis of Data Relating to Research Questions

The section two of this chapter is dedicated to the presentation and discussion of the main data of this study. It is done according to theme and sub-themes for each of the research questions. In all, data on four research questions have been analyzed and discussed. Table 2 shows emerging themes and sub-themes from the data in relation to the research questions.

*Table 2: Emerging Themes*

S N	Research Questions	Themes	Sub-themes
1	What factors account for the phenomenon of street youth in Ashiaman?	Factors accounting for street youth in Ashiaman	Peer-influence Social acceptance Poverty Recreational adventure
2	What are the daily experiences and challenges faced by street youth in Ashiaman?	Experiences of street youth	Accommodation Health challenges Harsh weather conditions Unemployment and underemployment
3	What are the key risk factors that street youth in Ashiaman encounter?	Risk factors of street life	Violence and violent physical behaviors Sexual harassment and abuse

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			Theft Social stigma.
4	How do street youth in Ashaiman cope and maintain resilience in the face of the challenges of street life?	Coping mechanisms	Social Networks and Relationships Adaptation and Resilience Interactions with authorities and organizations Spiritual and Religious Practices Mental and Emotional Well-being

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### **4.3 Factors accounting for street youth in Ashaiman**

Research question one sought to find out the factors accounting for the phenomenon of street youth in Ashaiman.

Data for addressing this research question was collected from the interviews with participants. Responses to research question one elicited from interviewees reflected their personal insights, observation, life events, socio-economic conditions and community dynamics. The interview data was collected from all 25 participants. The views and submissions of the interviewees have been analyzed thematically. Four sub-themes came up from the interview data which describes the factors accounting for street youth in Ashaiman. The themes are peer-influence, social acceptance, poverty and recreational adventure. The detailed descriptions of these factors have been discussed extensively in the ensuing sections.

#### ***4.3.1 Peer-Influence***

Relationships among street youth has proven to be an undeniable factor that accounts for the phenomenon. Peer groups provide a sense of

communal and mutual support. Such groups are essential for survival, offering emotional support and sharing resources.

One of the interviewees had this to say:

*“Oh, it was my friends that told me about this job they are doing here. I decided to join them here” (SY 2).*

Another interviewee also added that

*“We come here as a group, with my friends, every day after school. On Saturday too we meet and come together” (SY 7).*

Still to buttress this point, an interviewee indicated that

*“I come here with my cousin to escort the blind as they beg for alms from cars [passengers] and people along the road. I have been getting money small” (SY 13).*

Majority of the interviewees intimated that they were influenced and urged by their friends into making a livelihood from the streets. The fundamental reason for them was to make some money through meaner jobs they engage in on the streets. For instance, one of them indicated that

*“We make money when we come here to buy the things we need and for school. That’s why we come here all the time” (SY 4).*

There are also those who were not directly influenced by someone talking to them but they saw other youth living and making money from the streets. They also decided to try it with the hope to improving their livelihood. For instance, one of the interviewees revealed that

*“... I came here on my own to earn some money. I do a lot of things like giving people directions, begging for money, carrying loads or even selling water” (SY 5).*

#### **4.3.2 Social acceptance**

Society appeared silent on the prevalence of youth living on the streets of Ashiaman. This was another sub-theme that emerged as a factor accounting for youth involved in streets living. The interview data revealed that some of the youth living on the streets of Ashiaman were influenced by the living conditions, demeanour and complacency of their parents or guardians. One of the interviewees had this to say:

*“I come here because my mother sells on the streets. So after school I come here every day till she goes back home at night.”*

Another had this to say: *“I live with my senior brother so when he comes here to work, I follow him here. I do sell some of his things for him” (SY 2).*

In responding to a further question on his brother view on living on the street, this is what he indicated:

*“it’s good and my brother is always happy that I am able to sell more. He always tells me that I will be a good sales person when I grow up” (SY 15).*

Social acceptance is also seen when families hand over troublesome youth relatives to the streets. When young people felt rejected by their parents/guardian, it led to misunderstandings that resulted in them leaving home to live on the streets. For example, a male interviewee shared how he ended up on the street:

*“I started ‘using’...erh I was doing weed. It was not serious at first oh. A friend of mine reported me to our teacher and my parents were called to the school. And my father started complaining and comparing with other children in the neighborhood and at school. I felt disrespected and what I don’t like is to be compared with others. I started staying late into the night and visiting the ghetto often and*

*the threats from my father didn't stop. So, one time one of my friends advised that we leave the town and seek greener pastures in Accra. That is how I got to Ashiaman, my friend's addiction got out of hand so he was sent to the hospital but I could not go back to our town. I ended up here. But I am planning of going back..." (SY 17)*

Another male interviewee shared that:

*"When poppy died, I moved in with my elder brother. My mommy died before poppy. I am the last born...when I got there were a few issues here and there. I became stubborn like that, I always having issues with brother and her wife. Like helping with house chores, doing my homework, studying. I was not helping. I will follow boys to do yahoo, yahoo, gaming, chacha..that kind of hard core life. One time he threatened to beat me...and that my brother I know him, if he gets angry is serious. So, one day after school I decided not to go back home again...That is how it all started. 'Street deɛ thug life nkoaa'" (SY 22).*

#### **4.3.3 Poverty**

The interview data revealed that poverty is another factor that accounts for youth living in the streets of Ashiaman. This factor is the commonest factor responsible for streetism generally. One of the interviewed participants intimated that

*"We don't have money so we come here to make something. Sometimes even food and water to drink is very difficult to get but when we come here, we get some money to buy food" (SY 8).*

Another had this to say: *"I came to support my mother because we don't have money to buy things like my clothes and books for school. So, when I come home from school, I sell on the streets with her" (SY 1).*

Similarly, another respondent shared how he came to Ashiaman in search of greener pastures to support his parents who were struggling financially to put food on the table.

