

## Tenacity, Purpose in Life and Quality of Interpersonal Relationships Among Street Children in the Vaal Triangle Townships of South Africa

S.N.Madu\*, A. Meyer\* and M.K. Mako\*\*

*\*Department of Psychology, University of the North, South Africa*

*\*\*P.O. Box 3368, Vereeniging 1930, South Africa*

*Telephone: (016) 455-1755*

**KEYWORDS** Street children; South Africa; tenacity; purpose in life; interpersonal relationships

**ABSTRACT** The study is an investigation into tenacity, purpose in life and quality of interpersonal relationships among street children in the Vaal Triangle townships in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. Two hundred and sixteen participants made up of 54 hardcore, 54 sheltered, 54 part-time street children and 54 non-street children (as control group) took part in the study. Kobasa's Hardness Scale and the Antonovsky's Scale of Sense of Coherence were administered to them to test for tenacity. Crumbaugh's Purpose in Life Scale and the Sociability Scale developed by the Human Science Research Council of South Africa were administered for information on purpose in life and quality of interpersonal relationships, respectively. Hardcore street children were more tenacious than the non-street children. The hardcore street children had a lower level of purpose in life and also a lower quality of interpersonal relationships than the part-time and non-street children respectively. Rehabilitation programmes for hardcore street children should take into consideration that they are very tenacious, have a lower level of purpose in life and a low quality of interpersonal relationships compared to other children.

### INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of street children is of great concern to many governments, health, social and religious organisations of the world (D'Abreu et al., 1999; Densley, 2000; DiCarlo et al., 2000; Hatting et al., 1998; Hutz and Koller, 1999; International Catholic Child Bureau, 1995; Karabanow, 1999; Knutsson and O'Dea, 1998; Le Roux, 1996; Medina-Mora et al., 1997; Panter-Brick et al., 1996; Smoller, 1999; United Nations, 1998; Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 1996). The plight of street children is often associated with substance abuse (Medina-Mora et al., 1997; United Nations, 1998), unsafe sexual behaviours (Bernier and Ascensio, 1995), theft, other forms of crime and mendicancy (Forster et al., 1996), vulnerability to sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS (Anarfi, 1997), vulnerability to abuse and destructive risk-taking behaviours (Denseley and Joss, 2000; United Nations, 1998), high murder rate (Seabrook, 1992), child labour and child trafficking (de Lima Soares, 1996).

Generally, street children display an extraordinary range and scale of psychological and emotional problems. It is therefore important to design programmes that would help to integrate

them into the society. However, it would be inappropriate to try to do so without considering the traumatic experiences and difficulties of incalculable magnitude they endure and also their strengths. Thus, it is necessary to study some aspects of their psychological make-up (e.g. their level of tenacity, purpose in life, and quality of interpersonal relationships) and the implications for reintegrating them into the society. This study, therefore, aims at investigating street children's level of tenacity, purpose in life, and quality of interpersonal relationships, and to state how the findings can be gainfully used for integrating them into the society. The above attributes the authors presume will either be taken advantage of (Tenacity) or worked upon (purpose in life and quality of interpersonal relationship) in the effort to integrate them meaningfully into the society.

In South Africa, many authors have highlighted the physical, social and psychological problems associated with street children (as mentioned above) (e.g. Beams and Wait, 1999; Dashuber, 1999; Decarlo, 1999; Geldenhuys and Meyer, 1998; Hatting et al., 1998; Jain, 2001; Klinck et al., 2000; Le Roux and Smith, 1998; Porteus et al., 2000). At the same time, many of the authors have pointed out some positive

attributes found in street children, for example, resilience (tenacity) (Le Roux and Smith, 1998) and strong need and value for autonomy or freedom (Donald and Swart-Kruger, 1994; Le Roux and Smith, 1998; Richter, 1988a, 1988b, Werner and Smith, 1982). The above extreme qualities identified in street children gave rise to a debate on the right attitude and approach to the phenomenon of being a street child.

The present authors, therefore, based their study on the following theories:

(a) Victor Frankl's Theory on Tenacity and Purpose of Life (Frankl, 1963). According to Frankl, life is not meaningful in itself. The individual must create and discover meaning in his or her life. Children's tenacity derives from their will to find meaning in the situation they find themselves (the existential thrownness – one being born into existential situations in which he/she could not chose before hand). When children find themselves alone in this world to fend for themselves and struggle for their own livelihood (as in the case of street children) they may be faced with a series of decision-making processes and hard realities of life, which on the one hand, may push the person into the unknown, unpredictable future. On the other hand, the process may pull the person into the past, the status quo, or the familiar. This push-pull factor may harden street children and make them to be very tenacious. The same factor, however, can make them have low purpose in life, since they are not guided. According to Frankl (1963), the more stubbornly the individual opposes his or her being-thrown into existence, the more the thrownness gains in influence. If the thrownness gains in influence on street children, they may oppose and try to resist it with tenacity. Since street children are faced with extreme existential problems than non-street children, the present authors hypothesise that street children would be more tenacious than non-street children. Furthermore, street children would have a lower sense of purpose in life than non-street children.

