

MYKOLAS ROMERIS UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL STUDIES

DAVID OTIGBA

SOCIAL WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN NIGERIA

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SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR DR. VIDA GUDŽINSKIENĖ

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ABBREVIATIONS

NHR – National Human Rights Commission of Nigeria

OECD- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

UNICEF-United Nations Children’s Fund

UNODC- United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime

ILO- International Labor Organization

NASoW- Nigeria Association of Social workers

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1. INTRODUCTION

This research seeks to advance knowledge on how social work can assist street youth in Nigeria. Youth' choosing the street is becoming a prominent factor in various parts of the world. The street has become one of the most populated areas for adolescents who are homeless, seeking street work, orphans, suffering from drug abuse or seeking social integration; other reasons exist (*Oyeniya, Bamiwuye, Ibukun & Olusegun, 2009*). The professional field of social work is relevant in administering and fortifying better conditions for individuals in need, therefore, social work as a practice will play a vital role in assisting street youth in Nigeria. Social work can create methods in which street youth can access better standards of living, without feeling like social pariahs. The profession is a particularly purposeful job for creating social integration amongst street youth (*Gudžinskienė & Ramanauskas, 2017*).

The role of social work as a profession is a critical part in the provision of assistance to individuals (youth, families and elderly people) in Nigeria, the practice also refers to methods social welfare services can be administered; this practice is conversant with successful ways in dealing with street youth. Hence, the need to research how social workers can effectively assist street youth in Nigeria is important; as well as, methods in which social welfare services can be properly administered to these youth in Nigeria (*Ekpe, 1983*). The amount of street youth worldwide was estimated by the United Nations to be 150 Million and counting (*UNICEF, 1998*). The phenomenon of street youth has been on the increase in major cities of Nigeria (*Oloko, 1999*). Street youth in Nigeria need service delivery of a better welfare policy and their wellbeing prioritized. Social work is the most appropriate practice for assisting street youth (*Gudžinskienė & Ramanauskas, 2017*). This profession prioritizes street youth, ensuring strong bonds by maintaining a favorable environment (*Saurabh, Prateek & Jegadeesh, 2016*). Working with street youth can be one of the most challenging aspects for social workers handling youth; this is due to the fact that most have made the street a central part of their lives (*JAMA, 2016*).

Nevertheless, the Nigerian Child's Rights Act of 2003 states that "in every action concerning a child, whether undertaken by an individual, public or private body, institutions or service, court of law, administrative or legislative authority, the best interest of the child shall be the primary consideration" (*cited from Oyeniya, Bamiwuye, Ibukun & Olusegun, 2009*). Many literatures on outreach work with street youth have centralized the major concepts based on other parts of the world (*Gudžinskienė & Ramanauskas, 2017; Lotko, Leikuma & Battle, 2014*), while some other

research researchers have focused on street youth in Nigeria by pointing out the challenges in its steady increment (*Oyeniya, Bamiwuye, Ibukun & Olusegun, 2009*).

Problem of Research

The increasing number of streets youth and its associated social problems requires social action which has not been significant in terms of street youth welfare. Social work as a trained profession that is critical for the provision of the needed assistance for people (i.e. youth, families and elderly people) in Nigeria. But, it is worth mentioned this profession has not gained much ground in social welfare programs in the country due to many challenges. The Nigerian street youth are a class of people that should benefit from social welfare services if accessible. Hence, the study aims to discover the problems of streets youth in the selected study areas, and social worker's roles and government in addressing the problems. This includes, challenges facing social workers in rendering social welfare services to street youth and the way out to improve social welfare policy for street youth in Nigeria.

Relevance of research

This research is relevant as it is aimed at addressing the issues confronting social work with street youth in Nigeria. It focuses on how the social welfare policy can be properly administered to these individuals, including an overview of a specific area, practices in social work, and a phenomenological perspective to discovering social workers' experiences with street youth in Nigeria.

Research object- improved social welfare policy for street youth in Nigeria

Research goal- to examine theoretically and empirically, ways social work can develop and improve the social welfare policy for street youth in Nigeria.

Research objectives

1. To explore the role of social workers in social welfare services in Nigeria
2. To analyze social work in improving social welfare policy for street youth in Nigeria.
3. To discover how social work can ameliorate the social welfare policy for street youth in Nigeria and to suggest ways of improvement of the social welfare for street youth in Nigeria.

Research questions

The arising questions that this research seeks to find answers to are as follows:

1. How can social workers help street youth in Nigeria?
2. How can social work ameliorate the social welfare policy for the benefit of the street youth in Nigeria?

Research method

The qualitative method is employed for this thesis and it involves analysis and synthesis of the primary and secondary data. The research analysis will involve induction and deduction in the reviewed literature, as well as analysis of findings using graphical representation and explanation. According to *Levitt (2017)*, qualitative method is inductive in nature and it is applied in research work to explore the meaning and insights in a given situation.

Therefore, the research work on social work with street youth seeks to explain the how and why on related issues on the subject of study and cases with referenced to a particular context. It is an attempt to understand the situation with social works with street youth in Nigeria, and the reasons why certain things are the way they are at the moment.

The purposive sampling will be applied in selecting social workers (working with street children and youth) in three highly populated local government areas of Lagos state (Mushin, Ajegunle and Makoko Yaba LGA's). These local government areas of Lagos state are known for their high population density, slums, high rate of social issues and increasing numbers of children and youth living on the streets in these areas.

Research period- 2021

Overview of paper structure

An introduction on the subject of the study was done, presenting the problem of the research, its relevance the aim and objectives of the research as well as the research methods and research questions. The research work is divided into three chapters:

Chapter one: This consists of the introduction, research problem, and relevance of research, object, goal, objectives and research questions.

Chapter two: The theoretical part contains the definition of street youth, classification of street youth, mobilization of street youth, the concept of social work with street youth, history of social work, the definitions and concepts of social work, methods in social work and how it applies to street youth, how social work can help improve the social welfare of street youth and application of empowerment theory.

Chapter three: Research method and empirical analysis. The chapter contains the logical arrangement of the research, the research method for social work with street youth. It also contains a brief introduction and demographic information of the informants and research result analysis. The summary of research findings, conclusion and recommendation are done in line with the research outcome.

Keywords: street, youth, child, young people, homeless, social work, roles, methods

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter includes the literature review that surrounds and discusses the areas of street youth and how they can be managed through social work practices. It draws attention to the definition and characteristics of the research areas under discussion and then makes the linkage between the variables.

2.1 Street Youth and Social Work

The increase of street mobilization by youth around the world as well as the negligence of this demography by the society has ignited the importance of social work practices. However, as much as there are so many articles, books and write ups that attempt to discuss the importance of roles in social work, there is limited research work that directly links social work to street youth as a factor that can influence success or failure if well or poorly managed. This research work explores the ability of relevant social work roles in effectively managing, communicating and assisting street youth around the world.

Managing street youth is a contemporary issue that has become a popular discourse in the globalized and diversified parts of the world; it has become a necessity for street youth to be well managed notwithstanding their culture, background or views. In doing this, it gives rise to the need for effective communication, as communication is the way to pass and collect information. Therefore, in dealing with a number of disparities, social work helps through effective communication. At the end of the review, the research intends to provide a relevant framework that shows the relationship between the variables outlined in the research. There will be the review of secondary research materials like books, journals, articles, reliable internet sources and magazines. The presentation of rational literature with theories that suit and support the argument will be given to help achieve a good research work. The principle subject area and focus of this chapter will be street youth, social work and how social work roles can effectively handle street youth. It is important to note that, youth can range from a child to a young adult. Literature regarding street youth may be limited; most of the documents are based on other variables such as street children and homeless child or youth. For the best understanding of this research, those variables will be incorporated to form a broader aspect since they are all intertwined.

2.2 Concept of Street Youth

According to an article by the Defense for Children International (DCI), the wonder of street youth traces all the way back to the Medieval times and eleventh century Europe. In the sixteenth century, the main place to manage such individuals was set up, in Britain. Be that as it may, the concept of street children has a confusing history, when and how the term was coined relates to periods between 1840's and 1920's; most children without homes from the countless revolutions and wars in Europe were regarded street youth and children (*Charlotte, 2004 & Lewis, 2012*).

UNICEF (1989) asserted that 100 million youth were experiencing childhood with metropolitan streets around the globe (*Sarah, 2009*). Fourteen years later, UNICEF announced that '*the most recent appraisals put the quantities of these children as high as 100 million*' (UNICEF, 2002). Furthermore, more as of late still: 'the specific number of street youth is difficult to measure, yet to consider more likely than not runs along with several millions across the world. Almost certainly, the numbers are expanding as the worldwide populace develops and as urbanization proceeds apace' (UNICEF 2005).

Many confused efforts to manage the issue followed throughout the long term. Expectation for finding a practical answer for the issue of street youth strengthened in the 20th century; according to the article by DCI, a few worldwide and territorial associations were set up to advance the privileges of young people, including street youth. Such associations incorporate UNICEF, Save the Children and Defense for Children International. The battle for youth privileges made a significant progress in 1989 when the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was received (*UN, 1989*). The CRC is restricting for all gatherings that endorse it. It is the most generally confirmed common freedoms settlement; 191 states have endorsed it. States gatherings are answerable for presenting, clarifying and actualizing the CRC in the domains under their purview. By recognizing the legitimate status and the privileges of the youth, the CRC in a roundabout way advocates profound changes in the attitude and standards of society. Use of its arrangements could hence change numerous social orders, conventions, and financial and political standards. Despite the fact that extraordinary increases have been made nearby child privileges, including that most states have endorsed the CRC, and notwithstanding the action of legislative associations, NGOs, and worldwide foundations in shielding child privileges, the issue of street youth is still on the ascent in all nations. This increment is demonstrative of the infringement of other youth rights like the privilege to

wellbeing, schooling and a sufficient way of life, just as the option to live with a family and different rights explained in the CRC (UN, 1989).

To coin a definition for street youth, the two variables, **street** and **youth**, will have to be independently understood. What is a **street**? *Merriam-Webster dictionary, revised edition (2021)* defines a street in several aspects, stating that it is a thoroughfare especially in a city, town, or village that is wider than an alley or lane and that usually includes sidewalks. Accordingly, the dictionary defines a **youth** as, the time of life when one is young; it further gives other definitions, such as, the early period of existence, growth, or development and simply, a young person. United Nations General Assembly, the Commonwealth and the World Bank have endeavored to homogenize the order of youth age. For the UN and World Bank, youth are those people falling between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four years, and for the Commonwealth youth is the age section between the ages of fifteen and twenty-nine years. For certain nations the age could be stretched out to thirty-five years, as in Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone (*Efem, 2007*).

In terms of a simpleton, street youth are individuals between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four or thirty-five, who are directly involved with the public roads in a city, town or village. In such case, the reason for involvement by these people is uncertain and usually personal, economical or political. It is important to state that, UNICEF defines a child as any individual underneath the age of eighteen years (*Sarah, 2009*), which means between ages fifteen to eighteen years; a youth can be referred to as a child. Similarly, a street youth can be referred to as a street child. Also, most certainly, street children often grow up to be street youth. This may result to the conflict in acquiring a universal definition for the term street youth.

Several definitions of street youth (or young people) exist. The term lacks a universal definition (*Mankwane, 2014*), nevertheless, one of the most used definitions of street youth states: “an individual who has not reached adulthood, for whom the street (in the broadest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) has become her or his habitual abode and/or sources of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, supervised or directed by responsible adults” (*Glasser, 1994 & Ennew, 1994 cited from Mankwane, 2014*). This indicates that young individuals may choose the street as an alternative for shelter, but without supervision from an elderly entity.

Another definition stirs from the South African Child’s Act No. 38 of 2005, it states that: “a street youth means a person who – because of abuse, neglect, poverty, community upheaval or any other

reason, has left his or her home, family or community and lives, begs or works on the streets; or because of inadequate care, begs or works on the streets but returns home at night” (*Makwane, 2014*). This definition highlights that, if a child has gone through any form of social negativity and in the process, chooses anywhere other than the home or seldom resides at home but on the street, that individual can be seen as a street youth. It also illustrates the role of family, guidance and state policy. These roles are vital in the wellbeing of the youth in a society. Street youth tend to be present in every part of the world. Most often, developed nations possess a fewer number of this population compared to developing nations, the term street youth encompasses the range of young people that possess similar characteristics but particularly differ.

Within Nigeria, street youth occupy large cities (*Patrick, 2014*), most are viewed as ‘homeless’ (another term often used in describing street youth), while the actual number is undocumented. The rapid increase in Nigerian street youth is alarmingly becoming a thing of worry (*Joshua Olusina, Akanni & Lanre, 2009*). Most street youth in Nigeria suffer from similar factors of family disintegration, urbanization, modernization and abuse in different forms (*JAMA, 2016; Patrick, 2014 & Joshua, Olusina, Akanni & Lanre, 2009*), but most importantly, from the malfunction of the social welfare policy; in fact, several situations involve sexual abuse by law enforcers on gamines (*Patrick, E., 2014*).

Varieties in definition are because of contrasts in the different hypothetical and philosophical foundations of youth subject matter experts and philosophers, just as contrasts as expected and spot. Albeit this fails to imply that there are no broad systems or ideas that professionals can concur on and allude to, the definition and depiction of this marvel have been founded on changed modes and approaches. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines street children as young people with cut off family ties, who have discovered the street their solitary home; the street is the place where they stay every day; who all face similar threats like getting associated with illicit medications or prostitution, and their quality in the streets gives them a feeling of opportunity.

As a researcher, the definition of street youth are individuals between the age of fifteen to twenty-five, who lack proper guidance due to the inefficiency of a proper social welfare policy, mobilizing the streets in search of meaning. This definition directly points out the key areas affecting individuals who chose the streets, which are poor guidance and social welfare policies.

In a describing the concept of street youth, some important variables are ‘severed family ties’, ‘street as a solitary home’, ‘street endangerment’, and ‘opportunistic street value’. One definition that definitely stands out and is most appropriate for this research is by the Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues, it defines street children as an underage child or youth for whom the street (in the broadest meaning of the word, including uninhabited residences, wastelands, etc) has become his or her usual place of residence, and this person cannot find adequate protection. This definition directly classifies the demography as socially excluded, neglected and in need of help. Some other definitions of street youth sees young individuals as anyone who always or sometimes work and dwell in the road, without being dealt with by their families, or who spend extensive stretches of the day in the thoroughfare.

The different meanings of street youth depend on various models, for example some depend on spot of residency (the road) to create their definition, while others depend on the kind of familial connection and the idea of time spent in the street. These characterizing standards can likewise be sub-isolated into more nitty-gritty models. For instance, familial relations can be split between, kids who are in every day contact with their families, youth who have powerless associations with their families, and the individuals who have no family contact at all. Evidently, there is no select meaning of the idea of street youth. One may discover a few researchers utilizing such terms as destitute young people, homeless people and different terms as equivalents for street kids. Indeed, even the expression "street youth" has met with contention. For instance, some see the idea of "street youth" as negative, contending that it gives a generalized image of kids (*Makwane, 2014*). Others, notwithstanding, accept that it gives young ones a personality and a feeling of having a place.

In summary, supporters for utilization of the term contend that the idea incorporates a wide scope of children, like destitute children, refugee, youth who work and rest in the streets, children who have or lack families and invest some energy in foundations (like prisons). They contend for utilization of the term as it is comprehensive. Nonetheless, it is essential to be careful about speculations, which surely may not matter to all cases similarly, as each kid addresses a novel case by oneself.

2.2.1 Classification of Street Youth

There is often a contradiction in the difference between the classification and types of street children and youth, in fact, these two terms are easily similar. To the extent of this research, the difference in both has been clearly stated.

Though the concept street youth suffers from the lack of a proper definition, it has indeed made progress in terms of classification, several international organizations have classified street youth into various categories; some of these organizations include: The World Health Organization (WHO) and The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). The argument differs between both organizations, but in explanation, are regarded similar.