*“I have been hustling on the street to take care of my siblings and my grandmother for the past 4 years. After completion of Junior High School (JHS), I left Somanya to Accra specifically to Ashiaman to be with my maternal grand-mother because life was hard for the family but my grandmother is aged and could not to provide for me so I took to the streets. As the first born I found...I have to find a way to support the family. I sell car dusters for my livelihood because my parents do not have the means to take care of me. I have to drop out of my school and hawk on the street to support my younger siblings. I hoping to get money so I can further my education” (SY 24).*

Poverty or financial challenges is a factor that push the youth to the streets. The respondents reported that their parents and caregivers were unable to provide their basic needs and see them through school. As such they had no choice than to move to the street to fend for their daily livelihoods. This indicates that young people are often aware when their parents face difficulties in meeting their daily needs. Consequently, they think they can come to the street and work to fend for themselves and even support their families.

#### **4.3.4 Recreational adventure**

Youth living on the streets of Ashiaman are pushed unto the street for a recreational adventure. This was another theme that emerged from the interview data on the factors accounting for youth living on the streets of Ashiaman. Recreational adventure is an attempt by the youth to find a recreational benefit on the streets. They perceived that there was a certain level of fun and play they derived from the streets that attracts them. So, for

many of the participants interviewed for the study, street living inured to them some recreational benefits.

One of the interviewees had this to say:

*“it was my friends who told me about the fun they are having here. They make a lot of money to buy whatever they want. So I decided to join them here too” (SY 1)*

One the participants interviewed intimated that:

*“when I was coming here, I was scared small but now everything is normal” (SY 6).*

Asking for further explanation on why he was scared when coming, the answer indicated the adventurous nature of whatever recreational value they claim to be getting. This was the response further question, why were you scared:

*“oh...It seems dangerous to me initially because of the cars and I was afraid of accident. Maybe I can be knocked down by a car” (SY 25).*

This concern of a possible accidents was a fear almost all the participants interviewed expressed.

#### **4.4 Experiences of street youth**

Research question two dealt with the experiences of street youth of Ashaiman. Exploring the experiences of youth living on the streets of Ashaiman revealed several interrelated sub-themes that capture the complexity and challenges of their lives.

The interview data revealed the following challenges namely: health challenges, accommodation, sexual abuse, physical attacks and others-cases.

Although there were remarkable differences in their experiences, it was evident that there were some similarities in their experiences.

#### **4.4.1 Accommodation**

It was realized that the major challenge street youth face in Ashiaman is accommodation. In the interview with one female participant on the street of Ashiaman, this is what she had to say:

*“... I am fine in my movement during the day, because everything I want to get I have them in every means, but when night comes, I feel worried because I don't have a good place to sleep...” (SY 23).*

Another participant shared his experience as:

*“... I can go to any place I want and play around at any area I want but my worry is where to lay my head at night. Because if you sleep too deep someone can easily take your hard earn money”.*

Yet another interviewee intimated that *“you always have to buy new set of clothes or walk around with your belonging for fear of someone taking it”.*

When the interviewer inquired how they cope with accommodation when it rains, this is what one interviewee indicated: *“We all worry about the rainy days. The heat is relatively better because we sleep in front of shops and in open spaces, so when it begins to rain, there is wahala” (SY 18).*

The above excerpts are a testament of the challenges experienced with streetism in Ashiaman. Even though they enjoy living on the street, they mentioned that because they do not have stable address, it becomes difficult to keep their belongings.

#### **4.4.2 Health challenges**

Another challenging experience living on the street had to do with their health. For instance, one female youth had this to say:

*“...it was tough at the beginning, although life was difficult back home. I had a place to sleep as a result sleeping on the bare floor resulted in body pains. I will complain of body pains and aches because I was not used to this kind of life. I was taking paracetamol and other pain killers until my body got used to it.”(SY 13).*

Another participant shared his experience:

*“I used to battle with skin rashes, eczema because I was not bathing regularly. Found it a bit expensive having to bath in public places. So, I could go days without bathing and this posed a lot of skin problems for me. But as I got used to the street and was serving one woman as a cleaner in her restaurant I could bath and use her soap for free so that things all have stopped for now” (SY 9).*

He added that:

*... I don't know for a fact but what I have heard, is that most of the street children have HIV and other STIs. Because they sleep around and do not use condom. Master eye asemoo...me de3 I don't do those things because the goal is to save money and go back to school. If a girl gets pregnant right now what will I do...so I dey gee paa” (SY 24).*

#### **4.4.3 Harsh Weather conditions**

One of the major risk of youth in the street is difficulty of finding a place to sleep. They are exposed to lack of shelter in the wet season. They sleep in overcrowded and in hygienically poor environment during the rainy season. These are some of the excerpts from the interview:

*“...Anytime it rains I am not able to sleep until morning, because the weather becomes very cold that it feels uncomfortable to sleep under that weather” (SY 11).*

One female participant mentioned that:

*“... I feel very bad and regret being on the street during the wet seasons” (SY 7).*

Youth in the street experience many risks being out there but most vulnerably is during harsh weather conditions.

#### **4.4.4 Unemployment and Underemployment**

The lack of stable employment opportunities for families forces the youth to engage in informal and often dangerous economic activities on the streets. Street youth are often exposed to various forms of violence, including physical abuse, and gang-related activities just to earn a living. Their vulnerability makes them easy targets for exploitation. Many street youth turn to substance abuse as a being able to take any meaner job offer.