(b) Sullivan's Interpersonal Relationship Theory (Sullivan, 1953). Sullivan believes that if an individual has to be studied, this has to be done by taking his/her social relationships into account. Children acquire skills of interpersonal relationships firstly when they are with their parents or parent-substitutes. Then, upon meeting other people, their interpersonal

relationship skills become moulded to suit their environment. This dynamism, in the case of street children, may be different from that of non-street children, since their personal situations and circumstances as well as their life experiences are different. Furthermore, Sullivan holds that there is a self-system, which sanctions certain forms of behaviour (the good-me self) and forbids other forms (the bad-me self). For a street child, the good-me self and the bad-me self may not be distinct from each other, since the attributes may not change people's attitude towards him or her to the positive, as long as he or she is on the streets. Thus, the present authors hypothesise that the quality of interpersonal relationships of street children will be lower than that of non-street children.

## METHOD

**Participants:** A total number of 216 children were selected for the purpose of this study. Among them, 54 were hardcore, 54 were part-time, 54 were sheltered street children, and 54 were non-street children. For the purpose of this research, the following distinctions of street children are made: The 'hardcore' street children live on the streets day and night, and fend for themselves. The street is their 'home'. Part-time street children (the strollers) do odd jobs (like, pushing other people's trolleys to get some money, and begging), but they have a home where they retire at night. Street children in shelter homes are those who find themselves confined to shelter homes (which may be 'foreign' to them). All the participants were selected from the Vaal Triangle's township streets or schools (in the case of non-street children).

The Vaal Triangle is situated in the Gauteng Province. It is approximately 80 kilometres south of Johannesburg. According to the 1996 census, the current population of the Vaal Triangle is 717 192. The Vaal Triangle's Vaal River serves as a boundary that separates Gauteng from the Free State Province. The reason for choosing to conduct this study in the Vaal Triangle was because one of the authors who come from the area has observed that there are many street children in the area. It was therefore felt that this study would make a contribution to the improvement of the situation of street children in the area.

Table 1 shows that the age of the participants

**Table 1: The characteristics of the participants**

Characteristics	Types of participants			
	Hardcore N (%)	Sheltered N (%)	Part-time N (%)	Non-street N (%)
<i>Age in years</i>				
10	2 (3.7)	6 (11.1)	8 (14.8)	5 (9.3)
11	9 (16.7)	8 (14.8)	4 (7.4)	8 (14.8)
12	8 (14.8)	2 (3.7)	6 (11.1)	4 (7.4)
13	9 (16.7)	13 (24.1)	6 (11.1)	4 (7.4)
14	5 (9.3)	10 (18.5)	9 (16.7)	10 (18.5)
15	7 (13.0)	4 (7.4)	8 (14.8)	8 (14.8)
16	4 (7.4)	3 (5.6)	8 (14.8)	7 (13.0)
17	10 (18.5)	8 (14.8)	5 (9.3)	8 (14.8)
<i>Gender</i>				
Males	40 (74.1)	49 (90.7)	45 (83.3)	44 (81.5)
Females	14 (25.9)	5 (9.3)	9 (16.7)	10 (18.5)
<i>Townships where found</i>				
Vereeniging	6 (11.1)	5 (9.3)	4 (7.4)	1 (1.9)
Vanderbijlpark	6 (11.1)	4 (7.4)	6 (11.1)	0 (0.0)
Meyerton	4 (7.4)	1 (1.9)	2 (3.7)	1 (1.9)
Bophelong	5 (9.3)	8 (14.8)	4 (7.4)	11 (20.4)
Evaton	9 (16.7)	5 (9.3)	4 (7.4)	11 (20.4)
Sharpeville	7 (13.0)	3 (5.6)	9 (16.7)	7 (13.0)
Boipatong	5 (9.3)	6 (11.1)	8 (14.8)	7 (13.0)
Sebokeng	8 (14.8)	13 (24.1)	5 (9.3)	6 (11.1)
Sasolburg	2 (3.7)	4 (7.4)	7 (13.0)	5 (9.3)
Orange Farms	2 (3.7)	5 (9.3)	5 (9.3)	5 (9.3)
<i>Duration on Streets/Shelter</i>				
2 or less years	11 (20.4)	15 (27.8)	9 (16.7)	
3-5 years	15 (27.8)	18 (33.3)	21 (38.9)	
6 or more years	28 (51.9)	21 (38.9)	24 (44.4)	
<i>Highest Level of Education</i>				
Never attended school	10 (18.5)	7 (13.0)	5 (9.3)	5 (9.3)
Grade 1	9 (16.7)	4 (7.4)	4 (7.4)	7 (13.0)
Grade 2	9 (16.7)	7 (13.0)	6 (11.1)	9 (16.7)
Grade 3	8 (14.8)	2 (3.7)	2 (3.7)	3 (5.6)
Grade 4	4 (7.4)	10 (18.5)	3 (5.6)	12 (22.2)
Grade 5	5 (9.3)	5 (9.3)	8 (14.8)	3 (5.6)
Grade 6	4 (7.4)	8 (14.8)	7 (13.0)	7 (13.0)
Grade 7	4 (7.4)	5 (9.3)	11 (20.4)	7 (13.0)
Grade 8	1 (1.9)	6 (11.1)	8 (14.8)	1 (1.9)
<i>Method used to Make a Living</i>				
Pushing trolleys	10 (18.5)	12 (22.2)	12 (22.2)	
Car watch	12 (22.2)	7 (13.0)	9 (16.7)	
Gambling	6 (11.1)	12 (22.2)	4 (7.4)	
Eating at Shelters	18 (33.3)	11 (20.4)	18 (33.3)	
Begging	8 (14.8)	12 (22.2)	11 (20.4)	