During a special project for street children, the WHO released a report classifying this demography into four categories;

- Children **of** the street: these are children having no home except for the street. The family may have deserted him or then again her or may have no relatives left alive. Such a child needs to battle for endurance and might move from one companion to another, or live in sanctuaries like deserted structures.
- Children **on** the street: this class of street children visits their family routinely. The child may even return each night to rest at home however spends most days and a few evenings on the street on account of destitution, stuffing, sexual or actual maltreatment at home.
- Children part of a street family: A few children live on the walkways with the remainder of their families. Families dislodged because of neediness, cataclysmic events, or wars might be compelled to live in the city. They move their assets from one spot to another when important. Regularly the youngsters in these 'road families' work in the city with different individuals from their families.
- Children in institutionalized care: these children have come from a circumstance of vagrancy and in danger of getting back to a destitute presence.

According to UNICEF (1984), street youth are sectioned into three categories; youth at risk, youth *on* the street, youth *of* the street, an additional category is abandoned youth but its classification is quite similar to youth at risk. In identifying street youth, two peculiarities are emphatic; the location and absence of proper supervision and care (*Panther-Brick, 2002*). Till date, UNICEF still recognizes these as the categories.

- Youth *at* risk: this group of young people is described as the most populated in this categorization of street youth. These are the youth of the metropolitan poor and they

structure the repository from which street children arise. The examples of problems leading to risk include: poverty, race, unemployment, gender, infections etc.

- Youth *on* the street: these youth go to the street to work to enhance their families' pay, and they will get back to their families at evening. A critical number go to class on low maintenance premise. Around the world, these kids perform comparative errands - they sparkle shoes, wash vehicles, sell lottery tickets, magazines and papers, convey products and hawk cigarettes and biting gum. Outrageous destitution has constrained them to get in any event part of the way self-supporting.
- Youth *of* the street: the street is their principle living domain. Family ties may exist however are distant and their previous home is visited rarely. These youth are bound to make their job by unlawful methods. UNICEF stated that: "They become untimely grown-ups and create standards of conduct which can be summed up in a dismissal of power, forcefulness, and a shortfall of cutoff points, freedom and an absence of fondness. They are likewise portrayed by issues with chronic drug use, liquor addiction, wrongdoing, prostitution and good and actual maltreatment".
- Abandoned youth: these are youth that relationship with their family has been cut off, either through death, uprooting or deserting. It is similar to youth *of* the street in regards to way of life and every day exercises. Examples of this category include orphans, runaways, refugees and some others who have lost relations with proper guidance.

The contradiction in argument between these international organizations centers on the term and explanation chosen to describe this demography. In contrast to those factors, the meaning put in words, are noticeably similar. As a researcher, this paper will attempt a collaboration of the valid information from the internationally recognized organizations above. This will deduce a better understanding of the classification, as illustrated on Table 1 below.

Table 1: The table shows the classification of street youth and children based on the collaborated information from WHO and UNICEF (Author, 2021).

CATEGORY	CHARACTERISTICS AND ATTRIBUTES	POSSIBLE REASONS	TYPES
Of the street	– Street is main domain; – Deserted from family; – Learning how to adapt alone; – Part of a street family; this is a family that lives on the street with the possibility of the family members being street children or youth as well.	– Conflict or War – Death – Poverty – Unemployment	– Homeless youth – Orphans – Depressed youth
On the street	– Economical activities for sustainability; – Distance from family is dependent on reasons for choosing the	– Unemployment – Family issues (step-parents) – Lack of self-actualization – Discrimination	– Depressed youth or youth suffering from mental illness such as anxiety and

	street, often returns home at night; – Abuse (usually sexual or domestic) from family member.	– Social exclusion	hypertension.
At risk	– Involved in illegal activities; – Family of street youth: members are usually not blood related; – Mostly from one of the other categories (of, on or abandoned).	– Poverty – Lack of social services in the society – In and out penitentiary – Lack of purpose – Social exclusion	– Youth on parole – Gangs – Drug dealers – Sex workers
Abandoned	– Living in institutions for habilitation such as foster homes; – Runaways and castaways.	– War – Death – Seeking asylum – Infected from Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)	– Refugees – Orphans

The table above shows that the possible reasons for being attributed as a street youth or child can be similar to each other; differentiation is usually based on present situations. Some common factors for possible reasons may include death (seeing as such phenomenon is inevitable), poverty and social exclusion, which are major reasons youth mobilize the street, amongst other factors which will be further discussed.

The classification of street youth also explains how some youth may not remain in one category forever. In terms of youth at risk, this group amounted to be the most in number due to the circumstance of possible change in situation. For instance, some youth of the street may eventually be a part of youth at risk if he chooses to regard joining a family of street youth over learning to adapt alone. Similarly, an abandoned youth can migrate to the category of youth on the street if, after being a part of a habilitation institution; the child gets assigned to a family that in turn, may choose to abuse that individual leading the individual to commit to the street. In actuality, these categorizes are in existence to cancel the notion of ‘all street children are the same’, these individuals may have similar reasons for choosing the street but are distinguishingly different.

In summary, it is important to state that, few of these youth chose the street and remains in a particular category without the need to migrate to another, for instance, being on the street without choosing to be involved in illegal activities for financial uplifting. While in most cases, the street chose these individuals, meaning, these people may never have expected to find themselves in the street but due to unforeseen circumstances, currently mobilize the streets.

2.2.2 Mobilization of Street Youth

The exact number of street youth in the world is unidentifiable. *UNICEF (1998)* addresses street youth or children in the estimates of 100 million. In as much as this data has been frequently used by other researchers, it still contradicts the factor of time which in turn makes this value inarguably outdated. In another event, the amount of street youth worldwide was estimated by the United Nations to be 150 Million and counting (*UNICEF, 1998*). In several parts of the world, the phenomenon of street youth and children is on the rise, for instance, in major cities of Nigeria, street youth are increasing (*Oloko, 1999*).

For several reasons, street youth and children cannot be quantified. It is almost impossible to count or estimate street youth and children; this is due to the fact that the task may seem unending. These several factors may result to why street children are unquantifiable (*CRC, 2019*).

- **Dynamic in nature:** This is a dynamic and versatile populace, which requires explicit techniques other than standard family overviews or statistics.
- **Time as factor:** Gauges or checks that are done at a fixed point in time can be misdirecting relying upon when the tally happens. Quantities of children in the street can vacillate either with occasional change or if the public authority eliminates street youth in front of enormous occasions worldwide games or worldwide gatherings or festivities.
- **Out of sight:** several researchers can take a preview of the children as of now in the city, they fail to catch the ones who are inside at that specific day or second. Additionally, the children that may not be quantifiable can include girls or gamines and disable children.
- **Out of fear of stigmatization:** Street youth experience significant degrees of shame and regularly are dubious of endeavors to tally them, dreading negative outcomes because of being tallied and liking to stay underneath the radar.

Regardless of these difficulties, it is essential to build up dependable quantities of street associated youth and the real factors of their lives. Associations working with street youth need precise information to eventually plan their projects properly. Benefactors need information so they can guarantee their wellbeing, schooling and equity financing likewise arrive at street youth. According to the Child Rights Convention and its specific guidance, governments need exact information on street children with the goal that they can commit the assets needed to satisfy their commitments to this demography.

The Consortium for Street Children (CSC) in 2019 stated that the organization is directing investigation into strategies for checking and assessing the quantities of road youngsters, with the objective of building up a standard philosophy that can be utilized across the area to make data on the quantities of street youth and children more exact, aggregately and practically identical.

One of the most important questions in this research is why do youth or children mobilize the street? The appropriate response is unpredictable, many street youth as there are on the planet there are as numerous explanations behind them being there. Each and every child has their own remarkable story. The explanations regarding their association with the street will fluctuate from one country to another and from one individual to another (CSC, 2019).

As aforementioned, various youth **on, of, at risk** and **abandoned** have several reasons they choose to mobilize the street. It is impossible to incorporate every reason into this research; nonetheless, the main reasons will be accentuated. Mobilization of the street has been an option by youth and children of different backgrounds, races, ethnicity or tribe and the fact still remains that the amount of this demography on the street is unquantifiable. Street youth are for various reasons drawn to the street and these reasons are but not limited to;

(The several reasons are divided into four factors; *natural, economical, social and psychological*)

Economical factor involves reasons that are directly related to the situation of the country in which this demography resides. In most situations, economical factors affect this demography more than any other factor. This is due to the inevitable role the economy plays in the maintenance of a nation. Economy certainly affects the function of the government in a nation. Some reasons based on economical factors include;

- **Poverty:** This is defined as the state of one who lacks a usual or socially accepted amount of money or material possessions. When the economy of a country cannot afford a proper standard of living for its citizens, the less privileged (poor, illiterates, disabled) tend to fall short in being able to provide for themselves. Certainly, a poor economy can lead to the inability to afford the cost of living, hereby leading to poverty of individuals. Several street youth tend to fall short of enough financial capability to take care of themselves, and in some cases, their family.
- **Unemployment:** Unemployment is the state of not being engaged in a gainful contribution. This economical factor affects most street youth who chose the street to eradicate the element of poverty. The unavailability of jobs occasionally leads to these youth fending for themselves by doing activities that may provide for a proper standard of living. It may range from stealing to drug peddling.
- **Urbanization:** This is seen as the ability to impact an urban way of life. This action is usually done to rural or undeveloped areas to introduce other forms of making money for the economy of a nation. Urbanization is an economical factor that affects street youth that once lived in rural areas but lacked basic amenities to make life more fruitful.

In hindsight, these three reasons are major circumstances that motivate youth to mobilize the street, the economical factor plays a major role due to the fact that these youth depend on the nation's state of being able to provide for each citizens.

Natural factors involve situations that cannot be controlled. It is regarded as unforeseen circumstances. In most situations, this factor is certainly unavoidable and when personally avoided, may affect the state of a nation. These factors may include but are not limited to:

- **War and conflict:** War is an unfortunate scenario that can occur at any major point in a nation. The essence of war is peace; the damage is the problem street youth who survive, face. Political conflict is an example of the use of street children to do malicious acts in countries suffering from governmental prosperity. Most of these countries include nations like Nigeria, Kenya and Mozambique.

War and conflict often lead to individuals seeking for asylum or an escape from trouble, to avoid hindrance of personal development. For example, good amounts of street youth happen to be either refugees or orphans seeking for liberation.

- **Death:** As defined in most articles, death is an action, to die means to stop living. Not being able to consciously or unconsciously do something. This act is mostly an unforeseen circumstance, which may leave individuals to take the street. Street youth are mostly orphans who end up on the street or inside an institutional care organization, for example, foster homes.

Psychological factors are occurrences that affect an individual's mind and behaviors. Psychological factors can alternate the situations in an individual's life, in a mixed up way, this factor is interrelated to the economical and social factors. The WHO profiled street children in this understanding.

- **Family issues:** This is the most common social problem in the history of man. Family issue is a problem that affects the psychological part of a human being. Since the family is the primary actor in a society, the initiation of challenges is often easy. In terms of street youth and children, several types of families can cause psychological issues which may encourage an individual to take the street. For instance, in case of a single-parent home, children are often curious about the absence of the missing parent figure, also, in terms of a family with step-relations (step-father, -mother or -siblings), youth tend to be disrespected by the new

figures involved in their lives or vice versa. This situation may also be associated with abuse, which is a dominant factor in psychological challenges.

- **Abuse:** As aforementioned, abuse can play a dominant role in psychological issues. According to SCIE (2015), there are different types of abuse (physical, emotional and sexual, material, modern slavery, discriminatory abuse, organizational abuse, self-neglect and acts of omission); in terms of street youth, the most common abuses involve physical, sexual and emotional. Physical abuse comprises of rough handling by parents, unlawful use of restraints, confinement, misuse of medications and withholding food; these are evidently reasons for youth to mobilize the street in cases where one might feel more comfortable dissociating from such situations. Sexual abuse which is commonly affected by gamines but not completely ignorant to the street boys as well, constitutes of rape or attempted rape, nonconsensual/pedophilic masturbation and sexual penetration, inappropriate sexual innuendo, forced use for pornographic content and indecent exposure; clearly, these actions and more are reasons to leave home or a settlement to engage in the street. As youth and children, sexual abuse can easily become a reason to engage in the street, mostly because it uncomfortable and can inflict pain. Emotional abuse mostly involves youth and children who are not being treated with emotional intelligence, for instance, preventing the expression of views and opinions, disrespecting one's privacy, threats of abandonment or disowning, prevention from social growth stimulating activities, neglecting assistance and public humiliation; youth and children may not completely choose the street in such cases, most times, the choice of mobilizing the street arises from continuity in this aspect of abuse. One type of disregarded abuse that children and youth see as a reason to mobilize the street is modern slavery, that is, situations like forced labor, domestic servitude, sexual exploitation and more. This abuse is often regarded with families that have step-relations and mostly as a result of disrespect or negligence.
- In addition to these *psychological factors*, **mental health issues** and **gender orientation** are contemporary elements (Gatz, 2009). Street youth often suffer from mental health issues like depression, anxiety and trauma. These mental health issues may lead to suicidal thoughts or drug abuse. These children regularly portray strength and incredible resilience but the damage is usually internal, and rarely exhibited in public. The shame and social rejection looked by street youth affects their psychological prosperity. Gender orientation regards

most youth mobilizing the street who are non-binary in sex; this means they choose to neither be identified as male or female. This contemporary subject has led to families rejecting children, which significantly affects their psychological development and often make them seek for social acceptance on the street. Gender orientation includes homosexuals, transgender, pansexual and many more. Children and youth that are affected by this rejection may experience other forms of abuse, including physical, mental and/or sexual (CSC, 2019).

In summary, youth mobilize the street due to various reasons. These reasons may be similar in nature but often different based on personal lifestyles.

2.3 Social Work as a Profession for Helping Street Youth

Social work profession originated as voluntary efforts to address the social question, the paradox of increasing poverty in an increasingly productive and prosperous economy, in North America and Europe during the late 19th century (Stuart, 2019). Some of the earliest social work interventions were formulated to meet the basic human needs of populations and placed great values in providing support, help, and resources to families and communities in an effort to alleviate suffering (Nsonwu, Casey, Cook and Armendariz, 2013).

As at 1920, social workers can be seen in public schools, hospitals and also at the child welfare agencies, settlement houses and family agencies, they have focused on the problems of families and children by the next decade (Stuart, 2019). Social work is a practice based profession that promotes social change, cohesion, development and the empowerment of individuals and communities. Social work practice entails the understanding of development of human, behavior and the social, economic and cultural institutions and their interaction. The profession is now known as social work ultimately started due to the practice originally known as ‘helping’ others to improve their well-being of people, families and communities (Stuart, 2019). Over the years social work profession played important roles in the facilitation of social change aimed at reducing inequalities among various populations (Beckman, 2021).

By the practice of helping, social workers were able to address several social problems that plagued vulnerable populations by facilitating, advocating and influencing people, families, communities, politicians, and law makers (Langer and Leitz, 2014). Social work education program developed as a stable finding base for voluntary social services programs, social work achieved professional

status in the 1930s. Also, throughout the progressive movement era, many social workers emerged and they were known as the major players known to have advanced the profession. These people came to be known as pioneers of the social work profession as their careers devoted to improving the well-being of people, families and communities.

Social work practice organization and social work education organization amalgamated and in 1947, NASSA and AASSW formed the National Council on Social Work Education to explore professional unification (*Stuart, 2019*). NASSA and AASSW merged to form the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). The American Association of Social Workers (AASW), organized in 1921, attempted to represent all social workers, but specialized practitioner organization existed for medical social workers (organized in 1918), school social workers (1919), psychiatric social workers (organized in 1926), group workers (1936), community organizers (1946), and researchers (1949), several inter-organizational committees met during the early 1950s to develop an agreement for a single social work practitioner organization (*Stuart, 2019*). Other bodies emerged for regulating and coordinating social work activities, such as the NASW and IFSW.