#### **4.5 Risk factors of street life**

Young people living on the streets are exposed to several risk factors that are behavioral in nature. The analysis of interview data revealed some themes which are violence and violent physical behaviors, sexual harassment and abuse, theft and social stigma.

##### **4.5.1 Violence and Violent Physical Behaviors**

Aggressive behaviors particularly, physical aggression was found to be a common practice among street youth. One male participant shared his experience:

*“...yh! Street life is equal to thug life so if you don’t fasten your seat belt you will be cheated all the time. We have seniors and more experienced people on the street, sometimes they want to take advantage of the new ones. Me de3, I don’t allow...so in defense, I fight with them. One broke my head with a coke bottle but since then he’s realized that I can own up for myself, so that respect is there. He does not bully me anymore like the others” (SY 22).*

Another male had this say:

*“As for me I always have a pocket knife on me oo. If you want to show me ‘shege’, I go cut you right now. The street here de3 ei bi survival tactics. If I was able to survive life as a boy back home, then nobody can beat me. Even at age 12, I was made to slaughter a goat, even the very stubborn ones. Not knowing it was preparing me for the life down here” (SY 17).*

One participant also added:

*“... during my life leaving in the street, sometimes you will be sleeping and from nowhere people who are older and stronger than you, will come and beat you and take all the monies on you...” (SY 4).*

From the above narratives, it is evident that physical attack is mostly associated with dominance and survival. Most new comers are bullied and with time they turn to own up for themselves. They devise defense mechanisms in order to protect themselves on the street.

#### **4.5.2 Sexual harassment and abuse**

Sexual activities in the form of coercion, luring, abuse and survival are prevalent among street youth in Ghana. One female shared some sexual escapades on the street. She said:

*“when I used to work at one restaurant around Asenso Bar, my madam will ask me late in the night to go and get some items from a man. When I get there he will start touching me inappropriately, and I could not complain because my madam will get annoyed. After a while he began to have sex with me and will give me money. That is how I started trading my body for what I needed. I was making more money than what madam was giving me. So I said to myself why don't I leave and do my own thing” (SY 16).*

Another female participant with a 4-month baby had this to say:

*“Because I did not want to do drugs. I felt sleeping around was better. Unbeknownst to be it could result to other things that I did not think about. I felt I was having fun. At night my friends and I will dress up and stand at vantage point and you see...that is how we make money” (SY 21).*

One of the participant revealed how she nearly died on the street:

*“I had a boyfriend and I got pregnant for him. From that time, I didn’t see him again, so I aborted the child. Because I was in haste to do abortion I nearly died. ...Since from the time leaving on this street for almost 5 years, I have seen people who have died in the act of aborting” (SY 12).*

It is evident from the data that a strong link exists between sexual activities and recreational behaviors among street youth sampled in the study.

#### **4.5.3 Theft**

Many street youth have been accused of, and confessed to, being thieves. They are also victims of theft. Some only survive in the street by stealing to make money for themselves. People also steal from the street youth. The following are excerpt from the interview:

*“... I saved an amount of Gh 105.00 intended to buy shoes and a bag for myself. The money got missing the day I planned to buy them. Life is very bad be here” (SY 6).*

Another interviewee said that *“...fear always gripe me when we are sleeping at night, because our friends lose their belongings whiles at sleep” (SY 24).*

This risk has been the most vulnerable to street children in a way that it has made street youth to know how to bully people and take their money from them and also steal money from others.

#### **4.5.4 Social Stigma**

The research also revealed the street youth encounter problems of stigmatization. They suffer this stigma from market traders, the police, and their fellow street youth. For instance, one male child shared his experience:

*“... the way our clothes are mostly dirty on us, it makes the market traders always see us as thieves and bad people...”*

Another said that *“they always accuse us of stealing their goods, because always we are always around of them... Although not all of us are bad. We are seen as deviants, naughty and thieves and often treated with harshness. But some of us are here to hustle” (SY 15).*

One of the participants intimated that:

*“Because we live on the streets we are not accorded respect. Also, when we work for these market women they do not pay what is due as. Some will pay you in kind instead in cash. They can give you some leftover food or some rotten food stuff because they know you cannot complain and you need them to survive” (SY 9).*

One female shared:

*“They call us names because we live on the street. I once overheard one speaking in Ga to another market woman about me. She thought I did not understand but I pretended not to understand her. She was just lying about me...that I have done abortions and I sleep around. Meanwhile, those stories are lies. I cried the whole night. Since that day I have been careful around her but life must still go on” (SY 21).*

The findings from the above information clearly show that most of the participants suffer under the hands of market women, law enforcing agencies, and other street youth.

#### 4.6 Resilience and Coping Mechanism

Research question four handled the resilience and coping mechanisms of street youth. Though these street youth have difficult experiences and the risky factors on daily basis, they still manage to survive. Adverse life circumstances do negatively characterize street living and for these street youth in Ashiaman it is not uncommon to recognize very similar circumstances with entirely different reactions.