range from 10 to 17 years. In each category of participants, there are more males than females. Street children could be found all over the townships. Most of the street children have spent more than three years on the street. Most of the street children either never attended school or attended only primary schools. The methods they used to make a living were “pushing other peoples’ trolleys for shopping”, “car watch”, “gambling” and “begging”.

Table 2 shows that many of the children have lost their fathers, stepfathers, mothers, or stepmothers. Most of the children had more than

three siblings. The order of birth of most of the participants falls within first and sixth. More than half of their parents attended only primary schools.

**Instrument:** A questionnaire made up of four scales was used in this study. One of the researchers translated all the questionnaires from English into Sesotho. An independent translator back-translated these translations into English. Discrepancies were identified and corrected. The final versions were given to a clinical psychologist, who knows the language fluently to check the terminology of the final version of

**Table 2: The family circumstances of participants**

Characteristics	Types of participants			
	Hardcore N (%)	Sheltered N (%)	Part-time N (%)	Non-street N (%)
<i>Father Figure</i>				
Father alive	7 (13.0)	10 (18.5)	12 (22.2)	17 (31.5)
Father deceased	17 (31.5)	13 (24.1)	12 (22.2)	8 (14.8)
Step-father alive	12 (22.2)	18 (33.3)	17 (31.5)	20 (37.0)
Step-father deceased	18 (33.3)	13 (24.1)	13 (24.1)	9 (16.7)
<i>Mother Figure</i>				
Mother alive	9 (16.7)	11 (20.4)	20 (37.0)	26 (48.1)
Mother deceased	23 (42.6)	17 (31.5)	18 (33.3)	10 (18.5)
Step-mother alive	16 (29.6)	12 (22.2)	11 (20.4)	8 (14.8)
Step-mother deceased	6 (11.1)	14 (25.9)	5 (9.3)	10 (18.5)
<i>Number of Siblings</i>				
1	1 (1.9)	1 (1.9)	3 (5.6)	4 (7.4)
2	1 (1.9)	3 (5.6)	3 (5.6)	4 (7.4)
3	3 (5.6)	4 (7.4)	4 (7.4)	8 (14.8)
4	5 (9.3)	7 (13.0)	8 (14.8)	13 (24.1)
5	3 (5.6)	5 (9.3)	9 (16.7)	6 (11.1)
6	3 (5.6)	10 (18.5)	4 (7.4)	8 (14.8)
7	10 (18.5)	3 (5.6)	9 (16.7)	1 (1.9)
8	7 (13.0)	6 (11.1)	6 (11.1)	3 (5.6)
9	7 (13.0)	9 (16.7)	2 (3.7)	3 (5.6)
10 and over	14 (25.9)	6 (11.1)	6 (11.1)	4 (7.4)
<i>Birth Order</i>				
1 <sup>st</sup>	18 (33.3)	15 (27.8)	11 (20.4)	8 (14.8)
2 <sup>nd</sup>	11 (20.4)	10 (18.5)	9 (16.7)	6 (11.1)
3 <sup>rd</sup>	6 (11.1)	7 (13.0)	9 (16.7)	12 (22.2)
4 <sup>th</sup>	2 (3.7)	3 (5.6)	6 (11.1)	8 (14.8)
5 <sup>th</sup>	6 (11.1)	7 (13.0)	4 (7.4)	8 (14.8)
6 <sup>th</sup>	5 (9.3)	3 (5.6)	5 (9.3)	3 (5.6)
7 <sup>th</sup>	3 (5.6)	0 (0.0)	2 (3.7)	3 (5.6)
8 <sup>th</sup>	0 (0.0)	3 (5.6)	3 (5.6)	3 (5.6)
9 <sup>th</sup>	0 (0.0)	2 (3.7)	2 (3.7)	2 (3.7)
10 <sup>th</sup>	1 (1.9)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Don't know	2 (3.7)	4 (7.4)	4 (7.4)	1 (1.9)
<i>Educational Level of Parents</i>				
Grade 4 or lower	20 (37.0)	15 (27.8)	9 (16.7)	7 (13.0)
Grade 5	5 (9.3)	8 (14.8)	7 (13.0)	6 (11.1)
Grade 6	5 (9.3)	5 (9.3)	4 (7.4)	5 (9.3)
Grade 7	3 (5.6)	4 (7.4)	4 (7.4)	6 (11.1)
Grade 8	6 (11.1)	5 (9.3)	6 (11.1)	3 (5.6)
Grade 9	5 (9.3)	7 (13.0)	10 (18.5)	4 (7.4)