In summary, based on the history and services of social work, the profession has equipped for the functions and tasks of advocating for care of people, protecting the vulnerable, making available psychotherapy as defined as “assessment, diagnosis, treatment of mental, emotional or behavioral disorders, conditions, addictions, or other biopsychosocial issues”. Social work definitions and concept is examined below.

2.3.1 Social Work as a Concept

The concept of social work is a field that has diverse views in its definition. According to *Askeland and Payne (2001)*, social service has been targeted continuously with contradicting values and definitions, politicians, legislators and social workers have repeatedly made an effort at establishing a universal definition on social work and its principles. Despite if the widely considered as an element that considers the response towards social issues, though utilizing an assortment of values and skills that are mutual and comprehensive throughout the national and intentional territories.

Despite the services providing bodies and the titles utilized for various roles differentiate greatly, the real scope of interventions towards individuals, communities and the aspects and comprehension towards which they are dedicated exhibit substantial resemblances. Such is not to alleviate the

various historical foundations and theoretical foundations of social working as created by the Anglo-American tradition and social pedagogy created under numerous North European nations. To recommend that these discrepancies are not enough, but we can also comprehend a mutual goal (*Karen Lyons, 2003*). Social services had been defined as practice oriented occupation; alongside an educational profession that gives encouragement to social progression and development, liberation and social unity, empowerment of people living in the society.

The values of social service, human rights, social justice, mutual concern and comprehension towards diversity are important aspects of social working. Supplanted by the concepts of humanities, social science and domestic comprehension, social service encourages people and entities to meet and overcome all social problems and encourage improved living standards (*IFSW, 2004*). It attempts to create the concept and principles of social work, its comprehension and practice methodologies, and to counter criticisms of previous efforts to establish a universal definition, which were perceived to be oriented towards western values with little priority towards collective rights; rather all priority was allocated to people's rights (*Hare, 2004; Truell, 2014*).

Thus, social work according to the *IFSW (2014)* is defined as a practiced based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of individuals. Like every other profession, values guide, principles or codes apply, and social is no different. The NASW created the code of ethics for social work, they are:

Service: motivation makes available should exceed personal interest for social workers. Social workers use their skills, principles and comprehension to aid individuals in need of support and a contribution towards mitigating social problems. They are promoted to volunteer a section of the professional capacity with no motivation of receiving any substantial financial compensation (Probono service).

Dignity and Worth of the person: it is the responsibility of social workers to consider and react with all people in a kind, respecting and caring manner with no regards to their cultural and ethnic background. Social workers are supposed to encourage clients' capacity and chance to modify and contribute towards their own requirements. All social workers must be aware of the diversity of their responsibility and the greater society's benefits in a socially positive attitude, in turn with the principles, ethical values and ethical ideals for the occupation.

Social justice: the responsibilities of social workers entail pursuing progression and development in the society, specifically together and in representation of the oppressed and vulnerable people in the society. The efforts of social workers are directed towards problems on unemployment, poverty, racism and other types of social issues. The functions aimed at encouraging consideration and increase the general comprehension on ethnic and cultural diversity. Social workers attempt to create comprehensive access to knowledge, resources and services: equal opportunities and effective contribution on the decision- making procedures from all people in the society.

Competence: all social workers consistently attempt to enhance their occupational comprehensive and capabilities and implement them in their actual performance. All social workers should attempt to enhance their knowledge based on their profession (*Glicken, 2010*).

Prominent of human relations: all social workers comprehend that association amidst person in critical towards social change and progression. All social workers attempt to encourage, reinstate, sustain and promote the welfare the individuals, groups, families, companies and entire societies.

Integrity: all social workers are consistently comprehensive regarding the profession's purpose, principles, ethical values and principles in an attitude relevant with their conditions. All social workers are expected to perform responsibility and honestly and encourage good ethical values towards organization to which they are associated.

In summary, social services are dependent on the admiration for inherent dignity and worth of all persons, and the rights originating from such. All social workers should maintain and promote people's bodily, emotional and mental capacity and welfare (*IFSW, 2004*). The valuable lesson is that, there exist substantial contractions in a possible explanation on the principles of social work, as these values are maintained under IFSW explanation are also highlighted inside the national association code of ethics for countries (*IFSW, 2004*). There is existent of a global reach on such principle through time and place either for social workers, education or social pedagogue (*Kornbeck, 2002*). Despite the various contradictions on the most effective structure, there are trivial contradictions on the primary principles backing social services (*Askeland and Payne, 2006*).

2.3.2 Methods in Social Work and How It Applies To Street Youth

A method is what a social worker actually does when working with clients. Thus, social worker relies on methods or techniques which have been tested over a period of time (*Uranta and Ogbanga, 2017*). Social work activities involve six main methods which are grouped into the primary and

secondary methods. These methods and activities have become the pillars of social work practice and their nomenclature stood out to describe them as social work methods, social work processes or social work activities (*Chukwu, 2019*). The terms are used interchangeably (*Rao, 2011*).

The methods are used to help people of different ages from numerous sections of the society to improve their social functioning and to cope more effectively with their challenges (*Okoye, 2013*). It is achieved by using these methods to systematically resolve psycho social problems and by way of planning to assist people (*Mohinuddin, 2017*). The social work methods are shown in Figure 1 below.

Social work primary methods: the primary methods are direct in the sense that it is applied to a real situation to assist in solving problems among the people. The social worker intervenes directly with the clients in need of the professional services to people, groups and communities. It is applied to solve problems at the grass-root level through direct intervention of the social worker. The methods under primary techniques are: social casework, social group work and community organization.

- **Social case work:** is a primary method that deals with issues through one on one relationship which is guided by professional knowledge of the social case worker. With this method social case worker makes efforts at repairing relationships of the client with his social environment and through a guided interaction that allows the clients to adjust with their social environment (*Mohinuddin, 2017*). Using this method with street youth enables the social worker to discover aspects of the youth challenges, and plan an appropriate treatment plan and then apply the social work professional knowledge to boost relationship ties to results in change of attitude and behavior of the street youth in favor of their development in growth. It is particularly effective for counseling street youth as it promotes relationship with the social worker and it is characterized by mutual acceptance and rapport, finding supports for them etc.
- **Social group work:** is defined as two or more people connected to one another by social relationships (*Chukwu, 2019*), since group is a fundamental part of human experience and social life. It involves a process by which people in a social group are assisted by a professional qualified worker, which guides them in their interaction by planned programs activities. The aim is to enable them relate themselves with other people and find growth opportunities in line with their needs, and abilities towards the noble end of individual group and community development. Social worker uses social group work through the following three methods:

1. Social action group - it is used to promote change in the society.

2. Support/remedial/therapeutic/treatment group - it is created to solve behavioral or emotional problems.
3. Reciprocal groups - this involves members coming together for mutual exchange of ideas and information, to enable exchange of support for one another.

In summary, group works facilitates changes in client's communication skills, self-awareness, reality assessment and acquisition of constructive societal values to promote realizing chosen life goals (*Uranta and Ogbanga, 2017*). The three methods in group work are also suitable for assisting street youth to promote changes in their lives, to enable street youth with addiction problems access support and treatment. It also them enable them share information that can help the street youth support one another through the professional guidance activities planned by the social worker.

- **Community organization:** is a method of social work by which efforts are directed towards meeting the needs of the community by organizing human and materials resources for the community (*Mohinuddin, 2017*). Community organization could range from building the community by making available services provided by the government or NGOs, it could be community based organizations (CBOs), which focuses on problems of social and structural inequalities, to mobilization and activism at different levels organized by various global and local sectors (*Loomis, 2012; Midgley, 2010*). Thus, community organization (development) is a process through which a systematic attempt is made to improve relationships in a community (*Chukwu, 2019*). Community social worker performs their roles as an enabler, counselor and educator.

In summary, the expertise of the community social workers involves organization to foster human relationships that binds the community members together even in difficult circumstances with the help of a local leader. The focus of the social worker using this method is to help organize and collaborate efforts of the street youth in the community for their own wellbeing and development.

Social work secondary or indirect methods: it directly involves some specialized agencies or a set of organized people. It is different from the primary methods because it is generally operated at secondary levels not with individuals directly. The three secondary methods are social welfare administration, social work research and social action.

- **Social welfare administration:** it is a process through which social policy is transformed into social service. It is a process of managing the affairs of social work and social welfare (*Mohinuddin, 2017*). It is a two-way process of transforming policy into concrete social services and use of experience in policy modification recommendation. Also, it is a growing field in which special programs are administered within the setting of an agency to vulnerable people, socially excluded group, disadvantaged and weaker section of the society, people with disability or mental illness etc. According to *Chukwu (2019)*, the present challenges facing social agencies in Nigeria are largely due to poor administration as a result of the non-inclusion of trained social workers in these agencies. Hence, the poor planning and access to social services or assistance by vulnerable groups in the country such as the street youth.
- **Social work research:** is an important method of social work, it refers to the systematic and important enquiry to questions encountered by social worker in the field of application (*Mohinuddin, 2017*). It helps in identifying social problems, and it is intensive and extensive in identifying the causal factors, its impact on target population and the repercussion on their social lives. Social work research assists in finding and developing an objective critical perception of social problems.

In summary, the application of social work research for street youth for instance, will help the social worker gain an in-depth knowledge about the social challenge, the contributing factors and the impact it has on the socio-cultural and economic lives of the street youth. Social work research helps to gain a store house of knowledge and helps to plan more effectively and implement social work programs.

- **Social action:** it is a method that adheres to the philosophy of professional social work which does not appoint blame to individuals for the challenges or deficiency, but rather believes in the dignity and worth of human beings (*Chukwu, 2019*). It rejects the doctrine of laissez-faire and survival of the fittest, and it adopts the commitment to capacity of all individuals to take action by a non- elitist highly skilled process. It also facilitates members to make their own choices and take actions for them.

In Nigeria's social services defective system, social action can be used to bring about the desirable change that will ensure social progress. It is a method of mobilizing individuals to create awareness on existing issues, organizing and encouraging people to raise their voices against undesirable practices that hampers growth and development, by pressing for legislature or authorities that are suitable for social progress.

In summary, social work primary and secondary methods are all directed that improving the wellbeing of people through either collective and individuals approach to addressing social problems. It is geared towards facilitating positive changes in the life of people, groups and community as a whole.

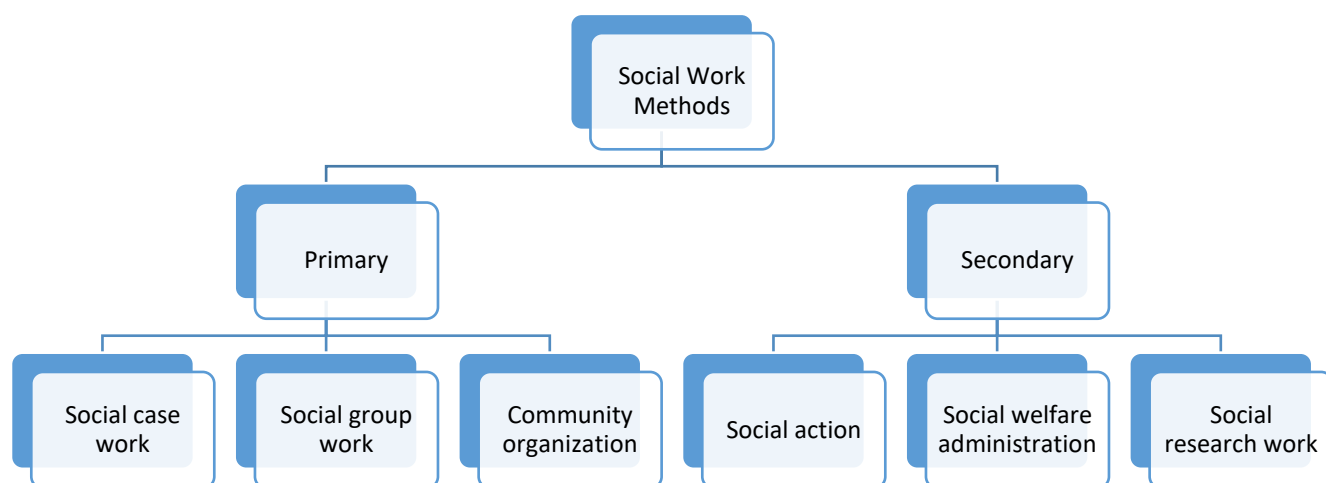


Figure 1: Social work practice methods (Source: Chukwu, 2019)

2.3.3 How Social Work Can Help Improve the Social Welfare of Street Youth

Social workers perform different roles in line with the fundamental principles, values and ideas of social work which is relevant to improving the social welfare of the street youth. There exist several ideas on exactly what the objectives and purpose of social workers according to *Askeland and Payne (2006)*. Some of the roles social workers can perform to improve the social welfare of street youth are as follows:

- **Social workers as a counselor:** the idea of a social workers as a person that supports and advices individuals has been a powerful and reoccurring function in social services since history (*Younshisband, 1959*). A major function of social workers includes to empower people through affirming personal strengths and the abilities to handle their problems more effectively (*Zastrow, 2016*). A social workers acting as a counselor assist street youth to express their needs, clarify their issues, explore strategies for resolution, and application of strategies for intervention to assist in developing and expanding the abilities of clients to handle their problems more

effectively. It is the principle of aiding and supporting others which is fundamental towards finding solutions to problems. Thus, it may be less of casework towards the roles of counseling, which could be observed as an important problem social service, as yielded by public services.

- **Social worker as an advocate:** a social worker may also be considered as a representative functioning in representing the poor, street youth, disadvantages and socially discriminated groups etc. social worker's role may as well include performing actions that benefit individuals and groups of persons, i.e. families and communities. The National Association of Social Worker's (NASW, 2015), "specifies that the social workers are responsible to the community and broader society since its adoption in 1960 and in 1996, strengthened its call to require all social workers to participate in social and political action to "expand choice and opportunity" and "equity and social justice for all persons". Thus, social workers in this regard can make available and mention their perception, desires and motivation for the benefit of the street youth as they are also part of the community. This role still empowers the notion of a strong association between the social worker and the street youth they are working with.
- **Social worker as a partner:** The social worker can be considered as a parent with the disabled and the socially discriminated groups, abandoned groups and persons. It can exist as a strong bond amidst social workers and the street youth or other group whom the support is directed.
- **Social worker as assessor of risk:** social workers as risk assessor have been a major role in assessing the needs and risk over a variety of clients and groups, in this case assessing certain risks involved with the street youth. Assessment is a primary role of social workers and it is usually what dictates the services and resources identified as needs for clients (street youth) (Beckman, 2021).
- **Social worker as an educator:** the social workers acting as a teacher or educator often assist in times of crisis for many clients (Beckman, 2021). The role of social workers assists clients to develop insights into their behavior by making available education aimed at assisting clients learn skills to some of which are parenting, budgeting, communicating effectively and/or prevention of violence (Zastrow, 2016).
- **Social worker as care manager:** every social worker could as well maintain the purpose of functioning as a care manager. They could be incorporated in the arrangement for care towards clients, but as well be incorporated in trivial direct contacts with clients, whose care towards peoples (street youth) are executed by non- certified social workers or operating under the private or voluntary sectors.

- **Social worker as a case manager:** acts as a case manager by identifying needs and also barriers to their clients. Sometimes they provide direct services to the clients and often engage with clients that are in need of multiple services from numerous agencies. Social work case managers remain active with client throughout the process by identifying and coordinating services, monitoring identified services and providing support services when required, and finally making available follow-ups to ensure services are being used (*Zastrow, 2016*). They work with clients to develop goals and implement intervention based on the goals identified.
- **Social worker as an agent of social control:** the goals of social services can be seen as or observed as a conservative effort aimed at continuing an economic and social framework that gives consideration to the inequalities and disadvantages faced by several individuals. In this case, social workers are perceived as administrators of social control or manage social system.
- **Social workers as a researcher:** social workers use their practice experience to inform future research. This is due to their awareness of the current research, and they integrate their knowledge with the current research. The knowledge obtained through information gathered and examined are used to update their practice intervention (*Grinnell and Unrau, 2010*)

In summary, social work as an occupation responds to diverse social problems, the multiple roles of social workers in addressing these issues is made possible through the professional knowledge, competences and skills acquired in this field. This makes it possible to use the knowledge and skills of social work to empower groups such as the street youth, facilitate positive social change, advocate for effective social policies, organize social actions etc to improve the wellbeing of their clients.