##### 4.6.1 Social Networks and Relationships

Street youth in Ashiaman try to relate to and maintain contact with people they think can help them cope with all the challenges and risky situations of their life. They also associate themselves with other street youth whom they find compatible, and other supportive adults. One of the participants indicated that:

*” ...My friend is called Evame, but I have many friends here. We learn from each other and encourage ourselves to be strong on the street. When I was seriously sick and without money they come together to help and I do same for them. They are my brothers and stay together. When I make it big one day, I will enjoy with them all” (SY 8).*

Another participant had this to say: *my best friend here always helps me to buy drugs from the pharmacy shop whenever am sick” (SY 13).* Some of these street youth love their friends because they feel they helped them when they fell sick. They know that none of them have their parents or relations on the street and they therefore try to help each other in times of need. One cannot but appreciate the strong support culture these young people on the street share. These are some of the evidences of their communal culture:

*“At first, when I came new and I did not know my way around...there*

*was an older guy who was also from the same village as me. So, he was more like my father on the street, that guy is very good. He will buy food for me and showed me around, protect me against others. That really helped me to stay on the street till I became independent” (SY 24).*

*“Sometimes we attend funerals of our friends because we are like brothers. When we get to the funeral grounds, Ahhh...we display paa to show support to our friend who is dead or bereaved” (SY 7).*

Street youth build social relationships on the street. They are able to function appropriately and effectively as they try to make sense of their own behaviors, reactions, emotions, intentions, needs, desires and beliefs and that of other people.

#### **4.6.2 Adaptation and Resilience**

The following are some ways by which street youth interviewed coped with health challenges on the street:

*” ...I always buy paracetamol tablet and take two whenever I have headache. I don't have health insurance or the means to go to the hospital. So I do my own first aid. It works all the same. Another participant had this to say: my best friend here always helps me to buy drugs from the pharmacy shop whenever am sick” (SY 8).*

A male participant also said:

*“At first, when I came new and I did not know my way around...there was an older guy who was also from the same village as me. So, he was more like my father on the street, that guy is very good. He will buy food for me and showed me around, protect me against others. That really helped me to stay on the street till I became independent” (SY 10).*

One female participant shared this:

*“I have asthma so I am always careful not get an attack. Because I don’t have enough money to buy an inhaler. I pray to God to keep me from any attack and that has helped me...I think God me” (SY 15).*

She added that:

*“Even though I have heard people talking about getting high...they say that could resolve my attacks. I have never explored that option, because I have seen how it has destroyed most of the children on the street. I am just careful and I pray and that has helped” (SY 15).*

One other said:

*“I am unable to work when I am menstruating, I just lie down. The pain killers don’t work I just have to bear with the pains till the end of my menses. I get friends to buy me food. Someone suggested that I take shisha. I have tried a couple of times but the pains still the same. I don’t feel right about it so I don’t do it anymore. There are so many advices out here and if you are not careful you will be led astray so I am very careful” (SY 15).*

#### **4.6.3 Interactions with authorities and organizations**

Street youth receive different forms of support from organizations, particularly Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Those who live close to NGO facilities often benefit from services offered at drop-in centers, which provide basic assistance and protection. For example, teenage mothers and pregnant girls reported that certain NGOs offer them help during pregnancy. One such organization is *Street Girl Aid (SGA)*, which provides antenatal and postnatal care to young mothers once they are identified and encouraged by officials to attend. In addition to health services, SGA supports girls in learning vocational skills such as sewing and hairdressing, equipping them with practical livelihoods that enable them to care for themselves and their children. One of the females had this to say:

*“When I pregnant, I couldn’t survive from the street so the NGO took me and support me till I gave birth. I was made to learn do beads. It has helped me just that I am not getting money from it like I expected” (SY 14).*

Another participant indicated that:

*“...my national health insurance card and that of my baby was provided by the NGO” (SY 21).*

These organizations visit the street of Ashiaman, make friends with the street youth and run educative and relief programmes for them. The girls select from the services provided by the organizations what they think can impact on their positive development.

One male participant shared that

*“I’m very happy to be here, because I have learnt many things since CAS found me on the street. They have provided a roof over my head, and I am currently in school through their provision. I am sure this will help me a lot” (SY 9).*

Another male participant shared a similar sentiment:

*“It is very good to be here, because I can see if I get this educational help for more than 4 years my life will change”. A female participant shared a similar story: “they have helped me and my friends a lot. When they approached us, I thought it was one of those promises but here I am learning a vocation... and I am very grateful for their support. I can now cut clothes and I happy” (SY 5).*

From the above excerpts it can be deduced that with the support of non-governmental organisations such as Catholic Action for Street (CAS) youth, the young people can live a fulfilling life. It was also evident from the data that street youth also receive assistance from various religious organisations

especially the church. This form of support ranged from pastoral counselling, care to the provision of basic needs. One female shared:

*“The church has been helpful...from time to time they come to the street and share food, give us clothes etc. There is this particular church, ermmm...I have forgotten their name.... they are very good paaa” (SY 11).*

Another participant had this to say:

*“They come here...yes especially on holidays. They bring us food items. I take some and take some to my siblings at home. One of the church people gave me their number to be calling if I need help but the number is lost mpo” (SY 2).* One Male participant said: “... I wish I can get someone who will always come and take me to church every time” (SY 1).

It is evident that from the above narratives those young people on the street had expectations of the church. They shared various testimonies of the assistance received and perceived to have received from the church.

Other governmental institutions and agencies provide services and amenities that contribute to improving the wellbeing of these street youth. Though it appears there more facilities to be provided by the government, the major has to do with accessibility to those basic facilities. The data from the interviews point to the fact that these street youth are sleeping in front of shops, kiosk, and lorry stations. While a few go back home after the day's work. Many of them believed that it was better to hustle on the street without the basic amenities from the government than to stay home hungry. They have to cope with hygiene and sanitation, access to portable water, toilet facilities, menstruation, and hygiene management, etc.

