Between home and the streets: street adolescents' perception of their own daily lives

Entre a casa e a rua: a percepção de adolescentes em situação de rua sobre o seu cotidiano

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

ABSTRACT: The number of young people trying to survive on the streets is still high, as they are marginalized by society. In this study, we aimed at getting to know the daily lives of nine adolescents who live on the streets of the city of Maceió, capital of the state of Alagoas, Brazil. This is a qualitative research produced from semi-structured interviews and analyzed with the content analysis technique. Results presentation and discussion occurred from three thematic categories: departure to the street; daily life on the streets; and family reference. We noted these adolescents are daily exposed to several conflicts and risks, having to search for strategies to meet their basic needs. In the group under study, most children had a family reference, however, conflicts at home, usually associated with the social background of these families, tend to weaken their existing bonds, which may lead to the expulsion of these minors from home.

KEYWORDS: Adolescent; Social vulnerability; Homeless persons; Homeless youth; Family.

RESUMO: Ainda é grande o número de jovens que faz das ruas seu local de sobrevivência, sendo estes marginalizados pela sociedade. Neste estudo, buscou-se uma aproximação ao cotidiano de nove adolescentes que vivem em situação de rua no município de Maceió, capital do estado Alagoas, Brasil. Trata-se de pesquisa qualitativa, cujos dados foram produzidos a partir de entrevistas semiestruturadas e analisados com a técnica de análise de conteúdo. A apresentação e discussão dos resultados ocorreram a partir de três categorias temáticas: a ida para a rua; cotidiano na rua; e referência familiar. Constatou-se que esses adolescentes se expõem cotidianamente a conflitos e riscos, buscando estratégias diárias para suprir as suas necessidades básicas. No grupo estudado, a maioria mantém alguma referência familiar, contudo, situações de conflitos no lar, originárias do lugar social que essas famílias ocupam, tendem a fragilizar os vínculos existentes, podendo expulsar esses jovens de casa.

DESCRITORES: Adolescente; Vulnerabilidade social; Pessoas em situação de rua; Menores de rua; Família.

INTRODUCTION

Despite the advances in Public Policies aimed at protecting children and adolescents, street adolescents still represent a persistent problem that demands the efforts from the State and society until its full resolution. When young people start living on the streets, they have their rights violated daily and tend to be marginalized because people assume they do not have a family reference.

Since the 1980's it is possible to identify the first studies on the subject[1,2] of street adolescents. At first, such studies wanted to quantify this population. Subsequently, they defined typologies to get to know them better based on two main criteria: period of stay on the streets and family bonds[3].

This discussion was developed during the 1990's by several researchers[4,5] who wished to detail specific typologies for this public. In this study, we adopted the typology defined by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) that, considering the heterogeneity of this group of people, separated it in two broad categories: "children on the streets" and "street children." In the first group are those who, despite spending most part of the day on the streets, are able to come back home during the night or the weekend and are supported by their families somehow; in the second group are those who spend more days (and nights) on the streets and have no family support in any way, which do not mean they are orphans.

Family reference must not be associated with traditional family standards; we consider all the possible compositions of people that give protection and support to their members, considering the fact that contemporary social transformations imposed changes in family's roles and dynamics.

Regardless of its composition, family is one of relationships insertion axes[8] and determines how children and adolescents act in social contexts, besides providing emotional and material support that are essential to their development. This way, the understanding of the phenomenon of children and adolescents who have the streets as their survival and social space also implies the understanding of the social paths experienced by them and their families[9].

As for the factors that lead adolescents to the streets, Ferreira[10] points out analyses that use micro, meso, and macro causes. According to the author, in the first group, there are studies on the reasons concerning individual and psychological characteristics of adolescents and their respective families that lead to street situations; in the second one, there are studies more focused on the reasons associated with precarious conditions of survival, violence and the lack of resources and opportunities in the communities where these individuals are inserted; while in the third one, there are studies that discuss the processes of economic globalization and fast urbanization, which leads to the deepening of the exclusion and marginalization processes of the most vulnerable groups.

From a comprehensive perspective, we consider this phenomenon a synthesis of multiple determinations from several different approaches, thus increasing the complexity of the subject. Most of these adolescents come from vulnerable families that face several difficulties and are not able to support them in a material and emotional way. Poverty associated with domestic violence and the lack of opportunities in society makes these adolescents search for the informal labor market as a way of survival and family support. These circumstances leave these individuals exposed to the attractions offered on the streets, which makes them more susceptible to remain there. These attractions serve as a refuge from the poor life conditions and the family conflicts they deal with[10,11].