2.4 Empowerment Theory: Definition, Concept and Relevance to Social Work Practice

The empowerment theory is a construct that links person's strength and competences, natural assisting system, proactive behaviors to social policies and social change (*Perkins, 1995*). Empowerment theory understands human challenges in the context of a social, economic and political environment that is stratified and oppressive to those with the smallest advantages in the society.

According to *East (2021)*, the empowerment theory situates human challenges in a person on environment perspective, not only recognizing the interdependence and mutual influence of persons and communities, but it also proposes successful interventions to the problem of people at the

intrapersonal and community levels simultaneously (East, 2021). The empowerment is a theoretical framework that has been used for many decades to guide and evaluate persons, groups, organizations and communities (Perkins and Zimmerman, 1995; Zimmerman, 1995, Zimmerman, 2000). Some definitions of empowerment theory by authors are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Definitions of Empowerment Theory

AUTHOR	DEFINITION
Karl (1995)	“Empowerment theory is defined as a process of awareness and capacity building leading to higher participation to greater decision making and control, and transformation action”.
Lorraine, M. and Robert, O (1991).	“Empowerment theory is a process of increasing personal, interpersonal or political power to enable people, families and communities take actions to improve their conditions”.
Parsons, R. J. (1991)	“Empowerment is a process through which individuals becomes strong enough to participate within, share in the control of, and influence events and institutions affecting their lives” and that in part, “empowerment necessitates that people gain more skills, knowledge and sufficient power to influence their lives and the lives of the people they care about”.
Rappaport, J. (1987)	“Empowerment theory is defined as the interdependent process at the persons (Psychological), organizational, and community levels, which focuses on how people (and groups) receive and use resources to assert control and change their environmental condition”.
Lee, B (1986)	“Empowerment theory concerns a person’s perceived and actual ability to determine the course of one’s life and community. It is strategies emphasizing the importance of teaching person’s about the dynamics of power relationships within their social, political and economic systems” .

The various definitions create an understanding of empowerment theory as a level to which we are capable of affecting our environment, which is to get things done or to make things occur or to keep things from becoming done. The authority of empowerment theory and practice, defines power as

the ability to influence the forces that affects the life, space or benefit and to produce change. Therefore, empowerment theory considers the assets and the capabilities that are fostered with persons and communities to make improvement on the lives of people. It has been broadly applied to studies that examines persons wellbeing (*Opara, Lardier Jr, Fernandez, Garcia-Reid and Reid, 2020; Lardier Jr, 2019*).

Thus situations make many individuals perceive themselves powerless in the face of economic system, political system, religious and education system, legal and justice system, and even on more immediate level, the peer and family system. And the lack of power is based on several factors including economic insecurity, absence of experience in the political arena, physical and emotional stress, lack of fiscal support, lack of access to information etc. (*Parsons, 1991*). As people experience powerlessness in relation to their environment, that experience is internalized and they see themselves as helpless.

Therefore, to reverse the state of helplessness experienced by people, the empowerment theory in social work entails applying intervention methods to guide individuals towards achieving a sense of control. It is centered on assisting marginalized individuals, groups and community levels to gain the personal, interpersonal and political power to make improvement on their lives. Enclosed through the foundation of a generalist, empowerment practice directs social workers address problems at all levels (i.e. persons, families, groups, organization, neighborhoods, communities and society). Empowerment in social work practice “enables a process through which individuals becomes strong enough to participate within, share in the control of, and influence events and institutions affecting their lives” and that in part, “empowerment necessitates that people gain more skills, knowledge and sufficient power to influence their lives and the lives of the people they care about”.

Thus, the principle of empowerment theory is applied practically to social work practice as a central process of social work practice. It serves as a framework for social workers to understand the phases of assessment, practice strategies, and methods in working with the individuals. This theory is particular applicable across divers setting of individuals in either the micro or macro level of practice with the individuals that are living in oppression and in need of liberation. Such individuals are the street youth, mental health people on the streets with no form of assistance, homeless people with concurrent illness that developed as a result of traumatic remarks in the life of such as mental health etc.

In summary, the empowerment theory principle is practically applied in social work to assist in important aspects of humanity. Since empowerment in social work is a theory rooted in social justice, its main goal is to limit social inequalities through community building and redistribution of access to power. It helps the oppressed to gain understanding that their nature of oppression is structural and systematic and it is not a condition they deliberately attached themselves to. Empowerment theory is relevant for social workers practice is helping street youth makes changes for themselves and it is a strength based theory that makes emphasis on the process than the outcome.

3. RESEARCH METHOD AND EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

The purpose of this research is to examine theoretically and empirically, ways social work can develop and improve the social welfare policy for street youth in Nigeria, which requires carrying out the stated objectives of the research. The Research object- to improve the social welfare policy for street youth in Nigeria Thus, the part contains the research method used for the empirical research, the analysis and the summary of the result of this study of social work with street youth in Nigeria.

3.1 The Logical Arrangement of the Research

The logical arrangement followed in the research is as follows (see Fig.2 below):

The empirical methodology and analysis involves detailed information about the research method and process used to carry out the empirical study. The analysis of the findings of the empirical study will be done for understanding of research results.

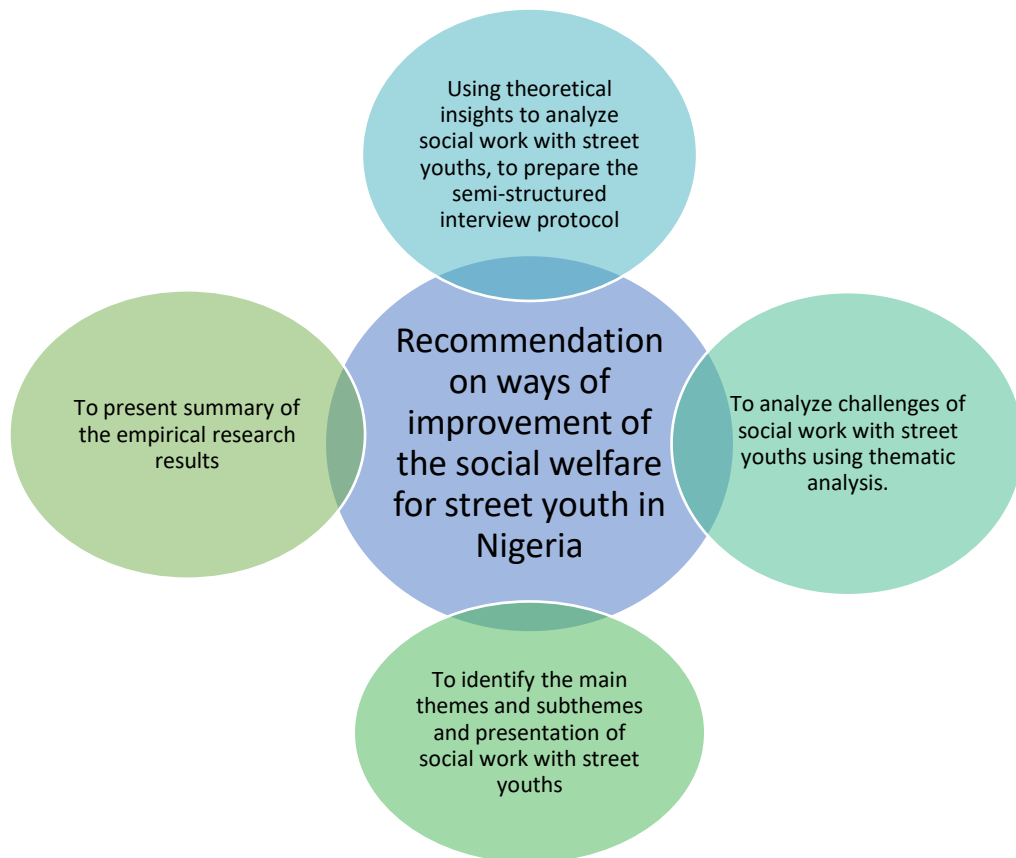


Figure 2: Logical arrangement of the research (Source: Author, 2021)

3.2 Research Method for Social Work with Street Youth

The method of this research work involves strategies, techniques and process used to generate data for the analysis of outcome. In an effort to uncover new information on social work with street youth in the selected parts of Lagos states (Mushin, Ajegunle and Makoko Yaba LGA) in Nigeria.

It implies that the informants involved in the research have some common features in relation such as their experience, conditions, issues etc. with reference to the subject of study “social work with street youth”. As a result, the qualitative method was adopted as it enables gathering of data about live experiences, behaviors, emotions and the interpretation of the persons attached to them in the selected field and study areas in Lagos state, Nigeria.

The data realized from the interview will be analyzed with thematic analysis. Thematic analysis comprises of the major issues of themes arising from a body of evidence of the research on social work with street youth. The method provides a process or ways of organizing and summarizing the findings from a large pool of diverse body of research (*Pope, Mays and Popay, 2007*). The original information gotten from the interview informants will be presented in a tabular form that is summarized into subthemes. These sub-themes are developed from the original information gotten from the informants.

The major opinions were taken from the initial themes to form the final themes which guide the data presentation and explanation. In situations where there are multiple appearances of viewpoints or words in the themes, the themes are categorized according to the data similarities and presented on the analysis section. The theme development is illustrated in Figure 3 below.

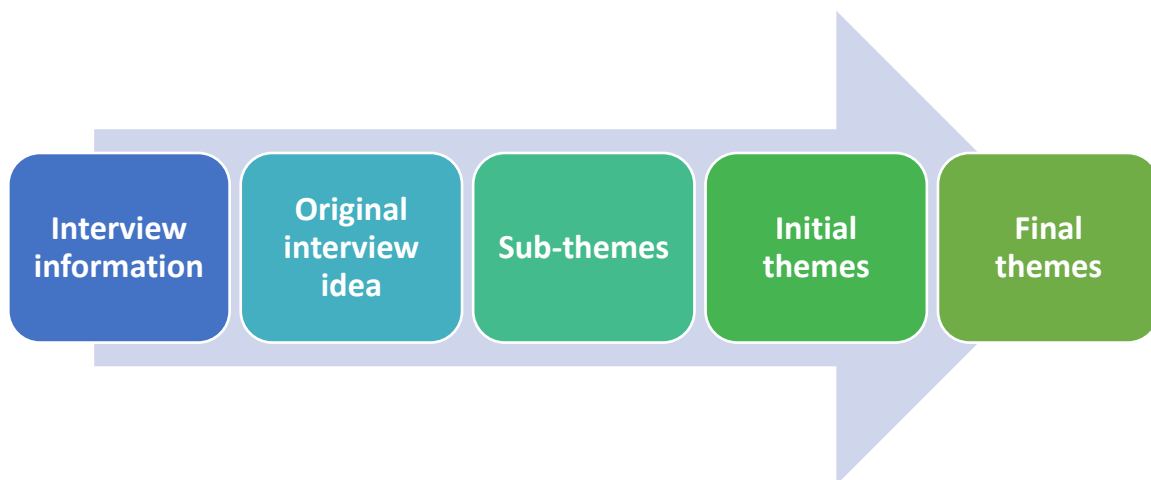


Figure 3: Development of Themes (Source: Author, 2021)

Data collection – The data used in the study were realized from the secondary and primary sources and are relevant to the subject of study “social work with street youth” in selected part of Lagos state, Nigeria.

- **Secondary sources of data-** These are data derived from published materials from books from authors, journals, reports, internet considered relevant to for the purpose of the study.
- **Primary sources of data-** The primary data are mainly realized from the semi-structured interview with informants in the study area.

Research Instrument - Research guide questions for interview carried out with the selected social workers for the semi-structured interview in each of the three local government areas of Lagos state selected for the study.

1. How long have been working with children and youth?
2. What are the categories of youth you work with?
3. What are your observations on the social issues of the streets youth?
4. Could you please mention if these youth have access to social welfare services when needed?
5. What methods do you often apply as social worker when working with street youth?
6. How do you apply these methods? Can you describe more perhaps with a different group too?
7. What type of strategies do you use to engage the street youth? (Depending on the type of street youth).
8. How do you handle crisis while working with street youth? Please give an example of crisis faced?
9. What are some of the biggest accomplishments in this field with street youth?
10. Could you please mention the role of social workers in helping street youth has been impactful?
11. What is the role of government in helping to provide social welfare for street youth?
12. Have you been faced with an ethical conflict in your experience working with street youth? How did you handle the situation?

13. What are your opinions on ways of improvement of the social welfare for street youth in Nigeria?

Qualitative technique – The qualitative research approach is used because it is a social enquiry that that helps the researcher understand the world around them and the things as they are, why it occurs that way etc. (*Hancock et al, 2002, Patton 2002*). Also, questions are designed as guide in the interview to seek opinions of informants on social works with street youth. The semi-structured interview went through an in-depth session with the selected informants with the researcher. A semi-structured approach generally involves dialogue between the informants and the researcher and it is considered a flexible interview protocol, it supplements follow-up questions, comments and probes. It also allows the researcher open ended questions to explore the thoughts, beliefs and feelings of the informants on the specified topic (*Dejonckheere and Vaughn, 2020*).

The interview is carried out using internet facilities such as WhatsApp, Zoom, Skype and telephone discussions, depending on the choice of informants and convenience. The semi-structured used was due to its advantage of allowing a relatively free conversation with informants. It also allowed certainty on issues which are noted and covered during the interview sessions. All information's from informants are taken down for review and analysis. According to *Braun and Clarke (2013)*, the thematic analysis process used is summarized as follows:

- **Step one** - The thematic process for interview with informants on social work with street youth involved first familiarization with the data information from the interview.
- **Step two** - creating tables for the data gotten from each interview for easy analysis and utilization of details, to avoid omission of information.
- **Step three** - the data extracted from the sentences and phrases of informants (original interview ideas) are place in another column to form the data the original part of interview data generated.
- **Step four** - reviewing and generating sub-themes which are like shorthand labels from original interview extracts.
- **Step five** - formulation of initial themes based on pattern of data.
- **Step six** - formulation of final themes named from the initial themes.
- **Step seven** - the sub-themes and final themes are presented for analysis of the research findings.
(Source: *Author 2021*)

Ethics of research- It is important for considering ethics in research works as it is aimed at respecting the rights of informants (Patton, 2002). The areas worthy of note about ethical consideration for this research are-

- *Informed consent* - permission of informants where sort first to avoid violation of rights.
- *Autonomy* - it considers issues of rights of people which must be respected.
- *Objectivity* - avoidance of bias in aspects of research analysis and interpretation of results
- *Justice* - predominantly about equity.
- *Beneficence* - it is about doing the right things (good).
- *Non- maleficence* - it is about not doing harm.
- *Respect for intellectual property* - the source of the information used in the research is acknowledged in the reference list.

These ethical considerations are taken seriously to ensure that the informants are given the needed confidentiality and also understanding of the idea of the research before their participation. The research is mainly for academic's purpose, and assurance of confidentiality was made known, for this reason, all informants have codes (A, B, C, D, E, F). Also, the materials used from secondary sources were referenced accordingly, to ensure the rights of the authors were respected.

Sample size - For empirical research works, interviews, observation of informants and documentation of reading can be considered as an effective means of gathering information under ethnographic method (Creswell, 2013; Hancock et al, 2002). Creswell provide useful information about three aspects of research design. He suggested tips about the author's roles in qualitative research method, in terms of qualitative collection procedures, like observation, interviews, documentation, reliability and validity or research and processes of analysis.