For instance, one male said that:

*“Most of us defecate in open spaces or on refuse dumps because of the cost of having to pay to use a public place of convenience” (SY 6).* Another male added that *“I go home every day to bath and ease myself, sanitation hasn’t really been my problem. But most of the boys do not bath. Some have bad body smell” (SY 21).*

One female added:

*“When am not menstruating I bath once a day if not...I don’t see the need to stress myself” (SY 9).*



#### ***4.6.4 Spiritual and Religious Practices***

The findings also revealed that spirituality and church involvement play an important role in the lives of some street youth. For many, participation in religious activities provides meaning, reassurance of salvation, and a sense of security and purpose. Faith gives them hope and confidence that their circumstances will improve. Several participants expressed the belief that one day God would bring someone into their lives who would support them. For instance, one respondent explained:

“My hope is that somebody will have mercy on me, take me out of the street and help me to become somebody in future. I wish the person will take me to his/her house.” (SY 11).

Optimism and hope were common among the youth. The vibrancy of city life itself was seen as a source of motivation to remain on the streets, while others combined this with the expectation of external help. Another participant emphasized reliance on divine intervention when reflecting on future aspirations:

“Well, God will tell. Whether I will undertake table top trading and or will be able to open a workshop and work after learning the trade is in the hands of God. I am looking up unto God.” (SY 13).

Faith was nurtured in multiple ways. For some, regular church attendance reinforced their spiritual resilience, while for others, it was strengthened by the belief that their hard work on the streets could help them save enough to buy sewing machines, enroll in apprenticeships, or pursue trades. These young people described different visions of what they hoped to achieve in the future, but shared a common determination to improve their lives, often combining religious belief with practical efforts to reach their goals

#### ***4.6.5 Mental and Emotional Well-being***

Despite the many challenges they faced, several street youths described ways of creating moments of joy for themselves. They often maximized whatever opportunities were available, such as listening to music or dancing, as a means of coping with hardship. One of them intimated that:

*“...what makes me happy on the street playing music and having fun with friends” (SY 22).*

Regardless of the challenges and the reality on the ground, which made their aspirations impossible, these youth are patient, hopeful and are persevering to make it despite the prevailing challenges. A number of them hold on to the belief that their dreams will come to pass. One participant had this to say:

*“I have been on the streets for four years, though I thought things will pick up in the very year I came on the street but it has not been like that, master. But you see, am not giving up. I have been able to buy some clothes, I have a phone and I send money to my younger brothers through my mother from time to time. It is not that bad...you see” (SY 16).*

Another male youth put it in a similar manner:

*“Oh daa!! Eb3 fa...am still young, I and I belief that I am not going to be the on the streets for the rest of my life. I have heard so many stories of how some of the youth have their lives changed through hard work. So I am not worried, I just need to work hard and do the right things...that is why I have decided not to drink and do those bad things” (SY 4).*

Another female participant shared:

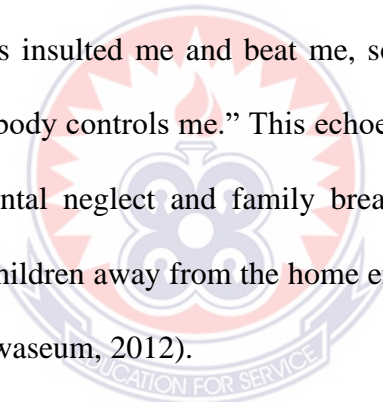
*“Even if we don’t get help, like we have been promied by many churches and other people, like the way you are talking to us, other people have come here saaa...but we haven’t seen any help so far. Me like this I sell small.. small and I hoping I can get some money and go back to school or learn a vocation. So as I am here I have an aim....and am working towards” (SY 11).*



## **5.0 Discussions**

### **5.1. Research Question 1: Factors accounting for street youth in Ashaiman**

The findings of the study revealed that several interrelated factors account for the increasing number of young people living on the streets of Ashiaman. Family-related issues emerged as one of the strongest contributors. Many participants explained that neglect, verbal abuse, and parental separation forced them to leave home. For some, constant beatings and insults from step-parents created a hostile environment that made life on the street appear as the only alternative. As one male respondent aged 18 shared, “My stepfather always insulted me and beat me, so I decided to leave. On the street at least nobody controls me.” This echoes earlier studies, which have shown that parental neglect and family breakdown remain central push factors driving children away from the home environment (UNICEF, 2006; Adeyemi & Oluwaseun, 2012).



Economic hardship was another dominant factor highlighted by participants. Several of the youth explained that their families lacked the financial means to provide basic necessities such as school fees, food, and clothing. In such circumstances, they were compelled to fend for themselves by engaging in menial jobs in Ashiaman. One 16-year-old female participant noted, “I came to Ashiaman to sell water and carry loads because at home there was no money to eat. Now I just sleep at the station after work.” Poverty therefore acted both as a push factor from rural homes and a pull factor into the urban economy, consistent with the findings of Hecht (2003) and Abebe (2009).

Peer influence also played a considerable role in motivating young people to enter street life. Some participants reported following friends who promised better opportunities in the city, only to realize later that survival required engaging in petty trading, begging, or truck pushing. This supports the argument of Hatløy and Huser (2005) that peers are often a major influence in the migration of children into street settings. The data also pointed to the role of rural–urban migration and urbanization. Ashiaman, as a fast-growing commercial hub near Accra, attracts youth from rural communities who come in search of work. A 20-year-old male participant who had migrated from Tamale explained, “I came from Tamale with my cousin to look for work. When we came, there was nowhere to stay, so we started sleeping outside.” This supports Abotchie’s (2012) argument that migration, driven by poverty and lack of rural opportunities, is a significant factor behind streetism in Ghana.