According to Rizzini[12], the complexity and the progressive nature of this tendency of moving to the street results from the mix of the limiting effects of the social and spatial environment, the adolescent's life experiences, and their own physical, emotional and social identity resources, which gradually triggers the feeling of not belonging into their family group and, consequently, awakes the need to go to the streets.

For Escorel[13],

> life on the streets indicates the distance in family relationships or even its break up; however, when the family group is pointed out as one of the reasons for living on the streets, generally, this is associated with the drug abuse, domestic violence, family conflicts and physical disabilities.

In cases in which domestic violence is present, there is need for the family group to promote changes in their functional arrangement, which often demands support from professionals or their relationship network. When this does not occur, it seems to enhance the weakening of the family bonds, which can be experienced by adolescents as abandonment or expulsion from the family group[7].

However, street life is not only caused by weakened or broken family bonds and material deprivation, but also by the ways of organization of everyday life. Knowing

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how these individuals perform their everyday activities is essential to understand the existing ways of living on the streets and, consequently, and start planning possible interventions based on them[14].

According to Andrade[15], the study of the everyday life of children and adolescents in street situation reveals that these groups carry out several activities (some of them work, beg, steal, are sexually exploited, or sell and drug abuse). For them, the street is a place for varied dynamics ranging from legal and illegal ones. In this perspective, the street starts to replace their own family and impose new codes and rules in their daily lives. The survival of these children and adolescents, and, often, their relatives, is directly associated with strategies for obtaining profit in addition to running away from serious problems.

In quantitative terms, the first Brazilian National Census Survey on Street Children and Adolescents held in 75 cities from Brazil, and carried out in March 2011 by the Secretariat of Human Rights of the Presidency of the Republic of Brazil, pointed out that in from a total of 23,973 children and adolescents in this condition in the country, around 7,827 children and adolescents only sleep on the streets[16]. In Maceió, capital of the state of Alagoas, Northeast Region of Brazil, data published by the Municipal Department of Social Assistance (SEMAS) in 2014, showed that 30% of people living on the streets of the city are aged between 0 and 17 years, corresponding to 150 children and adolescents, a number that has been concerning and challenging the local authorities to find a solution[17].

Considering the implications of this reality and assuming the social responsibility the University must take in the formation of professionals that will act in the field, the module of Occupational Therapy in Social Field of the Alagoas State University of Health Sciences (UNCISAL) has been developing, in the last years, interventions with students in the field, placing it as a practice scenario and stimulating the elaboration of research to be undertaken by the research group *Ensino e Pesquisa em Terapia Ocupacional* (Teaching and Research in Occupational Therapy) of UNCISAL according to the research lines *Social Intervention of Occupational Therapy* and *Day-to-day, Culture and Society.*

In this context, from the hypothesis that street adolescents result from deeper social problems, which does not necessarily imply their lack of family references, we created the following questions that should be investigated in a qualitative way: What are the main causes that lead adolescents of Maceió to the street?

What are the activities present in their daily lives? Do they have family reference?

This study aims at getting to know the daily life of street children of the city of Maceió, capital of state of Alagoas, Brazil, and identifying the main motivations that lead these adolescents to go to the streets and verify the existence of family reference.

We submitted this research to the Research Ethics Committee of the Alagoas State University of Health Sciences and approved in 07/16/2015 no. CAAE 46333515.7.0000.5011.

METHODS

This is a field study of exploratory and qualitative character conducted with street children assisted by a team of Social Approach Service from the Municipal Department of Social Assistance of Maceió.

During the exploratory phase of the study, in its idealization period, reflections on research-related matters, the methods that could be used, and the possible locations that could provide larger material subsidies for this study were carried out by following Stake's suggestion[18].

After enhancing the idea and defining the methods to be used, instruments were developed for data production.

This way, a semi-structured interview script was chosen to be applied in addition to a form to trace the profile of adolescents who participate in this study. These tools were elaborated by researchers based on the aims of this study. The interview script contained open questions organized according to three thematic blocks: motivations for being on the streets, everyday life on the streets and family. While the form collected information regarding age, sex, education and location.

Insertion into the research field occurred after contacting the general coordination of the Special Social Protection of SEMAS, which led researchers to the Social Approach Team of the administrative region II, whose help contributed to the understanding of the dynamics of service, its role in the Brazilian Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS), and the territories covered by it.