The case studies of the empirical aspects of the research are aimed at retrieving information about social work with street youth within the parts of Lagos State, Nigeria selected for this study. As shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Distribution of informants selected for the interview

Local government area of Lagos State, Nigeria	Informants (Social workers)	Informants code Informant (I)	Length of Interview	Years of experience with street youth
Makoko Yaba	2	I.A	52mins	6years
		I. C	40mins	4years
Ajegunle	2	I. D	56mins	5years
		I. F	50mins	6years
Mushin	2	I. B	47mins	5years
		I. E	59mins	7years
Total	6			

The selected informants (using purposive sampling) are social workers working with children and youth within the selected local government areas of Lagos who came aboard through referrals from contact in the areas. The social workers with street youth themselves express the feelings, experiences in doing their work and expectation as a result of their participation in the study.

Therefore, a total number of 6 social workers where scheduled for the semi-structured interview through their commitment to partake verbally. The interviews were carried out around 15th to 25th of August, 2021 based on the respondent's convenient date within the scheduled time frame for the interview.

The sample size in qualitative research is often much smaller that the quantitative research (*Interq Research LLC, 2020*). Working with smaller size is not necessarily a reason to have inadequate information, but rather the emphasis is that the information derived contains in-depth information that uncovers a range of opinions based on experiences rather than repetitive data from a larger sample size. Also, the similarities in the lifestyle and experience of the respondents make it unnecessary for a large audience. Using a large sample size in this research may result in repetitive information that hinders the attainment of the research goal and time waste. The criteria for selection are:

- Willingness to participate in the study.

These criteria are considered important to generate the information needed. Their willingness to spare time to share their knowledge and experience on the subject of study within the selected LGA's to achieve the aim of the study is important.

3.3 Brief Introduction and Demographic Information of Informants (Social Workers)

This subchapter comprises of the brief introduction and demographic information of the social workers who work with street youth, (also known as homeless children or street children) in Lagos Nigeria. The general information about the background of these Informants is summarised based on information derived from them.

The informants all dwell and work within the 3 selected local government areas of the city of Lagos, also known as the largest city and most populous city in Nigeria. The local government areas selected are within metropolitan Lagos, Nigeria. They are namely, Mushin, Ajegunle and Makoko Yaba local government area of Lagos. These areas are known for its high population density, high number of children on streets, high level of poverty, high rate of crime and social issues, more development of slums etc.

The situation in the area requires services of social workers as it is a profession and academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion and the empowerment and liberation of people. The informants who indicated their willingness to take part in interview are within the age range of 29 and 35 years, and they are all 4 males and 2 females.

All informants have privileged of being trained and acquired skills from the higher institution of learning in Nigeria, with a Bachelor of Science certificate (BSc) in social work. Social work is known as guidance counselling by some institutions in Nigeria. Most of the informants are into generalist practice of social work, which makes them equip to work many social work settings. They have been in this profession for at least 5 years. They have been working with children and youth for almost the same number of years.

The informants point out that they love working with youth because they consider them as part of the vulnerable groups in the society. Social workers in Nigeria are mandated to register with National Association of Social Workers (NASoW) before practice. To avoid ethical issues or conflicts during

practice, ensure best practices, the practices of social workers are regulated and monitored in the country by this organisation, in line with the guide lines of the IFSW.

The informants point out that their organizational goal and goals as social workers working with street youth (i.e. youth who are on the streets and those who are of the streets) is to pave the way for opportunities at re-orientation of positive values through better social welfare administration and social work methods. And enable the street youth have access to better social welfare where necessary and add value to self and society.

Based on the information derived from the informants, they are not in the employment of government, but they work with private institutions like prominent faith based organisations (3 social workers), and NGO's organization (3 social workers) in Nigeria. The area of interest of the organizations ranges from family welfare, community welfare, intervention and rehabilitation programs, street youth's welfare programs, counselling etc.

They are concerned with the fundamental rights of these youth and seeking ways to improve their welfare and other challenges. The methods they used are at different stages depending on the nature of the case at hand. But, they involve case work; group work is important guiding intervention with these street youth. The other responses of the informants to the semi-structured interview are analysed.

3.4 Analysis of Social Work in Improving Social Welfare Policy for Street Youth in Nigeria

The data realised for this research are analysed in this section. According to *Braun and Clarke (2013)*, the research analysis approach is based on interviews opinions on the research subject. Thus, all information's processed in this section is based on the information derived from the informants which is their opinions of the subjects of study. The aim is to find answers to the following research questions:

1. How can social workers help street youth in Nigeria?
2. How can social work services ameliorate the social welfare policy for the benefit of the street youth in Nigeria?

Therefore, the results of the study are presented in themes and then their meaning is described and presented in the analysis. In situations where there are multiple appearances, some of the themes are categorised due to its similarities in data meaning and key themes developed.

3.4.1 Theme: Experience Working With Street Youth.

Subtheme - Years of experience with street youth- Social work is a practice based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and then empowerment and liberation of people (IFSW General Assembly, 2014). Therefore, the principle of social justice, collective responsibility, human rights and respect for diversities are central to social work. The social work discipline is underpinned by the theories of social science, social work, humanities and indigenous knowledge; it engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance the wellbeing of people.

Having gotten the required foundation in social work discipline, the informants in this study have being on the field with street youth handling various cases. Each informant has at list 4 years' experience working with street youth in their local government areas, and they are into generalist practice of social work. Some of them work with faith based organization that have out reaches for street youth, such as shelters, health facilities, counseling, intervention programs, welfare programs etc. Informants C and E pointed out that:

“I and my church have been working with the streets for about four years. We have a ministry where we attend to youth with substance abuse issues” (I.C). “We have been working with street youth in our organization for 7 years.....” (I.E).

In summary, the experience of the social workers is deepened with the length of time spent working with the street youth. Social work field experience enables social workers to apply the knowledge and skill acquired in the classroom to improve the lives and wellbeing of this group of people in mostly poor areas in their practice work jurisdiction.

3.4.2 Theme: Types of cases handled

Subtheme: Cases on mental health and substance abuse – Social workers are multidiscipline professionals that are trained to be of help in Nigeria due to the rising cases of mental health and substance abuse. Informant A pointed out that:

“...I work more with street youth with cases of mental health, illicit drugs or substance use street youth.... We also partner with other organization, healthcare facilities.....” (I.A).

The dedication of social workers is particularly relevant to in preventive and curative approaches to assist the street youth with this health challenges which may have occurred due personal choices and

uncontrolled experience they have been subjected to. Nigeria is currently faced with a global human rights emergency in mental health (*Ugochukwu, Nbaezue, Lawal, Azubogu, Sheikh and Valleires, 2020*). Underpinned by poor societal attitudes towards mental illness and inadequate resources, facilities or even the required staffs for mental health staff, figures suggest that Nigeria currently has about 80 percent persons with various health needs in the country that cannot access this care.

The situation with street youth is particular evident as the social pressures and harsh condition makes them abuse substances as coping mechanism. It explains why there is high rate of substance misuse among this group. According to *Owoyomi (2018)* states that substance abuse seems to be one of the strenuous problems to detect by social workers especially among the vulnerable street children, since they are often neglected and habitually underrepresented in public health research.

Subtheme: Cases of abuse- Sexual exploitation is also prevalent among the street youth and insecurity issues are some of the problems these youth are subjected to. According the *African Health Sciences report (2018)* says that “sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not understand, cannot give informed consent to, or for which the child is not mentally developed for or the violates the laws or social taboos or society”. The Nigeria culture does not frown on physical abuse, as it is seen as disciplining a child. Lack of restrain in this mode of discipline causes bodily harm, fear, and other treats to children. This eventually led to children fleeing the homes to the streets, as they feel they are not loved. Also, the economic hardship at home is one of the reasons why youth are on the street hawking, and doing other menial jobs. Informant C pointed out that:

“Cases we work with street youth’s cases of abused sexually or physically, emotionally and other forms of abuse..... These are either on the street or back home....” (I.C).

According to the *Canadian Pediatric Association (2018)* homeless youth are more susceptible to risk for psychological harm, behaviors with serious medical consequences such as substance abuse, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), violence and physical and sexual abuse etc.

Subtheme: Child and family cases- It has been suggested that the possible reasons for leaving home may include abuse, a desire for excitement or relief from oppressive home conditions but they may become vulnerable to all forms of abuse and hazards on the streets (*Edewor, 2014*). According to *Nelson (2018)* states that street migration is a complex process in which a variety of factors such as poverty, abuse, abandonments, violence, natural calamities, and freedom; that either push or pull

the children from their families (some do not even have that) and communities into the harsh life on the streets. Informant B and D point out that:

“...my work has been with youth you ran away from home. We majorly try to re-unite them with their family after with work with them. We work with the families too while we guide to address issues” (I.B). “We work with runaway street youth and those abused by family and employer..... We do general services with youth on the street” (I.D).

Social work help in case work with street youth who seek to re-unite with members of their family. Carry out intervention and rehabilitation processes and techniques with street youth helps take some of them off the street and also provide social welfare assistance to have a relative good means of livelihood. According to *Nelson (2018)* states that these street youth are mostly deprived of basic human needs of health and nutrition. Most of the street youth live for quite a long time off the streets not are exactly one place. The nature of their works is mostly temporary, which makes mobility easier for them. Therefore, social work with these street youth serves as preventive measures, to guide against economic hardship that pushed them into the street.

In summary, street youth life is not by choice as most end up on the streets due to factors beyond their control. The typical cases handled by social workers with street youth are substance abuse, various levels of mental illness related issues due to substance abuse, sexual and emotional abuse with youth on the street, labour exploitation. The reason for the high rate of illicit drug and other substance are associated with other issues they are confronted with on the street, while indulging in use of substance and drugs as a coping mechanism. The response of the social workers is particularly important through seeking preventive and curative approaches to assist the street youth with their challenges which may have occurred due to poor personal choices and uncontrolled experiences.

3.4.3 Theme: Social work methods applied

Sub-theme: Case finding- street youth are faced with many problems; the caseworks are mostly substance abuse. The team of social workers usually carries out interview during field work in order to screen the youth for identification of possible use of substance. Informant A pointed out that:

“...we use case finding methods with street children that need health care services..... but have no resources to get it. And even with the street youth with substance abuse issues...” (I.A).

This approach involves screening at the point of admission or pre-admission, to identify the high risks caseworks for the social worker's assessment (Bywaters, 1991). The case finding methods allows social workers to identify the active and passive cases with street youth into abuse of substance, and other underlying factors of how this pattern began.

Sub-theme: Motivational Intervention- The approach involves using their skills to engage the street youth on issues that concern them. Although the social workers are professionals but they are also sympathetic in their relationship with street youth to motivate them into getting the needed help they require. Informant C pointed out that:

“...majority of the street youth are into one form of substance abuse or the other.... because of their environment, peer pressure and coping with their condition..... So we use motivational intervention, depending on the level of condition and we also seek alternative for them location, work etc..... to get away and get alternative environment” (I.C).

The communication technique is aimed at rendering assistance to people to resolve ambivalence in order to make lasting change more likely (The Guardian, 2016). It helps demonstrate and understanding of the point of view in the case at hand with the person. This approach according to Miller and Rosnick (2013) involves using skills and techniques to foster a partnership with clients, with elements of collaboration, listening, promoting autonomy, respect, compassion affirmation and curiosity. It is particularly used in situation where the person in the casework is resisting change, or doubtful an issues or struggling with low self-esteem.

Sub-theme: Assessment and primary evaluation- involves social workers getting the basic demographic information on the casework and primary evaluation to identify needs to make professional judgment. Informant B pointed out that:

“...we carry out assessment which involves primary evaluation of the street youth we take into the treatment centers.... We make the necessary contacts to parents, individuals, professionals who might have had contact with the youth..... To understand the circumstance or history associated with the situation” (I.B).

Social workers carry out an assessment for a range of purpose and that there is no agreement on what those purpose are (Crisp et al, 2003). Assessment is considered an important tool in for policy makers to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness on services (Clarkson, et el, 2006). For instance, the assessment could be shaped by policies to give protection to adults and children, it

could be to integrate street youth who are socially excluded and to prolong or make improvement in the independence and ability to work.

Sub-theme: Intervention programs, management approach- this entails a management approach through identifying and using set of skills needed to work with the street youth. The skills include the capability to determine the need of the individual, recognize which they are in crisis, plan a response approach that they need and recognize when these services will no longer be required. Informant E pointed out that:

“...we plan intervention programs. It involves assembling a team of professionals depending on the case for treatment..... This helps us to identify the case management approach” (I.E). The Informant said that the intervention programs include family based intervention given the rate of socio-economic issues on most homes in the slum area of Lagos state Nigeria” (I.E).

The programs comprise crisis intervention technique in threatening and risky cases. Intervention comprises rendering services to meet basic needs like food, clothing, shelter, referring to medical centers and others. The WHO (2002) states that the street children do not access medical support due to a number of factors which include, fear of peer judgment, getting arrested upon entering health facilities, pervasive social stigma, low accessibility and lack of financial support hinders getting treatment. With the intervention programs of social workers, the street youth can access this health care and get the much need attention.

Sub-theme: Counseling sessions- counseling technique is helpful to the street youth. The counseling techniques may be group counseling or individual counseling which are means of delivering treatments. Informant F pointed out that:

“...we do individual counseling sessions to help them unburden their hearts. Share personal painful experiences and face their fears” (I.F).

Based on this approach, the social workers help street youth to cope with or resolve issues such as abuse of substance, family dysfunction, school adjustment or even grief. Social worker assists the street youth to connect with the resources available in the community and empower them to prevail on structural barriers like poverty, social injustice, discrimination etc. (Dowd, 2020). The active listening skills of social workers help to build rapport and trust with the youth. As part of social

work training, the skills they acquired on evidence based technique helps to guide the street youth towards achieving set goals that can enhance the quality of their life.

Sub-theme: Follow-ups- this stage is when the social workers reaches out to the individuals to make sure that they are still in line with the goals set using their skills and making sure that they are doing well. Informant D pointed out that:

“...for the cases we have dealt with, we do follow –ups. Sometimes the follow ups take up to a few years. It can be active follow up (especially for cases with substance abuse) or passive follow up” (I.D).

Carrying out follow-ups helps social workers observe any changes in the client’s situation, and identify needs over time on the intake form and highlight them (*Contra Costa Aids Program, 2009*). Based on the findings, follow-up stage is very important. For instance, in situation of mental health or other health issues of street youth, it is important that through follow-ups they ensure sufficient support for optimal health outcomes, observe any changes that require attention and making sure that the implementation of the clinical treatment plans is followed.

In summary, social work methods could be primary which deals with individuals at a personal level and it entails case work, groups work or community works. And also secondary methods involve some specialized agencies or a set of organized people to address welfare policy issues, administration, research and advocacy to improve the lives of street youth. Using social work methods, enables the social workers have a direct relationship, build trust, etc with the street youth in which they are able to access the challenges and shows an approach that is professional suitable to address the problems identified with these youth. The preventive and curative approaches those not always end with the street youth alone, but families, community and the society all have their roles in dealing with the problem.

3.4.4 Theme: Situation observation with street youth

Sub-theme: Rise in substance misuse –The UNODC reports (2019) reveals that there is prevalence in psychoactive substances use in excluding alcohol, overall was higher among men in Nigeria; however, the gender difference in the non-medical use of prescription opioids, tranquilizers and cough syrup was less marked. Informant A pointed out that:

“...the social issues are so so much..... But I would say the prevalent one, is their substance abuse” (I.A).

The use and abuse of substance in Nigeria is on the rise and major behavioral risk in youth on the street and a major connection to rise in crime rates. The dangers of the use of these substances are that it puts them in emotional and sometimes physical, characteristics by a compulsion to take drugs on a constant basis in order to experience its mental effects. The rise in substance abuse requires a collective of government and social works and or health professionals in Nigeria as it will come at a personal and social cost on both the users (street youth) and society as a whole if not addressed.

Sub-theme: Poor shelter and health condition- study indicates that majority of the street youth live and sleep under the open sky, while some rest most part of the day on the street (Nelson, 2018). Some sleep under a roof top or some kind of covered shelter or ram shackled hut, under tarpaulin sheet. Informant E and B pointed out that:

“...some of the problem they have is shelter and very poor hygiene. It gives rise to so many health issues.... When they try to use local herbs because it cheaper. It sometimes outcomes are even more dangerous health issues” (I.E). “And there living condition is mostly deplorable and unacceptable.....” (I.B).