Grade 10	4 (7.4)	8 (14.8)	8 (14.8)	7 (13.0)
Post secondary	6 (11.1)	2 (3.7)	6 (11.1)	16 (29.6)

each translation. The scales are as follows:

**Tenacity:** The Kobasa's (1979) Hardiness Scale was the first test used to measure tenacity. This scale assesses the presence and degree of commitment, challenge and control. The behaviour is rated on a four-point scale. It comprised of 50 items (e.g. I often wake up eager to take my life where it left off the day before). The grading ranges from 0 to 3, with 0 indicating "not at all true", 1 indicating "partly true", 2 indicating "true", and 3 indicating "completely true". For the present study, the Cronbach's alpha was established at .70.

The Antonovsky's (1993) Scale of Sense of Coherence was also used to measure tenacity. It seeks to find out people's continued ability to stay well even in the face of severe stress and hardships. It is a seven-point rating scale consisting of 13 items ranging from 1 to 7. One (1) is the lowest score whereas 7 is the highest score (e.g. Do you have the feeling that you don't really care about what goes around you?). Items preceded by the letter R meant that when scoring those items, reversal-scoring system should be employed. Cronbach's alpha reliabilities reported in 26 studies ranged from

.82 to .95 (Antonovsky, 1993); and from .52 to .97 with a mean alpha of .87 in 27 South African studies (Strumpfer and Wissing, 1998). Wissing et al. (1999) cited four authors who report good content, criterion and construct validity. Cronbach's alpha computed for the present sample was .64.

**Purpose in Life:** The Purpose in Life Scale (Crumbaugh, 1968) was used to test the aspect of purpose in life. This scale is based on Victor Frankl's thesis of the meaning of life. The test is made up of 20 items rated from 1 (low/no purpose) to 7 (higher purpose). (For example, "Life to me seems always exciting.....completely routine"). A split-half correlation of .85 was reported for 120 parishioners (Robinson and Shaver, 1973). Robinson and Shaver (1973) indicated that this scale's validity has been supported. The scale correlates significantly with the depression scale of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) ( $r=.65$ ). Cronbach's alpha computed for the present sample was found to be .70.

**Interpersonal Relationships:** The Sociability Scale of the PHSF (Personal, Home, Self and Formal) relationship questionnaire, developed by the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) (1982) of South Africa was employed. This scale originally contains rating points ranging from zero to three. For the purpose of this study, the scale was allocated three rating points, from 1 (the lowest) to 3 (the highest) and 2 (average). The highest score indicates good quality of interpersonal relationship, while a low score indicates poor quality of interpersonal relationships. Minaar and Van Staden (1982) reported that the coefficients of internal consistency of this scale have been established at .84 (K-R 8). The Cronbach's alpha computed for the present sample was found to be .94.