Finally, weak institutional support further entrenched the problem. While participants acknowledged occasional assistance from NGOs in the form of food or temporary shelter, they stressed that such support was not sustainable. Some even suggested that such interventions made street life appear manageable, thereby keeping them on the streets. In addition, encounters with law enforcement were often described as hostile, with several youths claiming that police harassment worsened their conditions instead of improving them. This mirrors Mangesha's (2001) observation that humanitarian assistance, though well-intentioned, sometimes inadvertently sustains streetism by making it appear as a viable way of life.

In sum, the study found that youth streetism in Ashiaman results from a combination of push factors, such as poverty, family breakdown, and neglect, and pull factors such as peer encouragement, perceived economic opportunities, and temporary NGO interventions. These findings are consistent with global perspectives, which emphasize that streetism is not caused by a single factor but by the interaction of structural inequalities, weak family systems, and the lure of urban economies (Aptekar & Stoecklin, 2014; UNICEF, 2018).

## **5.2 Research Question 2: Experiences of street youth**

### *Health challenges*

The study showed that adolescent girls living on the streets of Ashaiman face significant health and social risks, including unintended

pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and the emotional distress that often follows these experiences. Such challenges frequently contribute to further health complications. A review by Raffaelli (1999, as cited in Panter-Brick, 2002) highlighted that research consistently demonstrates that homeless youth are more vulnerable than their peers to exploitative sexual relationships and sexually transmitted infections (UNICEF, 2001). Similarly, Orme (2007) observed that young girls on the street are particularly exposed to sexual abuse and exploitation, reinforcing the precarious conditions in which they live. From the above narratives it is evident that life on the street poses health challenges for most street youth. This finding corroborates with earlier works that have drawn a link between streetism and health challenges. The health challenges experienced by street youth are often directly connected to the unique conditions under which they live and work. Considering the girls particularly, engaging in sexual activities for money for their daily survival. Engagement in sexual activity, particularly through commercial sex work, exposes street youth to a range of health-related challenges.

*Harsh Weather conditions*

Ghana lies along the Gulf of Guinea on the western coast of Africa, situated just a few degrees north of the equator. The country has a tropical climate, although variations in temperature are influenced by seasonal changes and differences in altitude. The hottest months are typically March and April, when temperatures range between 23°C and 37°C, while August tends to be the coolest month, with temperatures averaging between 18°C and 27°C.

Ghana experiences two dominant seasons: the rainy season and the dry season. The rainy period is often marked by heavy downpours, thunderstorms, strong winds, and lightning. By contrast, the dry season is characterized by a lack of rainfall for two to three months across much of the country, accompanied by dry atmospheric conditions. Between December and February, the harmattan winds move southward from the Sahara Desert, depositing fine dust particles on surfaces. This not only settles on furniture and buildings but also affects human health, as prolonged exposure can cause the skin to dry, crack, or even bleed.

In terms of rainfall distribution, the southern part of the country experiences two distinct wet seasons: a major one from mid-March to mid-July, and a minor one from mid-August to mid-November. The northern regions, however, have a single rainy season lasting from June to mid-November, followed by an extended dry spell from mid-November through March. Rainfall levels also vary by month, with January being the driest, averaging about 15 mm, and June the wettest, with an average of approximately 178 mm.

### **5.3 Research Question 3: Risk factors of street life**

#### *Violence and Violent Physical Behaviors*

According to Boyden and Mann (2005), it is often challenging to categorize particular experiences as either risky or dangerous, since interpretations may differ across social groups and even within the same context. The narratives support the findings of a study in Bangladesh by Prtibha, Mathur, and Ansu (2016), which revealed that street youth are primarily subjected to abuse, exploitation, and harassment by market vendors.

#### *Stigma*

It can be implied that there are some stereotypes and prejudice about streetism in Ghana. As such they are discriminated against on grounds of their appearance, myths and some negative experiences the populace may have had with other youth in the past. A few of the participants shared that some of them are not bad as construed by the general public. Such negative reactions affect them in many ways particularly their emotional well-being.

#### **5.4 Research Question 4: Resilience and Coping Mechanism**

Resilience studies, including the works of Ungar (2004, 2007, 2008), provide useful insight into how street youth navigate the challenges of their environment. His research emphasizes the ways in which young people interact with their communities, peers, and others within their social settings to safeguard their mental, emotional, and physical health. These interactions contribute to their ability to cope with adversity and endure the harsh realities of life on the street.

##### *Social Networks and Relationships*

Siegler (2002) emphasizes that developing social and emotional awareness is essential for young people if they are to function effectively and confidently within society. The ability to establish and maintain friendships serves as a protective factor, offering both comfort and support. Among street youth, these forms of social connection emerge through the daily interactions they have with peers and others in their environment, enabling them to build different kinds of relationships that help them cope with life on the streets.

##### *Adaptation and Resilience*

The narratives corroborate the findings of Adjei (2014) and DSW et al. (2011), which showed that street youth in Ghana frequently resort to self-medication due to their lack of enrollment in the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS). Similarly, other source of help such as support of older one on the street served as a means by which these young people cope and survive the hardships of the street.

##### *Interactions with authorities and organizations*

Catholic Action for Street (CAS) youth is a non-governmental organisation that provides support to young people living in the street of Accra, Ashiaman and Tema Metropolis. This organisation provides a broad spectrum of activities organised by House of Refuge and Hope land Centre at Adjei Kojo a sub-urban of Ashiaman. They help these street youth by returning their dignity to develop them into respectful citizens of the society. They also act as guardians, as their goal is to educate the youth in such a way that they can find suitable employment and build up a responsible future. Some of the participants shared their experience with CAS who has directly benefited from this organisation.