According to Nelson (2018) states that these street youth are mostly deprived of basic human needs of health and nutrition. Most of them live for quite a long time of the streets, not are exactly one place. The nature of their works is mostly temporary, which makes mobility easier for them. The state of the hygiene and living conditions of street youth is such that endangers their health with exposures to infections and very poor income to get health care services.

Sub-theme: Engagement in hazardous jobs- one of the problems of street youth engages in temporary jobs and they live on daily expenses. The jobs may be legal and illegal, voluntary or involuntary as they are forced to do them to survive on the streets. Informant E pointed out that:

“...some of them engage in drug peddling and other dangerous jobs (pick pocket, dangerous factory jobs” (I.E).

In Nigeria, labor does not only indicate the work which is likely to be hazardous to children but also provided that the state parties to it shall not allow children less than 18 years' admission into such employment (Nwazuo, and Igwe, 2018). This lapse in regulation of factories or businesses in

Nigeria makes street youth vulnerable and exploited by the owners of these businesses with any form of health insurance in place for them.

Sub-theme: Over labor and low wages- the high level of unemployment in the country gives room for labour exploitation by employers of labour. Majority of the street youth work from dusk to dawn but with very low wages and poor working environments. The Informant F pointed out that:

“...A lot of the street youth we have interacted with are over labored with very little pay..... Why some of these jobs are not legal, they do it in the presence of no alternatives” (I.F).

Some of these children work by rag-picking, working as helpers in small tea shops, shoe shining, rickshaw-pulling etc. According to the ILO Minimum Age Convention declares that: “Children who are not less than 16 years may be employed in works envisaged by article 3(1) provided their health, safety and morals are adequately protected and they have either been specifically trained or instructed on how to handle such works (ILO, 2014). But, no body questions or monitors the condition of work of the vulnerable street youth.

Sub-theme: Harsh work conditions- on Nigeria’s highways, there lots of street youth along this motor ways cleaning vehicles, hawking, begging and selling stuff to motorist and passengers and selling for local food vendors etc. This very harsh work condition exposes them to dangers of being knocked down by vehicles. Informant D pointed out that:

“...There is problem of unemployment generally in cities.... It leaves street youth with jobs, mostly working in harsh job conditions with menial pay” (I.D).

For instance, UNICEF frowns against when these vulnerable groups are subjected to too many hours of work either within or outside the family as it leads to excessive fatigue. Also, there is the situation of work that deprives them the right to education. Also work that result in excessive physical, social and psychological strains (Nwazuo, and Igwe, 2018). Lack of presence of Labor Union, drug law enforcement units, government security outfits, social welfare agencies and the government agencies in charge of company allied matter etc. makes the harsh of work of street youth unabated and exploitative.

In summary, from observation, the street youth situation indicates the dangers of the use of these substances are that it puts them in emotional and sometimes physical, characteristics by a compulsion to take drugs on a constant basis in order to experience its mental effects. Also, the

harsh conditions of the street youth are often harder than the socio-economic hardship that pushed them to the street as their vulnerable state is taken advantage of. The level of their situation calls for more social worker's professional services and collective response.

3.4.5 Theme: Social welfare services

Sub-theme: Policy plans lack direction – Nigeria is naturally endowed with abundance of natural and human resources. However, despite the magnitude of the resources, corruption and leadership challenges has denied the citizens, especially the youth and children the opportunity to enjoy the dividends of good life, good education, good health care and enviable standard of living that the living God has provided for average Nigerian (Ayodele, Adeleke and Gandonu, 2018). Most of the street youth in Nigeria are not expected to undergo the kind of hardship they go through daily, if there was no bad leadership and corruption issues (Ayodele, Adeleke and Gandonu, 2018). Informant C pointed out that:

“...some of the previous government development plan was towards youth empowering at federal and states levels.... But these plans over the years have made helped much. Most of them even lack direction. This is where the street youth problem is growing every day, without a concrete structure of the government to solve them....” (I.C).

In a country with abundance natural resources of these resources should have been put to productive use to improve the economy. With better economy, high rate of poverty, conflicts, unemployment, banditry and many other issues that push youth and children to the streets wouldn't have been the problem of the day.

Sub-theme: Water down approaches, lack synergy with professionals- the Nigeria has rolled out several social welfare policy plans since its independence in 1960. Till date, known has been able to achieve recommendable results given the rise of social problem with youth and the general society. Informant B pointed out that:

“...some approaches of government that would have helped in some instance with welfare of the street youth, are watered down or politicized..... As there is no synergy with appropriate professional in the field like social workers to helped realize this social welfare programs.....” (I.B).

According to the *NHR reports (2021)* states that the Nigerian child has been mostly ignored by the family, society and the government. The NHR points out that the policy makers and services providers have not been able to target policies that address street youth issues due to lack of data on street youth, it contributes to the impediment in planning and policy making. Therefore, to deliver promises on social welfare for street youth are mostly watered down, they lack synergy with experts in the field of social science. There is no investment in research and data acquisition, nor involvement of social workers to make necessary planning to address street youth issues.

Sub-theme: Lack social health aid even during pandemic- poor healthcare facilities, incessant strikes by medical practitioners and policies on healthcare etc. in Nigeria is general poor which makes the impact even more grievous for the street youth who do not have means to these services. Informant D and F pointed out that that:

“The policy plan in developed country helps minimize the impact of harsh economy or social health care issues even during pandemic is lacking.... This structure is lacking with the government of Nigeria. They don’t employ social worker in the appropriate quarters manage these issues..... They don’t set aside funds or social security for citizen in situations like the pandemic or other crisis” (I.D). “There has not been attention to family welfare issues and health. This is some of areas that fall short of strategy to address them. The rate of poverty for instance is so high that parent’s subject children to labor to fend for the family” (I.F).

The pandemic was felt all over the world due to the rate of spread and its impact on life, health, and economies across the globe. Even the developed countries like Europe and America did not envisage such magnitude despite their healthcare facilities etc. how much more developing countries like Nigeria.

OECD (2019) states that, the economic effects of the pandemic risk aggravating the existing vulnerable situation of the young people in the labor market. These groups of people are more likely to work in non-standard employment, such as temporary or part-time work, facing higher risk of job and income loss. The vulnerable situation heightened by the pandemic lack of income makes it impossible for street youth to eat good food or take care of their health. The lack of policy to back up pandemic and other social issues puts the street youth and other vulnerable groups in great danger in Nigeria.

In summary, the poor social welfare administration and the lack of it in many communities are some of the realities that make the plight of the street youth in Nigeria overwhelming. Also, lack of engagement of professional social workers in government welfare agencies further compounds the accessing welfare services adequately. Social work professional practice in Nigeria does not have the desired impact as on the lives of the street youth and others vulnerable groups, due to the poor accessibility to most of the necessary social services of the public sector. The impact social workers in private social welfare organization can play in accessing social welfare services are limited in terms of the available resources given the magnitude issues and the rise in numbers of the street youth.

3.4.6 Theme: Achievements with street youth

Sub-theme: Reuniting youth with family- out of the circumstances while youth ends up on the streets, the economic factor plays the major role, due to the fact that these youth depend on country state of being unable to provide social welfare to its citizens. Informant A pointed out that:

“...I have been able to get a number of the street youth away from the streets, and re-united with their family..... We consider it important to address the issues that gave rise to the problem through our counseling therapy with the family” (I.A).

The outcome suggests that there are push factors that make the youth flee their homes into the streets. Therefore, the methods used by social workers are aimed to identify solutions to these issues through identified approach. Particularly, a number of youth ‘on the street’ are being taken off the streets when these problems are addressed and reunited with their families.

Sub-theme: Successful Intervention, management programs- the intervention and management approach in social work may involves rendering therapeutic services, youth and family counseling, family supports and so on, depending on the case work. Informant C pointed out that:

“...some youth with substance abuse issues have been giving the necessary intervention and management programs through collaborations with other professionals..... Although we have had cases of relapse, but some of our cases have been successful, they are clean and part of the society being productive” (I.C).

Social work intervention programs sometimes include concrete services to give support in material aid, income, mental health services, supervision, legal services, advocacy and protective services

(National Academy of Science, 2021); not just mental health casework. According to Olaleye (2019) says social workers work in many different types of setting including hospitals, mental, health facilities, guidance clinics, child welfare centers, substance abuse programs, schools and prison or correctional facilities. Intervention programs for street youth also working with stakeholders such as street goons (also called area boys), law enforcement units like the police, politicians etc. The social workers in some NGO's in collaboration with other private partners and professional in Nigeria have been able to the aid of some of these street children.

Sub-theme: Shelter, vocational training- there are different classification of street youth. There are youth 'of the street', youth 'on the street', youth that are part of the street family etc. Given this classification the similarities are need for basic welfare, while the 'youth of the street' additionally lack shelter. The identification of the cases based on the classes of street youth makes it possible to respond to the issues as social workers. Informant B pointed out that:

"...we discovered that shelter is one of the major problems with youth on the street..... We have been able to assist some into shelters around, along with education, training in their chosen vocation of interest" (I.B).

The shelter does not just serve as providing good accommodation, but it is also used as an approach for working rehabilitation of the street youth. The shelters provided by some of the NGO's take care of other basic needs like food, clothing, education, vocational training, recreation etc. Giving the successful candidates opportunity to be independent financially, though skill acquisition or academic scholarships in their choice of academic discipline, is a major step towards improving their social-economic wellbeing and sustainability. The shelters are also gradually used structure discipline into the lives of the street youth through experiencing constructive group living before integration back to the society.

The application of social work methods has yielded certain level of achievement within the capacity of the agency they work for. This are in the areas of intervention provided for some of the cases treated, empowerment programs through the shelters provided that took in some of the street youth. Also, academic scholarships provided for some street youth interested in studying. However, this achievement could be taken further if there is government political will towards the recognition of social workers and the professional services that can be rendered to address the problems at the government welfare levels more effectively and collaboration with relevant organization to better the lives of these group of people.

3.4.7 Theme: Social worker's roles

Sub-theme: Use social work method and techniques- lack of street youth access to social welfare may be as a result of their lack of knowledge about where to get access to some of the basic welfare units available to the public. It may also be due to lack of money, trust of the authority figure, confidentiality issues, low self-esteem etc. Informant A and E pointed out:

“...Social work as a helping profession has a lot to render with the methods and techniques in cases they handle with street youth.....” (I.A). “...as Social workers, we helpful in the research on street youth in conscientization, preventive institutional works. It is a way of identifying the main issues and suggesting ways to manage them.....” (I.E).

IFSW (2004) states that, social work is based on respect for the inherent worth and dignity of all people, and the rights that follow from this. Social workers should uphold and defend each person's physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual integrity and wellbeing. Conscientization involves an approach to developing, changing, strengthening, ability to think critically and consciousness (Montero, 2014). Also, some of the techniques and methods include the preventive action by social workers is done in a form of socialization and appeals to the community which is carried out by cooperating with other related institutions such as civil service police, private organizations, NGO's etc. while repressive actions are carried out through the sympathetic operations of street youth and also the maintenance or disregard of related location (Arinugraha, 2018).

Sub-theme: Advocacy on social services – advocacy in social work is a way of influencing purpose in protecting the interest of people who are socially discriminated or considered vulnerable from the respective stakeholders (media, government contacts etc) who should be of service to this people. Informant C is of the view that:

“Social worker can work on advocacy on the plight of street youth. This is to get the right response of government and other relevant agencies..... We have taken certain steps in the past with the national assembly, and we are still advocating for recognition of social workers and social services.....” (I.C).

The rights of street children include rights to identity, shelter, right to security, right to dignity and respect, right to protection, right to leisure and recreation and right to participation not exclusion from society. Since social work are trained, their services entails to maintain and sustain the objectives of support and protection/safeguarding roles capability, and maintaining the particular

necessities and requirement of people. Also using advocacy to maintain protective actions, under conformation to the relevant laws and regulations.

Sub-theme: Investment in research and data- investment in research and data acquisition helps the government make better informed decision on street youth in Lagos. The information derived from research data will enable government make effective strategic plans with better equipped capability to deal with the challenging situation of the street youth. Informant E pointed out that:

“...it has been pointed out that developing countries lack data to help in projection and even government policy initiation. Social work can be helpful in the research on street youth..... It is a way of identifying the main issues and suggesting ways to manage them” (I.E).

Investment in social work research facilitates human capital development and countries leading in the world with high human capital development places more importance in research and data (Chike, Ogidi and Nwachukwu, 2015). In summary, the problem of lack of investment in social work research in Nigeria is due to low funding in research institutions, lack of equipment, facilities and materials, lack of awareness. Also the research works done to improve social welfare in the country lack implementation of the research results; they are some of the reasons for inability to curb social welfare issues.

Sub-theme: Community welfare case work with government collaboration – given the rate of community’s problems in Nigeria, which is one of the push factors to youth living on the streets. The promotion of increased social worker’s services in community welfare case with government collaboration is necessary. Informant D and F suggests that:

“...there have been many conflicts in communities in Nigeria that has made people homeless, made children orphan and has led to great economic loss..... help reduce the problem that lead to rise in street youth, social work is relevant in community welfare organization with the support of the government.....” (I.D). *“It seems as if the government is not paying attention to the plight of the street youth in Nigeria..... As social workers we have been into advocacy and are still going at it until a meaningful action is taking by the state”* (I.F).

The community based programs is a social work approach, it involves method that enables social service providers, organizers, and evaluators serve community members in their own area. It

involves participatory approach of the community for development and access to need and resources.

In summary, based on these ideas, social work with street youth is such that can infer the principles of social workers to respect the rights of people to make their own choices, but promote the participation of people using their services. Also treating each other as a whole within the various social units and identifying, establishing the power of individuals, communities, groups to encourage empowerment and wellbeing. Social work is comprehensive and has the knowledge of participating with people limited and vulnerable because of their age, mental or physical health, economic condition which mitigates their capacity to take good care of themselves.

Social workers have engaged in many programs to assist the street youth over the years. Some the programs include, feeding, financial services, entrepreneurship programs, medical services, street education, family reunification, legal assistance, drop in centers/ right shelter, outreach programs that is designed to bring people closer to the agencies etc. But the advocacy programs for street youth involve facilitating their rights to good standard of living, good mental, spiritual, moral and social developing and taking them off the streets. This can be achieved by better social welfare administration, by developing suitable programs for street youth, mobilization of the needed resources, budgeting, evaluation, coordination etc.

Additionally, the empowerment theory emphasizes the process of increasing interpersonal or political power so that people can take action to improve their life. Thus, social workers with their training can make significant contribution by working hand in hand with the street youth to achieve goals of social inclusion and cohesion. They can also make contribution through advocacy for improve social policies and recognition for both parties.

3.4.8 Theme: Expected roles of government

Sub-theme: Effective Policy on security and welfare- the roles of the government in any society is crucial to ensure security of lives and improvement of the wellbeing of its citizens. The severe economic realities and security problems in Nigeria are a significant factor in the rise of numbers of street youth in Nigeria. Informant A pointed out that:

“...the job of government consists of protection of life and property..... The security problems in the country has displaced most family, made youth orphans, increased economic

problems and rise in number of street youth. All of this is some of the inability of government to safeguard life and property” (I.A).

For instance, the rate of poverty in China was initially 80 percent, but it currently stands at 13 percent, it is an example of how right government policy can change the condition of the country. The poor role played by Nigerian government in the last 20 decades was led to increase in security issues, rate of poverty and inequality, rise in unemployment, inflation and many others. The *World Bank Report (2012)* states that, the presence of social security is a sign of good governance. Social security and welfare of street youth requires effective policies and implementation. Also, the government should encourage NGO's and other private social welfare organizations as they help in support, reformation and welfare of street youth in Nigeria.