**Procedure:** A pilot study was conducted using participants, i.e. 10 hardcore street children, 10 sheltered street children, 10 part-time, and 10 non-street children. The participants in the pilot study did not participate in the main study. The researchers found that the experimental group (street children in different categories) was sceptical and uncooperative at first, as they wanted to know what it was that they would get out of this exercise. The researchers reassured them that nobody was going to harm them in any way and that the results would be presented to the government as well as to the social welfare

agencies so that street children can be helped. The most sceptical of the group were the hardcores. The investigators visited them at their places in the streets and forged 'friendship' with them. Different schools in the Vaal Triangle provided the researchers with non-street children.

The researchers were assisted by ten post-graduate students in psychology. The researchers had a three-day workshop with the research assistants focusing on how to administer the questionnaire and how to handle anticipated problems, such as lack of or short concentration span, having to repeat one question more than once before the participant could understand, irritability of street children, comprehension, etc. The workshop lasted for five hours a day. The research assistants asked the questions in the questionnaire, reading them out to the participants and carefully marking their responses. The street children's concentration span was very short and each examiner asked each street child questions from one instrument per day. On each successive day, each examiner met his/her previous day's street child and continued the testing. The home language of the 10 post-graduate students was Sesotho. Children in the pilot study came from the major township areas in the Vaal Triangle.

Two hundred and sixteen street children participated in the main study. They were made up of 54 hardcore street children, 54 sheltered street children, 54 part-time street children, and 54 non-street children. It should be noted that the first group of participants were the hardcore street children. The researchers visited their different places where they sleep at night. These included recreational parks, car parks, abandoned buildings, etc. The subsequent groups of participants (the sheltered, part-time, and non-street children) were selected based on the availability of the hardcore. The sheltered was the next group to participate in the study. They were also difficult to find, although less difficult than the hardcore. At times, they would be in their shelters and at times not. Similar problems to those encountered in the pilot study were experienced, though of a larger magnitude, given the large number of the participants. The same procedure used in the pilot study was also used in the main study. It took approximately one hundred research days to conduct the tests on all 216 participants. At the end of the interview with each street child, the name and address of a

social worker as well as the telephone numbers and address of the nearest Department of Welfare in the province were given to the child, in case he or she needed assistance.

**Statistical Analysis:** The data from the questionnaires were analysed using STATISTICA as the statistical software application. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the performance of the sample across the different groups on all the scales. Performances on the scales were compared across groups using Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVA). The Levene test for homogeneity of variance was computed for each of the scores. Post-hoc Least Significant Difference (LSD) tests were conducted to determine significant differences on each scale across the groups. All tests were performed at a 95% ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) significant level.

## RESULTS

Table 3 presents the descriptive data obtained for each of the test scores from each scale administered.

The Levene *F* test of homogeneity of variances was computed for each of the scores. The result of this test revealed that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated. Therefore, Analysis of Variance techniques could be conducted with confidence (see Table 4).

Scores on the various scales were compared across groups using a Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVA). The results of the MANOVA were reported as Rao's *R*. Rao's *R* is a transformation value of Wilk's Lambda, which is

used to determine the significance of the given effect. Rao's *R* follows an *F* distribution exactly. The results for the MANOVA were reported as an *F* statistics.

The MANOVA results showed a significant difference between the four groups as depicted in Table 5.

Post-hoc analysis for all the variables to reveal the differences in sense of coherence and hardiness (tenacity) were carried out as in Table 6.

Using sense of coherence as an indication of tenacity, the Post-hoc LSD test shows that hardcore street children are significantly more tenacious than part-time street children and non-street children (but not sheltered street children). Sheltered street children are more tenacious than the non-street children. Using hardiness as an indication of tenacity, the hardcore street children are more tenacious than the non-street children. Also the sheltered street children are more tenacious than the non-street children. (See also Table 3 for the mean scores).

Post-hoc analysis for all the variables to reveal the differences with respect to purpose in life and interpersonal relationships were carried out as in Table 7.

The table shows that the hardcore street children have a lower level of purpose in life than the part-time street children and the non-street children. The sheltered street children have also a lower level of purpose in life than the non-street children. The hardcore street children have poorer interpersonal relationships than the part-time street children and the non-street children.