First of all, it was established that all adolescents found living or exercising any kind of economic activity (licit or illicit) in public places covered by the Social Approach team of the administrative region II, would be considered part of the target group and, therefore, would be addressed individually. All adolescents who, after initial contact, did not fit in the typology "child on the streets" and "street child" were excluded from the

Table 1 – Participants' profile

Participant	Sex	Age	Schooling	Typology	Localization territory
Participant 01	M	12	Never attended school	"street child"	Levada
Participant 02	M	15	Never attended school	"street child"	Levada
Participant 03	F	16	Never attended school	"street child"	Vergel do Lago
Participant 04	M	17	Middle school	"street child"	Ponta Grossa
Participant 05	M	17	Up to Junior high school	"child on the streets"	Centro
Participant 06	M	12	Middle school	"child on the streets"	Bom Parto
Participant 07	M	16	Never attended school	"child on the streets"	Farol
Participant 08	M	17	Never attended school	"child on the streets"	Farol
Participant 09	M	15	Attends middle school	"child on the streets"	Farol

Source: Self elaboration.

research. After a brief explanation on the study and its objectives, an invitation to participate in it was carried out; to those who agreed to take part, the reading and the signing of the free consent term was conducted. At the same time, permission for the interview to be recorded in audio was also asked.

Thus, the interviews were carried out between August 7th to September 25th of 2015, twice a week during the morning period; our schedules were defined by the Social Approach team, which reported us they would help in our meeting with the highest number of adolescents in street conditions for non-informed reasons.

Over the 15 visits to the research field, around 60h of stay were totaled while approaching 15 adolescents; of these, 9 accepted to participate in the study and 6 refused without explaining why. It is worth highlighting the first two field visits carried out in the company of the Social Approach team were destined to know the local and some of the adolescents; the interviews only started after the second visit. Table 1 presents the participants' profile

The audio containing 9 interviews totaled 2 hours, 12 minutes and 44 seconds of recording and was fully transcribed by researchers. The transcripts were analyzed with the technique of content analysis of thematic mode, based on propositions by Bardin[19]. To this end, two levels of analysis have been conducted with the material transcribed, the first comprised the structured decryption process of each interview; then, as suggested by Bardin[19], there is need to carry out the second level of analysis, namely, thematic transversality.

All researchers participated in this process according to the following steps: exhaustive read of the full material to identify the main ideas, interpret its meanings, group them into broader category themes from which the discussions and the drafting of the text were defined.

RESULTS

Based on the analysis of the material content produced in the interviews, we prepared the three thematic categories presented below: departure to the street; daily life on the streets; and family reference. We will use parts of the interviews that represent the theme under discussion to better illustrate the contents of the considered categories.

Departure to the street

The first issue addressed in the interviews was on the reasons participants gave to justify why they have been living on the streets. Information in the statements made by participants indicated four main reasons that contributed to their departure to street: free will, family monitoring, escape from domestic violence experiences, and the search for job and income.

There is need to highlight that simple statements such as "I came because I wanted to" can contain other meanings.

In this context, it was possible to detect different motivations.

"I came alone! Because I wanted to [...] they just don't like when I do drugs [reffering to the family]... because it is nice, nobody tells us what to do." (Participant 01)

"[...] I came because I wanted to [...] because I killed a boy at Beco da Maravilha, and then my parents didn't want me at home anymore [...] they don't want me around." (Participant 02)

"I came because I wanted to. [...] Because back home there's nothing to do, then I come spend some time and get a few bucks." (Participant 05)

Family monitoring was also referred to in different situations. Patients reported situations in which their whole family lived on the streets.

"I came to the streets because we've never had a house, my mom never had a house, she has always lived on the streets her whole life" (Participant 03)

Situations in which the family goes to the street searching for jobs.

"I came to the streets because my brothers used to come as well, then I started wanting to come too to work and stay with them; my mom used to let me come, until today she gives me permission to come and she also comes to the streets" (Participant 06)

The escape from domestic violence experience was also referred to as motivation.

"I left because I couldn't stand my stepfather hitting my mother, every time he drank he used to hit her and my brothers." (Participant 04)

In the perspective of conflicting family relationships, however, it was possible to detect relationships that despite not being violent, indirectly encourage the departure of individuals to the streets.

"... they are so annoying, my dad and my mom. We fight a lot when we are together. We fight over everything, because everything is a reason to start a fight" (Participant 05)

The search for a job and income is also referred to as motivation for home departure and different contexts and are inserted in it. Some mentioned the desire to search for a job so they could buy what they want.

"Because I need it to buy my stuff" (Participant 08)

While others, despite claiming to have came to the street to work, mention other reasons associated with this particular motivation.

"I came to work. [...] she [the mother] fights with me when I'm home, and tells me to come to the streets." (Participant 07)

"I come just during the day to work. [...] To get some money to the church, for Projeto Força Jovem (Young Force Project). [...] In the church we have to achieve a goal of R$100, then I come to the traffic light to sell and get some money." (Participant 09)

Daily life on the streets

From the interviews, it was possible to highlight six aspects of life on the streets: activities regarding hygiene, food, sleep, leisure, work and drug use.