Sub-theme: Inclusive governance, collaboration social workers- an inclusive government involves interaction with the representative of people to identify areas of need. Informant C pointed out that:

“...the role of government to help the street youth is to have inclusive government and policy that address inequality in the society..... Social workers should be engage in agencies concerned with social welfare to render professional services” (I.C).

The address the challenges of street youth, the government and others stakeholders (social workers, teachers, parents, counselor and community leaders, NGOs, faith based organizations) all have some collective roles to play. The *NHR (2018)* states that, there is need for government investment in documentation or acknowledgement formula on the implementation of programs aimed at addressing the menace. It calls for deliberate or effective policy programs that specifically target the street youth to equip them, give health assistance, re-orientate them into the social and assist them to make a decent living.

In summary, social work in Nigeria still lacks legislative backing, which brings constraint in the level of services rendered in the country when compared with the counter parts abroad (e.g. UK or USA). According to *Okoye (2013)* state that there is no such licensing board in Nigeria, anybody can lay claim to being a social worker and this has hampered, in no small ways the development of the profession in Nigeria. The profession of social work should be able to protect the public from the power and privileges misuse in government which makes it impossible to carter for vulnerable groups such as the street youth.

The *NASoW*, (2012), states that the legal support towards social services in Nigeria by the government would facilitate the practitioners to perhaps undertake more professionalism in the volume of care they provide to clients; in effect it will reinforce the mitigation of major problems and their reasons and creation of progressive influence over social worker's interaction with clients, individuals, families and communities. Therefore, the social work profession in Nigeria requires government roles in ensuring legislating backing and well-structured social welfare policies. To enable the benefits derived from social work be better assessable as it is in developed countries like the UK, USA etc. Especially, with government based social welfare agencies or parastatals.

Furthermore, since most NGO's, faith based organizations into social welfare in Nigeria, employ the services of social workers and have been helping with the outstanding strategies. To address issues about the needs and rights of street youth in terms of advocacy through media, government contacts etc. But, these NGOs most often do not have sufficient financial capability to address various issues of street youth, given the magnitude of cases they discover on the field. Therefore, there is need for more support from government and international entities, to do more.

Also, social work preventive approach work to keep youth from taking to the streets through family is crucial to curb the rise in number street youth. This calls for government recognition of these services, and more inclusive approach with social workers in social welfare agencies to also deliver on their experience within government social welfare initiatives. This analysis is best described in Fig. 4 below.

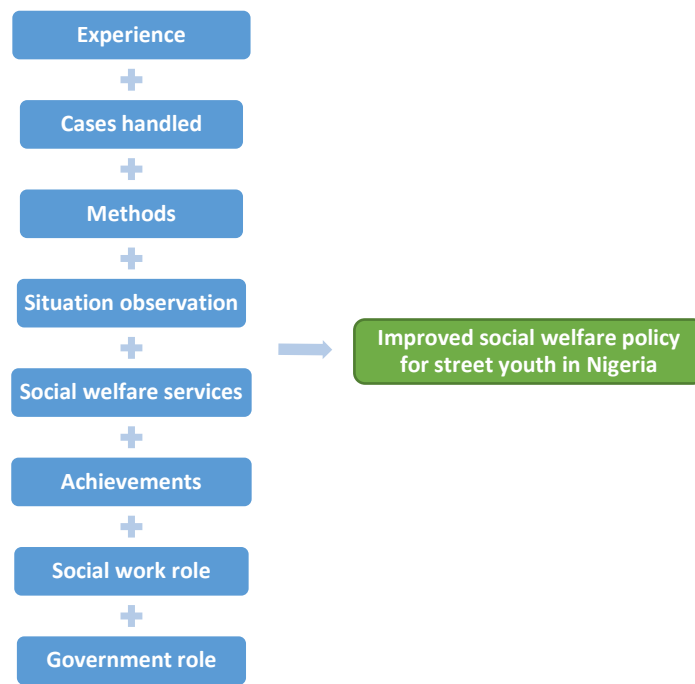


Figure 4: Themes and sub-themes for improved social welfare policy for street youth in Nigeria. Source: Author (2021).

The sub-themes were developed from the excerpts of the original interview idea of the informants. The themes and subthemes are presented in Table 4 below (i.e. important points or phrase from each response).

Table 4: Developed themes and sub-themes from interview information
Source: Author (2021)

NO	Themes	Sub-themes
1	Experience working with street youth	• Years of experience with street youth
2	Cases handled	• cases on mental health and substance abuse • cases of abuse • child and family cases
3	Methods	• Case finding • Motivational intervention • Assessment and primary evaluation • Intervention programs, management approach • Counselling sessions • Follow-ups
4	Situation observation	• Rise in substance misuse • Poor shelter and health condition • Engagement in hazardous jobs

		• Over labor and low wages • Harsh work conditions
5	Social services welfare	• Policy plans lack direction • Water down approaches, lack synergy with professionals • Lack social health aid even during pandemic
6	Achievements	• Re-uniting youth with family • Successful Intervention, management programs • Shelter, vocational training
7	Social work role	• Use social work method and techniques • Advocacy on social services • Investment in research and data • Community welfare case work with government collaboration
8	Government role	• Effective Policy on security and welfare • Inclusive governance, collaboration social workers

3.5 Suggestions of Ways for Improvement of the Social Welfare of Street Youth in Nigeria

Social work with street youth in Nigeria is supposed to utilize the advantage of the skills in social services to address the challenges of the street youth through approaches that curative, preventive etc. The study is particularly relevance to discover how social work can ameliorate the social welfare policy for street youth in Nigeria. From the research findings, the recommendations are suggested to the government, social workers and others stakeholders to achieve an improved social welfare policy for street youth in Nigeria. They include:

1. **Suggestion to government-** the government of Nigeria has the major role in ensuring an effective social welfare policy for the street youth and other citizens of the country. Currently many social worker occupations within the country is with the private entities, it is a pointer that the government of the country needs to employ the services of these professional's in in social welfare services through its ministries of other social welfare programs. Other important attention includes:
 - Address the legislative issue confronting social work services in the country.
 - Facilitate training and retraining of social workers.
 - Facilitate social work based programs annually to help understand and deepen the current and future challenges as well as prospects of the practice.
 - Ensure sufficient and well-structured social welfare policy administration for street youth and other vulnerable groups to access social benefits from government.

- Ensure advancement of current expenditures in practices of social welfare administration through social workers in the country.
 - Investment in curriculum education of social work to meet standards abroad and improve research and data required for social welfare planning.
2. **Private social welfare based originations-** the contributions of majority of these private organizations over the years have been reasonable to care for the vulnerable in Nigerian society including the street youth. Therefore, the support of the private involvement in social welfare programs should be promoted across Nigeria. It will help spread social welfare supports programs to other urban areas in the country to prevent and reduce the population of street youth in Nigeria.
3. **Suggestion to social workers in Nigeria-** the profession of social work needs love and passion to be able to discover solutions to social issues. Given this importance of social work services to assist the street youth, the following are suggested:
- To facilitate participation of other relevant professional in other to achieve better result on cases with street youth and other vulnerable groups.
 - Advocacy for improved social welfare in Nigeria has not achieved much, given the high rate of social issues in the country. Therefore, social workers should carry out more advocacy programs taking advantage of the media and contacts in government.
 - To advocate for the rights of children on the streets to reduce the minimize circumstances that are push factors to youth ending up on the streets.
 - To identify prospects that can advance the social welfare services for streets youth and other groups.
 - Use community mobilization to arrange meetings to advocate as well as sensitize people about threats and the negative effects of wrong choices as it impacts children, individuals, family and community as a whole.
 - To seek further knowledge that will help advance the solutions to current and future issues.

In summary, the high rate of social problems in Nigeria is not limited to issues with the street youth which require active social welfare services. Therefore, further research work can be done to seek

ways to provide improved practices concerning social welfare that will be beneficial to children, individuals, groups and the community as a whole. This is crucial because the social problems will continue to emerge as the world evolves, thus social worker's role should be proactive to find answers to arising social challenges.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The research goal was to examine theoretically and empirically, ways social work can develop and improve the social welfare policy for street youth in Nigeria. The arising questions that this research seeks to find answers to are:

1. How can social workers help street youth in Nigeria?
2. How can social work ameliorate the social welfare policy for the benefit of the street youth in Nigeria?

To answer these questions, a qualitative research was carried out in selected areas of Lagos state. Using a purposive sampling method, 6 social workers were selected based on their experience with street youth to participate in the study having expressed their willingness to participate.

Over the year's social work profession played important roles in the facilitation of social change aimed at reducing inequalities among various populations (*Beckman, 2021*). The findings reaffirm social work discipline, as being underpinned by the theories of social science, social work, humanities and indigenous knowledge; it engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance the wellbeing of people. Having gotten the required foundation in social work discipline, the informants in this study have being on the field with street youth handling various cases. Each Informant has at list 5 years' experience working with street youth in their local government areas, they are into generalist practice of social work. Some of them work with faith based organizations that have outreaches for street youth, such as shelters, health facilities, counseling etc.

Social work being a multidiscipline profession enables the required skills of trained social workers to be of help in Nigeria due to the rising cases of mental health and substance abuse of street youth. The situation with street youth is particular evident as the social pressures and harsh condition makes them abuse substances as coping mechanism. It explains why there is high rate of substance misuse among this group. This fact was also noted by the Canadian Pediatric Association (2018) which states that "homeless youth are more susceptible to risk for psychological harm, behaviors with serious medical consequences such as substance abuse, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), violence and physical and sexual abuse etc". Hence, the dangers of using these substances are associated with both emotional and physical issues; it is characterized by a compulsion to take drugs on a constant basis in order to experience its mental effects. Also, the prevalence of cases of sexual

exploitation is also prevalent among the street youth and insecurity issues are some of the problems these youth are subjected to.

According to the *IFSW* all social workers should maintain and promote people's bodily, emotional and mental capacity and welfare (*IFSW, 2004*). Hence, the social worker's methods with street youth are towards improvement of the lives of these youth. Their methods include case finding, which allows social workers to identify the active and passive cases with street youth into abuse of substance, and other underlying factors of how this pattern began. The motivational intervention approach involves using their skills to engage the street youth on issues that concern them. Although the social workers are professionals but they are also sympathetic in their relationship with street youth to motivate them into getting the needed help they require. The assessment and primary evaluation involves social workers getting the basic demographic information on the case and primary evaluation to identify needs to make professional judgment. Also, the intervention programs, management approach this entails a management approach through identifying and using set of skills needed to work with the street youth. The counseling technique is helpful to the street youth. The counseling techniques may be group counseling or individual counseling which is a means of delivering treatments. Finally, the Follow-ups stage is when the social workers reaches out to the individuals to make sure that they are still in line with the goals set using their skills and making sure that they are doing well.

There are various reasons why the youth end up on the streets. According to *Nelson (2018)* states that "street migration is a complex process in which a variety of factors such as poverty, abuse, abandonments, violence, natural calamities, and freedom; that either push or pull the children from their families (some do not even have that) and communities into the harsh life on the streets". The study reveals that the possible reasons for leaving home may include abuse, a desire for excitement or relief from oppressive home conditions but they may become vulnerable to all forms of abuse and hazards on the streets. Also, street youth engage in temporary jobs and they live on daily expenses. While, the lapses in regulation of factories or businesses in Nigeria makes street youth vulnerable and exploited by the owners of these businesses with any form of health insurance in place for them. Some of the harsh work conditions include lots of street youth along this motor ways cleaning vehicles, hawking, begging and selling stuff to motorists and passengers and selling for local food vendors etc.

Also, the findings show that the economic pressures and insecurity issues are some of the factors that push the youth to the streets in Nigeria. In a country with abundance natural resources of these resources should have been put to productive use to improve the economy. With better economy, high rate of poverty, conflicts, unemployment, banditry and many other issues that push youth and children to the streets wouldn't have been the problem of the day.

One of the secondary methods of social work in social work research, is an important method of social work, it refers to the systematic and important enquiry to questions encountered by social worker in the field of application (*Mohinuddin, 2017*). Hence, the need for social workers to explore research as an approach to address the lack of investment in research and data acquisition. The current situation is such that the policy makers and services providers are unable to initiate and effectively implement policies that address street youth issues, due to lack of data on street youth; it contributes to the impediment in planning and policy making. The issue of poor health care insurance, poor healthcare facilities, incessant strikes by medical practitioners and policies on healthcare etc. in Nigeria is general are areas of research interest. This is due to the fact that the impact of the situation is even more grievous on the street youth who do not have means or access to these services hence need for positive change.

The reuniting youth with family of street youth with family are some of our achievement. The circumstances while youth end up on the streets, the economic factor plays the major role, due to the fact that these youth depend on country state of being unable to provide social welfare to its citizens. The achievement made through various programs of social workers include the intervention and management approach in social work may involves rendering therapeutic services, youth and family counseling, family supports etc depending on the case work. Social work intervention programs sometimes include concrete services to give support in material aid, income, mental health services, supervision, legal services, advocacy and protective services (*National Academy of Science, 2021*); not just mental health cases.

Also, the problem of shelter and acquisition of skills and education among street youth are addressed. Given this classification the similarities are need for basic welfare, while the 'youth of the street' additionally lack shelter. The identification of the cases based on the classes of street youth makes it possible to respond to the issues as social workers. The profession is a particularly purposeful job for creating social integration amongst street youth. The role of social workers entails efforts that ameliorates the social welfare policy, for the benefit of the street youth is very beneficial

to the street youth. Social work can utilize methods in which street youth can access better standards of living, without feeling like social pariahs.

The role of government is also important as some of the primary function is to ensure the security of life and property improved social welfare etc. Since, social work methods include approaches that focus on problems of social and structural inequalities, to mobilization and activism at different levels organized by various global and local sectors (*Loomis, 2012; Midgley, 2010*). The professional social worker is equipped to empower this group by a process of awareness and capacity building leading to higher participation to greater decision making and control, and transformation action (*Karl, 1995*). Therefore, they have a major role to play in ameliorating the gap in social welfare policy through activism for the benefit of the street youth. The fallout of the poor role played by Nigerian government in the last decades led to increase in security issues, rate of poverty and inequality, rise in unemployment, inflation and many others. The severe economic realities and security problems in Nigeria are a significant factor in the rise of numbers of street youth in Nigeria. To address the challenges of street youth, the study reveals that there is need for inclusive governance.

In conclusion, this is a method of social work by which efforts are directed towards meeting the needs of the community by organizing human and materials resources for the community (*Mohinuddin, 2017*). Hence, the government and others stakeholders (social workers, teachers, parents, counselor and community leaders, NGOs, faith based organizations, security units) all have some collective roles to play. And also social work preventive approach work to keep youth from taking to the streets through family is crucial to curb the rise in number of street youth. This calls for government recognition of these services, and more inclusive approach with social workers in social welfare agencies to also deliver on their experience with in government social welfare initiatives.

CONCLUSION

The research work seeks to accomplish improved social welfare policy for street youth in Nigeria. To achieve this goal, four objectives were outlined.

1. The role of social workers in social welfare services in Nigeria – the research findings reaffirm the social work discipline, as being underpinned by the theories of social science, social work, humanities and indigenous knowledge; it engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance the wellbeing of people. Social work is a practice based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and then empowerment and liberation of people.
2. Analyze social work in improving social welfare policy for street youth in Nigeria-the analysis of social work with street youth involved a qualitative research method. And to derive information about the experience, knowledge and opinions of social workers working with street youth, a purposive sampling was used in selecting the informants. They are selected from three local government areas in Lagos state based on criteria to that ensured realization of the research goal. Selected informants took in the interview scheduled and the information derived was analyzed using thematic analysis. The theme developed is presented and they represent opinions of the informants on the subject of study and the research outcome was summarized.
3. The discoveries of the study indicate that social work can contribute to ameliorating the social welfare policy for street youth in Nigeria through the knowledge and skills acquired in social science which is channeled towards improvement of wellbeing, curb inequality, advocacy on rights of people, mental health and physical care, social work research and many others. Using social work methods and techniques that can address problems associated with street youth. Suggestions on ways to improve social welfare for street youth in Nigeria, in line with the study outcome were to the government, private organizations and the social workers in Nigeria. The suggestions are towards improving social welfare and policy administration for the wellbeing of street youth in Nigeria.