**Table 3: Mean scores of participants on tenacity, purpose in life and interpersonal relationship**

Participants	Tenacity				Purpose in life		Interpersonal relations		N
	Sense of coherence		Hardiness		M	SD	M	SD	
	M	SD	M	SD					
Hardcore	46.3	6.21	60.3	12.57	51.2	14.25	30.74	17.57	54
Sheltered	45.35	7.8	58.5	11.18	54.41	13.21	34.7	16.14	54
Part-time	43.26	7.03	56.01	11.92	57.17	13.14	37.46	16.48	54
Non-street	42.04	7.3	53.31	14.64	59.77	12.75	40.59	16.54	54

**Table 4: The Levene *F* test**

Variable	MSS	MS Error	F	p-level
Sense of coherence	19.92	16.2	1.23	0.3
Hardiness	124.71	54.56	2.29	0.85
Purpose in life	24.04	71.1	0.34	0.8
Interpersonal relations	67.86	71.75	1.1	0.35

Degree of freedom for all *F*'s: 3.212

**Table 5: MANOVA results**

<i>Wilks' Lambda</i>	<i>Rao's R</i>	<i>df1</i>	<i>df2</i>	<i>p-level</i>
0.69475	3.318	24	595	0.000*

\*p&lt;0.05

**Table 6: Post-Hoc LSD tests for sense of coherence and hardiness (tenacity).**

	<i>Sense of coherence</i>	<i>Sheltered</i>	<i>Part-time</i>	<i>Non-street</i>
	<i>Hardcore</i>			
Hardcore		0.492	0.028*	0.002*
Sheltered	0.492		0.128	0.016*
Part-time	0.028*	0.128		0.374
Non-street	0.002*	0.016*	0.374	
	<i>Hardiness</i>			
Hardcore		0.461	0.08	0.005*
Sheltered	0.461		0.309	0.034*
Part-time	0.08	0.309		0.268
Non-street	0.005*	0.034*	0.268	

**Table 7: Post-Hoc LSD test for purpose in life and interpersonal relationships**

	<i>Purpose in life</i>	<i>Sheltered</i>	<i>Part-time</i>	<i>Non-street</i>
	<i>Hardcore</i>			
Hardcore		0.214	0.021*	0.001*
Sheltered	0.214		0.284	0.038*
Part-time	0.021*	0.284		0.311
Non-street	0.001*	0.038*	0.311	
	<i>Interpersonal relationships</i>			
Hardcore		0.219	0.038*	0.002*
Sheltered	0.219		0.391	0.068
Part-time	0.038*	0.391		0.331
Non-street	0.002*	0.068	0.331	

There is no significant difference between the quality of interpersonal relationship of the sheltered street children and that of the other groups (See also Table 3 for the mean scores).

It is also to be noted from Tables 6 and 7 that there are not significant differences between the scores of the hardcore street children in all the scales and those of the sheltered street children. The same applies to the scores of the sheltered street children and those of the part-time street children. The same also applies to the scores of part-time street children and those of non-street children.

## DISCUSSION

The present study shows that the hardcore and the sheltered street children are more tenacious than the non-street children. In line with Frankl's (1963) theory on tenacity, hardcore and sheltered street children are more likely to be faced with series of decision-making processes and harder realities of life than the part-time street

children. Also, the hardcore and the sheltered street children may be reacting to or sustaining their 'existential thrownness' with tenacity. Thus, they would be more hardened and more tenacious. Le Roux and Smith (1998) also found strong resilience (tenacity) among the street children they studied in South Africa. The tenacity, however, does not make them less vulnerable to substance abuse (as indicated by Medina-Mora et al., 1997; United Nations, 1998), unsafe sexual behaviours (Bernier and Ascensio, 1995), theft, other forms of crime and mendicancy (Forster et al., 1996), vulnerability to sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS (Anarfi, 1997; Decarlo, 1999), vulnerability to abuse and destructive risk-taking behaviours (Denseley and Joss, 2000; United Nations, 1998), high murder rate (Seabrook, 1992), child labour and child trafficking (de Lima Soares, 1996) than non-street children (see also Beams and Wait, 1999; Dashuber, 1999; Decarlo, 1999; Jain, 2001; Klinck et al., 2000; Porteus et al., 2000).

The hardcore and the sheltered street children

have a lower level of purpose in life than the non-street children. In Frankl's (1963) view, the same factors that made the hardcore and the sheltered street children to be very tenacious, may also make them to have a lower level of purpose in life than the non-street children. Having no purpose or a low level of purpose in life may predispose any one not to guard against substance abuse, unsafe sexual behaviours and other risk-taking behaviours (as pointed out by Anarfi, 1997, Bernier and Ascensio, 1995, Densley and Joss, 2000; Forster et al., 1996, Medina-Mora et al., 1997; Seabrook, 1992, United Nations, 1998), since the person would see nothing or little to lose in life by engaging in such activities. In agreement with the above finding, Le Roux and Smith (1998) also pointed out that the daily lives of many street children in South Africa are unstructured and unstable; thus, many of them wander around with no structure or specific purpose.

