

Exploring the Lived Experiences of Children-Of-The-Street in Mthatha

Macalane Junel Malindi¹ and Madoda Phillip Cekiso²

¹*University of Johannesburg, South Africa, Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Psychology, P.O. Box 524, Auckland Park, Johannesburg, 2006, South Africa*

²*University of Fort Hare (East London Campus), Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities; Department of English, South Africa
E-mail: mcekiso@ufh.ac.za*

KEYWORDS Positive Psychology. Protective Resources. Resilience. Psychosocial Risk. Street Children. Vulnerability

ABSTRACT This paper reports the findings of a qualitative South African study that explored the lived experiences of *children-of-the-street* in Mthatha in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The study involved 19 children who had been involved in street life for periods ranging from 10 months to 10 years. The participants were aged from 9 to 18 years. The researchers conducted one-on-one interviews with the participants and content-analysed them. The findings showed that the participants experienced emotional problems, however; they had developed survival strategies that enabled them to cope with streetism. The findings challenge researchers and mental health practitioners not to be blind to processes that render some street-involved children psychosocially vulnerable and the mechanisms that others use to maintain mental health in the context of streetism. These processes and mechanisms need to be considered in designing secondary intervention programs for erstwhile street children.