In summary, social work with street youth is important to provide immediate and long term approach to curb the plight of the street youth. It involves applying methods and techniques are curative and preventive nature to help these street youth in value-re-orientation, mental health care, economic and social welfare, re-integration into their family and society where they belong etc.

Social workers also play a great role in advocacy using media platform and government contact to get the required attention on social welfare policy issues.

Finally, since social welfare issues are always emerging, there is need for social workers to be re-inventive in seeking ways to find solutions to these issues. It calls for more government presence, investment in research and training, effective collaborative approach and so on.

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APPENDIX I

Dear sir/madam,

This is an academic research on social work with street youth, using Mushin, Ajegunle and Makoko Yaba area of Lagos State as case study. The research is done in partial fulfilment of my academic study. The study entails carrying out an interview to obtain information beneficial to this study.

Therefore, your participation is needed to share your opinions of the subject of study. Based on your experience as a social worker working with children and youth, the wealth of your knowledge in this regard is beneficial to this research. Your willingness to be part of this study will be highly appreciated. Please note that all information provided shall be treated with utmost confidentiality since this study is mainly for academic purpose.

Thank you in anticipation of your kind cooperation.

Yours faithfully,
David Otigba.

1. How long have been working with children and youth?
2. What are the categories of youth you work with?
3. What are your observations on the social issues of the streets youth?
4. Could you please mention if these youth have access to social welfare services when needed?
5. What methods do you often apply as social worker when working with street youth?
6. How do you apply these methods? Can you describe more perhaps with a different group too?
7. What type of strategies do you use to engage the street youth? (Depending on the type of street youth).
8. How do you handle crisis while working with street youth? Please give an example of crisis faced?
9. What are some of the biggest accomplishments in this field with street youth?
10. Could you please mention the role of social workers in helping street youth has been impactful?
11. What is the role of government in helping to provide social welfare for street youth?
12. Have you been faced with an ethical conflict in your experience working with street youth? How did you handle the situation?
13. What are your opinions on ways of improvement of the social welfare for street youth in Nigeria?

APPENDIX II

Table 5: Showing thematic analysis of interview conducted with 6 social workers to fulfil the aim of the research on social work with street youth in Nigeria.

Informant	Original ideas from interview information	Analysis of interview outcome			Final theme
		Original interview ideas	Sub-theme	Initial interview idea	
A	I have been working with children and youth in my church for about 6 years now.	Working with children and youth in my church for about 6 years now.	6 years' experience with youth on the street	Years of experience	Experience
C	I and my church have been working with the streets for about four years. We have a ministry where we attend to youth with substance abuse issues.	I and my church have been working with the streets for about four years	Years of Experience	Years of Experience	Experience
B	I think I have been in this field for 5 years	I have been in this field for 5 years	Years of Experience	Years of Experience	Experience
E	We have been working with street youth in our organization for 7 years	working with street youth in our organization for 7 years	Years of Experience	Years of Experience	Experience
F	I have about 6 years on the job.	About 6 years on the job.	Years of Experience	Years of Experience	Experience
D	About 5 years plus	About 5 years plus	Years of Experience	Years of Experience	Experience

A	We work more with street youth with cases of mental health, illicit drugs use youth. We also partner with other organization and healthcare facilities.	Street youth with issues of mental health, illicit drugs use youth	Service on mental health and substance abuse	Mental health and substance abuse cases	Cases handled
C	We work with street youth's cases of abused sexually or physically and other forms of abuse. Either on the street or back home.	Work with street youth have been cases of abused sexually or physically and other forms of abuse	Abused sexually or physically cases	Cases of abuse	Cases handled
B	My work has been with youth you ran away from home. We majorly try to re-unite them with their family after with work with them. We work with the families too. While we guide to address issues.	We majorly try to re-unite them with their family after with work with them.	Child and family cases	Child and family cases	Cases handled
E	My work has been generally with street youth with substance abuse	Work has been generally with street youth with substance abuse	Substance misuse cases	Substance misuse cases	Cases handled
F	We work with street youth with substance abuse issues.	Street youth with substance abuse issues	Substance misuse cases	Substance misuse cases	Cases handled
D	We work with runaway street youth and those	Runaway street youth and those	Child and family cases	Child and family cases	Cases handled

	abused by family and employer. We do general services with youth on the street. We refer to other organizations when the need arise.	abused by family and employer. We do general services with youth on the street.			
A	We use case finding method with street children that need health care services, but have no resources to get it. And even with the street youth with substance abuse issues.	Use case finding method with street children that need health care services, but have no resources to get it. And even with the street youth with substance abuse issues.	Case finding method	Case finding method	Method
C	Majority of the street youth are into one form of substance abuse or the other because of their environment, peer pressure and coping with their condition. So we use motivational intervention, based on the level of condition and we also seek alternative for them location, work etc to get away and get alternative environment.	The use of motivational intervention based on the level of condition and seeking alternative for location, work etc to get away and get alternative environment.	Use motivational intervention,	Motivational intervention,	Method
B	We carry out assessments which	Carry out assessments which	Assessment and primary	Assessment and primary	Method

	involve primary evaluation of the street youth we take into the treatment centers. We make the necessary contacts where needed to parents, individuals, professionals who might have had contact with the youth to understand the circumstance or history associated with the situation.	involve primary evaluation of the street youth we take into the treatment centers.	evaluation	evaluation	
E	We plan intervention programs. Involves assembling a team of professionals depending on the case for treatment. This helps us to identify the case management approach. It also includes family based intervention given the rate of socio-economic issues on most homes in the slum area of Lagos state Nigeria.	Plan intervention programs. Involves assembling a team of professionals depending on the case for treatment. This helps us to identify the case management approach	Plan intervention programs, case management approach	Intervention programs, management approach	Method
F	We do individual counselling sessions to help them unburden their hearts. Share personal painful experiences and face their fears.	Individual counselling sessions to help them unburden their hearts	Individual counselling sessions	Counselling sessions	Method

D	For the cases we have dealt with, we do follow –ups. Sometimes the follow ups take up to five years. It can be active follow up (especially for cases with substance abuse) or passive follow up.	We do follow –ups. Sometimes the follow ups take up to five years. It can be active follow up (especially for cases with substance abuse) or passive follow up	Follow ups, passive or active	Follow -ups	Method
A	The social issue is so much. But I would say the prevalent one, is their substance abuse	But I would say the prevalent one, is their substance abuse	Prevalence of substance abuse cases	Prevalence of substance abuse	Situation observation
C	Some of the problem they have is shelter and very poor hygiene. It gives rise to so many health issues. When they try to use local herbs because it cheaper. It sometimes results in even more dangerous health issues.	Some of the problem they have is shelter and very poor hygiene. It gives rise to so many health issues	Poor shelter and health concerns	Shelter and health issues	Situation observation
B	There living condition is mostly deplorable and unacceptable.	living condition is mostly deplorable and unacceptable	Poor shelter or hygiene	Shelter and hygiene issues	Situation observation
E	Some of them engage in drug peddling and other dangerous jobs (pick pocket, dangerous	Engage in drug peddling and other dangerous jobs	Hazardous jobs engagement	Hazardous jobs	Situation observation

	factory jobs).				
F	A lot of the streets youth we have interact with are over labored with very little pay. Why some of these jobs are not legal, they do it in the presence of no alternatives.	The street youth we have interacted with are over labored with very little pay. Why some of this jobs are not legal, they do it in the presence of no alternatives	Over labored and low pay jobs	Labor issues	Situation observation
D	There is problem of unemployment generally in cities. It leaves street youth with jobs, mostly working in harsh job conditions with menial pay.	Problem of unemployment generally Mostly working in harsh job conditions with menial pay.	Lack of jobs and harsh working conditions	Labor issues	Situation observation
A	There are no precise welfare services made available for the youth to lay claim to. The federal ministry of youth, sports and development. Do have a thing or two in the constitution for youth. But it just like most policy of government making no significant impact.	There is no precise welfare services made available for the youth to lay claim to.	Lack definite social welfare structure for youth services	Absence of social welfare services	Social welfare services
C	Some of the previous government development	But these plans over the years	Policy plans lack direction	Policy plans lack direction	Social welfare

	plan was towards youth empower at federal and states levels. But these plans over the years have made helped much. Most of them even lack direction. This is where the street youth' problem is growing every day, without a concrete structure of the government to solve them.	have made helped much. Most of them even lack direction			services
B	Some approaches of government that would have helped in some instance with welfare of the street youth, are watered down or politicized. As there is no synergy with appropriate professional in the field like social workers to helped realize this social welfare programs.	Some approaches of government that would have helped..... Are watered down or politicized. There is no synergy with appropriate professional in the field like social workers.	Water down approaches, lack synergy with professionals	Water down approaches, lack synergy	Social welfare services
E	I think the bottom down approach is what is required by government in social welfare service. They address the problem of poverty, unemployment, conflicts,	The bottom down approach is what is required by government in social welfare service. Problem of poverty,	Lack capacity to address social economic problems	Address social economic problems	Social welfare services

	banditry and terrorism and the like. This roots of this problem needs to be addressed through effective government programs.	unemployment, conflicts, banditry and terrorism and the like.			
F	Family is the smallest units of the society. There has not been attention to family welfare issues and health. This is some of areas that fall short of strategy to address them. The rate of poverty for instance is so high that parent's subject children to labor to fend for the family.	There has not been attention to family welfare issues and health. This is some of areas that fall short of strategy to address them. The rate of poverty is high. parent's subject children to labor to fend for the family	Lack capacity to control Child labor	Child labor issues	Social welfare services
D	The policy plan in developed country helps minimize the impact of harsh economy or social issues in form of government welfare services. This structure is lacking with the government of Nigeria. They don't employ social worker in the appropriate quarters manage this issues. They don't set	The policy plan in developed country helps minimize the impact of harsh economy or social issues in form of government welfare services. This structure is lacking with the government of Nigeria.	Lack of direction of policy plan	No effective policy	Social welfare services

	aside funds or social security for citizen in situations like the pandemic or other crisis.				
A	We have been able to get a number of the street youth away from the streets and re-united with their family. We consider it important to address the issues that gave rise to the problem through our counselling therapy with the family.	Able to get a number of the street youth away from the streets and re-united with their family.	Re-uniting youth with family	Re-uniting youth with family	Achievements
C	Some youth with substance abuse issues have been giving the necessary intervention and management programs through collaborations with other professionals. Although we have had cases of relapse, but some of our cases have been successful, they are clean and part of the society being productive.	Substance abuse issues have been giving the necessary intervention and management programs through collaborations with other professionals.	Successful Intervention and management programs	Successful Intervention, management programs	Achievement
B	We discovered that shelter is one of the major problems with youth on the street. We	We have been able to some into our shelter, along with training in	Provide shelter and vocational training	Shelter, vocational training	Achievement

	have been able to some into our shelter, along with education, training in their chosen vocation of interest.	their chosen vocation of interest.			
A	Social workers as a helping profession have a lot to render with the methods and techniques in cases they handle.				Social work role
C	Social worker can work on advocacy on the plight of street youth. This is to get the right response of government and other relevant agencies. We have taken certain steps in the past with the national assembly, and we are still advocating for recognition of social workers and social services.	Work on advocacy on the plight of street youth. This is to get the right response of government and other relevant agencies	Advocacy on social services	Advocacy	Social work role
B	Some of the street youth are out there because of the economic problem and conflicts in the family, domestic violence. These are some of the areas services are needed to deal with this	Economic problem and conflicts in the family, domestic violence. Areas services are needed to deal with this problem	Social work methods, intervention techniques	Social work methods, intervention techniques	Social work role

	problem through intervention.	through intervention.			
E	It has been pointed out that developing countries lack data to help in projection and even government policy initiation. As Social workers, we helpful in the research on street youth in Conscientization, preventive institutional works. It is a way of identifying the main issues and suggesting ways to manage them.	Lack data to help in projection and even government policy initiation. Social work can be helpful in the research on street youth.	Investment in research and data	Research and data	Social work role
F	It seems as if the government is not paying attention to the plight of the street youth in Nigeria. As social workers we have been into advocacy and are still going at it until a meaningful action is taking by the state.	As social workers we have been into advocacy and are still going at it until a meaningful action is taking by the state.	Advocacy on social services	Advocacy	Social work role
D	There have been many conflicts in communities in Nigeria that has made people homeless, made children orphan and has	To help reduce the problem that lead to rise in street youth, social work is relevant in	Community welfare case work with government collaboration	Community welfare	Social work role

	led to great economic loss. To help reduce the problem that lead to rise in street youth, social work is relevant in community welfare organization with the support of the government.	community welfare organization with the support of the government.			
A	The role of government is first to protect life and property. The security problems in the country has displaced most family, made youth orphans, increased economic problems and rise in number of street youth. All of this is some of the inability of government to safeguard life and property.	The role of government is first to protect life and property. The security problems in the country has displaced most family, made youth orphans, increased economic problems.	Policy on security and welfare	Policy on security	Government role
C	The role of government to help the street youth is to have inclusive government and policy that address inequality in the society. Social workers should be engage in agencies concerned with social welfare to render	Inclusive government and policy that address inequality in the society. Social workers should be engage in agencies concerned with social welfare. to render	Inclusive governance, engage social workers	Inclusive governance, engage social workers	Government role

	professional services	professional services			
B	The role of government is tackle problem through policies on intervention programs. Collaboration with social workers to detect cases and provide needed for social case work, group work, community work with techniques to address issues.	Role of government is tackle problem through policies on intervention programs. Collaboration with social workers to detect cases	Collaboration with social workers on intervention	Collaboration	Government role
E	The role of government should include investment in security, through its process, system and control to safeguard the welfare of people and grow the asset of the country.	Role of government should include investment in security, through its process, system and control to safeguard	Policy on security and welfare	Policy on security and welfare	Government role
A	The field of social work in the country has not gotten the type of recognition it should. This can be corrected when government see the importance of this profession in health care, social welfare, family care etc.	Government see the importance of this profession in health care, social welfare, family care etc.	Government recognition of social work profession	Social work recognition	Improved social welfare
C	They should give social	Give social work	Government	Social work	Improved

	work the right recognition and included in government social welfare programs. As majority of the social work services are carried out through faith based organization and NGOs.	the right recognition and included in government social welfare programs	recognition of social work profession	recognition	social welfare
B	The profession of social work should be inclusive in social welfare planning and policy on street youth. Without understanding the nature of the problem to the right steps to tackle it. The policies of government will continue to lack direction.	The profession of social work should be inclusive in social welfare planning and policy on street youth. Without understanding the nature of the problem to the right steps to tackle it.	Inclusive in social welfare planning	Inclusive in social welfare planning	Improved social welfare
E	Some regulation of government on the right of a child and welfare programs should have been impactful, if the people who knows the job where employed to implement them. Social workers in Nigeria should be employed in government agencies to	Social workers in Nigeria should be employed in government agencies to do their jobs to aid better social welfare administration...	Social workers equipped for social welfare policy implementation	Social welfare policy implementation	Improved social welfare

	do their jobs to aid better social welfare administration.				
F	More research is needed in social welfare issues on street youth and investment in social disciplines. Policies lack direction without data. These data cannot be realized without investment in the education and training in social work disciplines in Nigeria's higher institutions.	More research is needed in social welfare issues on street youth and investment in social disciplines. Policies lack direction without data	Investment in research, social work discipline	Investment in research, social work discipline	Improved social welfare
D	I suggest collaboration of government agencies with social workers, NGOs and other stakeholders. To help on street youth's preventive and rehabilitation programs. Also, to assistance in financing the operation of NGOs is another issue that needed.	Collaboration of government with social workers, NGOs and other stakeholders on street youth preventive and rehabilitation programs.	Collaboration on preventive and rehabilitation programs	preventive and rehabilitation programs	Improved social welfare