The hardcore street children have poorer interpersonal relationships than the part-time street children and the non-street children. This agrees with Sullivan's (1953) interpersonal relationship theory. Since hardcore street children are often not in close contact with their parents or parent-substitutes, that basic skill of interpersonal relationship that is normally acquired from parents may be lacking. Again, for a hardcore street child, the 'good-me self' and the 'bad-me self' may not be distinct from each other anymore, since the attributes may not be seen by them any more as being able to change people's attitudes towards them, as long as they are on the streets. This attribute would contribute a lot to hardcore children's lack of care and self-protection against risk-taking behaviours. In line with the above finding, Le Roux and Smith (1998) also mentioned that the lack or loss of an adequate relationship with an adult caregiver (e.g. parents and teachers) poses the greatest problem for most street children.

The present study has some limitations. Participants were selected from only one geographical location that consists of a number of townships. The findings can therefore not be generalised to other street children in the province or even to the whole country. Some other authors may want to categorise the participants differently from how we did, e.g. 'street children', 'homeless children' and 'children on the street'. Tenacity is a multifaceted

phenomenon, which may involve many other variables than those considered in this study. The demographics of the street children are heterogeneous (in terms of age, education and duration on the streets), thereby making it difficult to examine intra-group differences. Among the non-street children, the homogeneity of the group (e.g. in terms of background and home environment) was also not examined, since variations in personal experiences will obviously affect the responses to the measuring instruments. No allowance was also made for children being cared for by other extended family members, such as a grandmother, which is a common occurrence in South Africa. Finding out other maladaptive behaviours, like drug abuse among the participants, would have been valuable information. Qualitative information via open-ended written question with regard to issues like street children's needs and interests regarding future training, to be incorporated into the rehabilitation programmes, would have also added quality to the study. The results of this study should therefore be understood in the context of the above limitations.

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

From this study the authors conclude that hardcore street children are very tenacious and they have low levels of purpose in life as well as interpersonal relationships. The authors therefore suggest the following:

1. The high levels of tenacity of the hardcore and the sheltered street children should be used to their advantage while designing rehabilitation programmes for them. The high level of tenacity is a quality that would be needed for selection into many professions like the army, police, security men and women, navy, to mention but a few. Rehabilitation programmes for such children should therefore incorporate skills, which will enable them to be admitted in the future for training in such professions.
2. Their rehabilitation should also be aimed at assisting them to find some meaning and purpose in their existence. With a clearer vision of their purpose in life, their vulnerability to risk-taking behaviours would be minimised.
3. While designing their rehabilitation programmes, particular attention should be

paid to skills that would enhance their interpersonal relationship. Many of them may not have had the opportunity of learning the skill from their parents but the skill will be needed for long-lasting rehabilitation and integration into the society. Examples of such skills are value and respect for others and their properties, punctuality, and keeping to appointments.