#### *Mental and Emotional Well-being*

Many street youth find ways to create moments of happiness despite the hardships they encounter in their daily lives. Play and fun-making is very important in the life of these street youth. This is not far from Ampofo (2007) assertion that street youth enjoy playing and having fun at film centers. The only deviation in this current study was in the football viewing centers popular known as betting centers. Many of these youth on the street spend most of their time at these betting centres having fun.

It is evident from the above narratives, that majority of the youth interviewed do not perceive their time spent on the streets as waste of time. They seem to have a goal and fulfilling their purpose in spite of the real odds. Even though their hope seems blighted, they are determined to realize their dreams and aspirations.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Overview

The purpose of this study was to identify the lived experiences of street youth in Ashiaman in the Greater-Accra Region of Ghana. The research design employed was phenomenology which allowed the researcher to understand and describe the lived experiences of street youth in Ashiaman. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What factors account for the phenomenon of youth streetism in Ashiaman?
2. What are the daily experiences are faced by street youth in Ashiaman?
3. What are the key risk factors that street youth in Ashiaman encounter?
4. How do street youth in Ashiaman cope and maintain resilience in their street life?

The data for the study was collected from 25 street youth in Ashiaman who were sampled through purposive sampling technique. Qualitative data was collected from participants through interviews. Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage,) was used in analysing the demographic data. Thematic narration was also used in analysing the interview data.

#### 5.1 Summary of Results

The results of the study have been summarized as follows:

1. Factors accounting for the phenomenon of street youth in Ashaiman were peer-influence, social acceptance of street youth, poverty and recreational adventure.
2. The experiences of street youth were also in the accommodation challenges, health challenges, dealing with harsh weather conditions and economic vulnerability.
3. Some of the risk factors of street life for the youth in Ashiaman were violence and violent physical behaviours, sexual harassment and abuse, theft and social stigma.
4. Street youth in Ashiaman cope and maintain resilience in the face of the challenges of street life through personal survival strategies, building social networks and relationships, adaptation and resilience, interacting with authorities and organizations, following some spiritual and religious practices as well as ensuring mental and emotional well-being.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

1. The phenomenon of street youth is thriving in Ashiaman due to social acceptance of street youth, poverty, peer-influence and recreational adventure.
2. The findings of this study suggests that life can be really tough. The experiences of street youth in Ashiaman were dominated by lack of basic needs.
3. The risk factors of street living poses harm to street youth serving as a breeding ground for violent behaviours.

4. This study finding indicated that streetism can be addressed since related organizations are continually making effort to handle the challenges and risk factors they face

### **5.3 Recommendations**

The findings of this study made some important suggestions that stakeholders such as government, non-governmental organizations, religious bodies, social welfare and the Police Service must take into consideration to improve the livelihood of the youth of Ashiaman. More importantly, it is to ensure that street youth are empowered to engage in more meaningful living. The following suggestions are based on the findings of the study.

#### ***5.3.1 Organization of Vocational Workshops/Centres:***

- a. The government should collaborate with non-governmental organizations to set up drop-in centers or vocational and technical training facilities.
- b. The Ashiaman Municipal Assembly should design programs that provide employable skills such as ICT, fashion designing, hair dressing, carpentry skills, formal education and other entrepreneurial skills based on the individual need of the youth.
- c. The Assembly and religious organizations should implement training programs paired with effective mentorship to guide trainees in starting and developing their own initiatives.

### **5.3.2 Re-union initiatives:**

- a. Street youth whose family can be traced and are willing to re-unite with the family, should be taken back and be re-united with them through the Social Welfare.
- b. NGOs into Economic Development and Children and Youth Empowerment, and religious bodies should provide Counseling services, rehab services and reconciliation opportunities for street youth whose situation requires them.

### **5.3.3 Advocacy activities:**

- a. Civil society groups, NGOs and the religious bodies should put more pressure on the government to show more commitment in addressing streetism.
- b. Institutions and organizations addressing the issue in Ashiaman Metropolis should establish strong inter-agency collaboration.
- c. Street Children Empowerment Foundation (SCEF) should continually educate and sensitize families on the ills of engaging in streetism

## **5.4 Contributions of the Study**

This research work has made the following contributions to policy formulation, practice, knowledge and methods. The details of these contributions have been summarized in the ensuing sections.

### **5.4.1 Contribution made to policy**

1. The study identified that street youth even though not properly trained, are capable of coping and building resilience for the challenges of street life. For that matter, a call has been made for a national policy

programme to sensitize and educate the street youth on channeling that resilience towards better ventures.

2. Financial support for combating street youth must be added to the government's yearly budget.

#### ***5.4.2 Contribution made to Practice***

1. Effective collaboration among agencies and organizations is essential to tackle the issue of street youth in the Ashiaman Metropolis.
2. Local Social Welfare centers mandate covers helping to eliminate street youth.

#### ***5.4.3 Contribution made to Knowledge***

1. The study has provided empirical evidence to the fact that street youth as a result of social acceptance and recreational adventure. These youth have a societal acceptance to be on the street.
2. The study has also offered practical implications and recommendations for teachers, the government, state institutions and agencies, religious bodies and non-governmental organizations.

No single research work can provide the answers needed to address a particular research problem. There is a need for further work to be conducted to provide ongoing discussion on lived experiences of streetism.

#### **5.5 Suggestions for Further Research**

The study concentrated on the lived experiences of street youth in Ashiaman, with less emphasis on evaluating the effectiveness of their coping strategies and resilience. The focus was rather on identifying factors

accounting for the phenomenon, experiences, risk factors and coping mechanism. Therefore, future research efforts can focus on the following:

1. Examining the effectiveness of coping mechanisms and maintenance of resilience of street youth.
2. Examining quantitatively the dominant factor accounting for the phenomenon of youth streetism in Ashiaman.



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UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA  
FACULTY OF APPLIED BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES IN EDUCATION  
**DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY**

☒ P. O. Box 25, Winneba, Ghana



## **APPENDICES**

### Appendix A

Introductory Letter from Dept. Counselling Psychology

9<sup>th</sup> January, 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

I write to introduce to you Very Rev. Ebenezer Douglas Bruce-Tagoe, the bearer of this letter, who is pursuing a Master of Philosophy Degree Programme, in the Department of Counselling Psychology of the University of Education, Winneba.

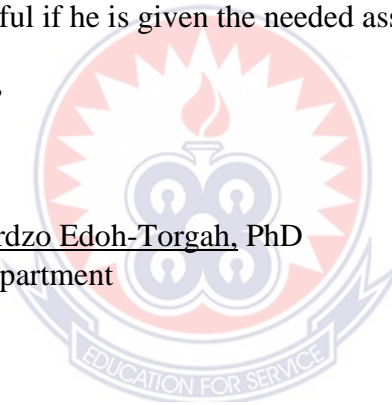
As part of the programme, he is conducting research on the topic: Lived experiences of streetism: A study of Youth in Ashiaman Municipality of Greater Accra Region.

He needs to administer questionnaire to enable him gather information for his data analysis and he has chosen to conduct this exercise in your outfit.

I would be grateful if he is given the needed assistance. Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Nywemedi Agordzo Edoh-Torgah, PhD  
AG. Head of Department





Dear Respondent,

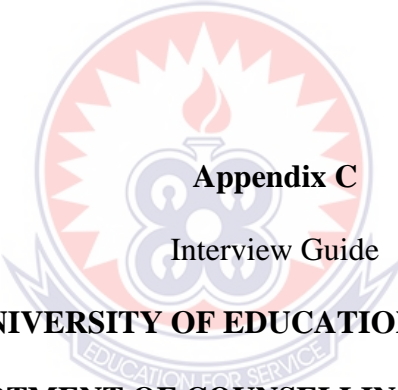
I am conducting a research study and would like to ask for your help. If you are willing to participate, it should take about 10-15 minutes of your time. I would be most grateful if you could give me some opportunity to interview you on the phenomenon of streetism.

You are assured of the anonymity of the responses you give and that no personal information about you is sought for any use whatsoever.

Please sign the space provided below.

Thank you.

I..... agree to participate.



**Appendix C**  
Interview Guide  
**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**  
**DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY**  
**INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**Introduction**

My name is ..... an MPhil. Student from the University of Education, Winneba. The topic of my research work is “**LIVED EXPERIENCES OF STREETISM: A STUDY OF YOUTH IN ASHIAMAN MUNICIPALITY OF GREATER-ACCRA REGION**” I am seeking responses from street children in the Ashiaman Municipality of Greater-Accra Region Any information given would be treated with strict

confidentiality. Names of participants would not be disclosed to any third party as far as this research work is concern.

### **Section A- Demographic Information**

1. Gender: Male [  ]                      Female [  ]
2. Age:.....
3. Are you currently in school? Yes [  ]                      No [  ]
4. Have you ever been enrolled in school? Yes [  ] No [  ]
5. What level of education do you have?
6. How many siblings do you have?
7. Did/do you live with your family?
8. Are both parents alive?
9. Do you have relationships with both parents?
10. What are the occupations of your parents?
11. Do you receive support from your parents while on the streets?
12. Do your siblings attend schools? If not why? If yes what grade/level are they in?
13. Where do you come from? Which region and town are you from?

### **Section B**

#### **Part 1: Factors accounting for the phenomenon of street youth in Ashiaman**

Research Question 1: What factors account for the phenomenon of street youth in Ashiaman?

14. Can you share your personal insights or observations on what factors you believe contribute to youth becoming street-involved in Ashiaman?
  
15. Are there specific life events, socio-economic conditions, or community dynamics that you think play a role in this phenomenon?

## **Part 2: Experiences of youth living on the streets of Ashiaman**

Research Question 2: What are the experiences of youth living on the streets of Ashiaman?

16. From your own experiences or interactions, could you describe the day-to-day lives of youth living on the streets of Ashiaman?

17. How do these experiences shape their sense of identity, relationships, and overall well-being?

## **Part 3: Risk factors of street life for youth in Ashiaman**

Research Question 3: What are the risk factors of street life for youth in Ashiaman?

18. In your opinion, what are the most significant risks that youth face when living on the streets of Ashiaman?

19. How do these risks impact their physical health, mental well-being, and social connections?

## **Part 3: Coping strategies of youth living on the streets of Ashiaman**

Research Question 4: How do youth living on the streets of Ashiaman cope with street life?

20. Based on your own experiences or observations, what strategies have you noticed or heard about that youth living on the streets use to cope with the challenges they encounter?

21. Are there specific coping mechanisms that stand out to you, and do they vary among different individuals or groups?

**Research Question 4:** How do street youth build resilience on the streets of Ashiaman?

22. Drawing from your experiences, how do street-involved youth demonstrate resilience in the face of adversity on the streets?

23. Are there particular support systems, personal strengths, or community dynamics that contribute to their ability to overcome challenges?

**Thank you**