### REFERENCES

- Anarfi, J. K. 1997. Vulnerability to sexually transmitted disease: street children in Accra. *Health Transit Review*, 7 (Supplement): 281-306.
- Antonovsky, A. 1993. The structure and properties of the sense of coherence scale. *Social Science Medicine*, 36(6): 725-733.
- Beams, J. and J. Wait. 1999. Conduction research with street children in South Africa. *Social Work*, 35(3): 277-281.
- Bernier, M. and P. Ascensio. 1995. Street children and AIDS in Haiti. *Sante*, 5(2): 125-130.
- Crumbaugh, J. 1968. Cross-validation of purpose-in-life test based on Frankl's concepts. *Journal of Individual Psychology*, 24: 74-81.
- D'Abreu, R. C., A. K. Mullis and L. R. Cook. 1999. The resiliency of street children in Brazil. *Adolescence*, 34(136): 745-751.
- Dashuber, T. 1999. The sheltering screen. *UNESCO Courier*, 52(11): 3-9.
- De Lima Soares, Z. 1996. Children: A permanent challenge for the churches. *International Review of Mission*, 85(338): 427-448.
- Decarlo, P. 1999. HIV among women in developing countries. *Harvard AIDS Review*, 1, 2-6.
- Densley, M. K. and D. M. Joss 2000. Street children: Causes, consequences, and innovative treatment approaches. *Work*, 15(3): 217-225.
- DiCarlo, M. A., J. L. Gibbons, D. C. Kaminsky, J. D. Wright and D. A. Stiles. 2000. Street children's drawings. *International Social Work*, 43(1): 107-120.
- Donald, D. and J. Swart-Kruger. 1994. The South African street children: Developmental implications. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 24(4): 169-174.
- Forster, L. M., M. Tannhauser and H. M. Barros. 1996. Drug use among street children in southern Brazil. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 43(1-2): 57-62.
- Frankl, V. 1963. *Man's Search For Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy*. New York: Washington Square Press.
- Geldenhuis, J. L. and L. W. Meyer. 1998. Die straatkindverskynsel as problematiese. *South African Journal of Education*, 18(4), 195-203.
- Hatting, R., M. Poggenpoel and C. P. Myburgh. 1998. The world of Hillbrow street children. *Curatiosis*, 21(1): 46-54.
- Hutz, C. S. and S. H. Koller. 1999. Methodological and ethical issues in research with street children. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 85: 59-70.
- International Catholic Child Bureau, Geneva (Switzerland) 1995. *Working With Street Children. Selected Case Studies From Africa, Asia and Latin America*. Evaluation/Feasibility Report, 305 pages.
- Jain, D. 2001. Children's rights and women's rights: Some connections and disconnections. *Development*, 44(2): 58-63.
- Karabanow, J. 1999. Creating community: A case study of a Montreal street kid agency. *Community Development Journal*, 34(4): 318-327.
- Klinck, M. E., B. Juris, D. A. Louw and B. J. Peens. 2000. A South African perspective on children's rights: Pertinent issues in remedial and protection interventions. *Medicine and Law*, 19(2): 253-273.
- Knutsson, K. E. and P. O'Dea. 1998. *Children's Rights and Development in South Africa*. Pretoria: UNICEF South Africa.
- Kobasa, S. C. 1979. Stressful life events, personality and health: An inquiry into hardiness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 37: 1-11.
- Le Roux, J. and C. S. Smith. 1998. Psychological characteristics of South African street children. *Adolescence*, 33(132): 891-900.
- Le Roux, J. 1996. The worldwide phenomenon of street children: conceptual analysis. *Adolescence*, 31(124): 965-971.
- Medina-Mora, M. E., R. Gutierrez and L. Vega. 1997. What happened to street kids? An analysis of the Mexican experience. *Substance Use and Misuse*, 32(3): 293-316.
- Panther-Brick, C., A. Todd and R. Baker. 1996. Growth status of homeless Nepali boys: do they differ from rural and urban controls? *Social Science and Medicine*, 43(4): 441-451.
- Porteus, K., G. Clacherty, L. Mdiya, J. Pelo, K. Matsai, S. Qwabe and D. Dnald. 2000. 'Out of school' children in South Africa: An analysis of causes in a group of marginalized, urban 7-to-15-year-olds. *Support for Learning*, 15(1): 8-13.
- Richter, L. 1988a. Thinking of your feet in the street: discussion of a study to determine the educational potential of a group of "Street Children" in Johannesburg. Address delivered at the *Open Day of the Unit of Cognitive Development*. Pretoria: Vista University.
- Richter, L. 1988b. *A Psychological Study of Street Children in Johannesburg* (Report 89-01). Pretoria: UNISA.
- Robinson, J. P. and R. P. Shaver. 1973. *Measures of Social Psychological Attitudes*. Michigan: Institute for Social Research.
- Seabrook, J. 1992. Rocky road to Rio. *New Statesman and Society*, 5(199): 12-15.
- Smoller, J. 1999. Homeless youth in the United States: Description and developmental issues. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 85: 47-58.
- Strumpfer, D. J. W. and M. P. Wissing. 1998. Review South African data on the sense of coherence scale as a measure of Fortigenesis and Salutogenesis. *Fourth Annual Congress of the Psychological Association of South Africa. 9-11 September*, Cape Town, South Africa.
- Sullivan, H. S. 1953. *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry*. New York: Norton.
- United Nations. 1998. Turning to kids ... before they

- turn to drugs. *UN Chronicle*, 35(2): 14-19.
- Werner, E. and Smith, R. 1982. *Vulnerable but Invincible*. New York: Adams, Bannister, Cox.
- Wissing, M., S. Thekiso, R. Stapelberg, L. van Quickelberge, P. Choabi, C. Moroeng and A. Nienaber. 1999. The psychometric properties of scales measuring psychological well-being in an African group. *Presentation made at the International African Psychology Congress, Durban, July 18-23*.
- Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, New York, NY. 1996. *Recovering from 30 years of War: Refugee Women and Children in Angola*. Research/Technical Report, 35 pages.