When it comes to personal hygiene activities, it was found that adolescents perform it in several places, including their own house and public locations, to those who only stay on the streets during the day to work. We also found young people who reported not having hygiene habits.

"It is difficult, I can only take a shower in the beach shower and that's just sometimes." (Participant 01)

"I take a shower over the scale [of the fishermen]." (Participant 02)

"I don't take showers, sometimes I get new clothes, and then I change them." (Participant 04)

"I take showers at my house." (Participant 06)

Concerning food, difficulties to get food were clearly noted, however, adolescents find their own mechanisms to meet this need on a daily basis, such as: asking for it close by traffic lights, stalls, restaurants and markets; buying food with the money they earn by working on the streets; or making meals at home.

"I ask for it in restaurants, sometimes my mom gets me some, and sometimes I buy it with the money people give me." (Participant 01)

"I ask for it and I eat it at the restaurant's sidewalk." (Participant 02)

"When I'm on the streets I ask for money, or I use what I get with my sales and go eat over there in the tents." (Participant 06)

"At home, and on the streets with the money I have." *(Participant 07)*

When asked about overnight stay, some mentioned sleeping on the streets, which leaves them exposed to several risks; they reported feeling scared, concerned and uncertain about where they were going to sleep in the next night; others claimed sleeping every day in their homes, often with their families.

"I sleep in the shacks my family makes, sometimes people come and tell us to dismantle them and we go somewhere else." *(Participant 01)*

"At night it is the worst time to be on the streets, because people get scared of others doing any harm to them." *(Participant 03)*

"I sleep here on the streets, in this sidewalk." *(Participant 04)*

"I sleep at my house." *(Participant 07)*

Regarding leisure activities, adolescents reported two distinct situations: in the first one, they mention not having time for it; in the second one, they mention performing activities sporadically defined by them as "jokes," which might comprise it in leisure activities category.

"No! I don't have any time to play." *(Participant 02)*

"Sometimes I play of tearing down other people's walls, of kicking trash." *(Participant 07)*

"I only play with my dog called 'negão'." *(Participant 01)*

Concerning work activities, they are always informal and the generated income is often summed up with their parents or guardians income to ensure the family's basic needs. Others reported not having a job because, according to them, asking for money close by traffic lights is easier and more practical.

"I work washing cars." *(Participant 05)*

"I work until five o'clock [17h], then I go home to get some sleep." *(Participant 06)*

"I don't work and I don't even want to, I make money by asking people at the traffic light." *(Participant 04)*

Still on the daily life on the streets, it has been reported the drug abuse as a present activity for some or that was already part of everyday life for others. According to them, they started using by influence of other people, however, they reported having stop using it or using it alone, in a frequency of twice or third times a week. Marijuana, cocaine, and crack were the drugs that showed up in their reports.

"I just do crack, but I stopped after I went to jail. A policewoman saw me and arrested me (laughs), she grabbed me by my ears." *(Participant 04)*

"I do crack, two or three times a week, just by myself, I buy it alone and do it alone." *(Participant 05)*

"I only did cocaine and marijuana with my friends from the street." *(Participant 06)*

Family reference

In this last category, we will approach if family reference is present or not in these adolescents' lives and the frequency they have contact with their relatives.

When asked where they met their families, there were several responses that allowed us to better understand and subdivide this theme in those who maintain family contact often,

"My family is here with me on the streets." *(Participant 01)*

"I never left my family's side, I've always been with them." *(Participant 03)*

"I live with my mother and my brothers." *(Participant 06)*

"I see my family every day." *(Participant 08)*

Those who maintain a sporadic contact,

"It's been more than a week I don't see my family." *(Participant 2)*

And the ones who do not keep contact with family,

"I don't know where my family is. I know they live in Ipioca and my mother's name is Ana." *(Participant 04)*

From the interviews, it was possible to identify adolescents who lived with their families and tried to make

a living in informal working activities in the context of the street; others who were gradually breaking up housing connections with their family; and, finally, those who have the streets as their main habitat, replacing their family as an essential element of support and sociability.

When asked about how they assessed the relationships with their families, they brought light to contents that, even superficially, may refer to the quality of these connections, here grouped into: good, unstable and bad.

"My relationship with my family is good, thank God."
(Participant 03)

"Our relationship is good, she [the mother] is angry, then we behave, she's our mother after all, right? Sometimes she is mean, but we have to respect her." (Participant 07)

"It's normal! They only fight with me when I do drugs, my mom hits me and my grandfather scolds me every time." (Participant 01)

"It's nice, but we fight a lot, they don't want me around." (Participant 02)

"It was bad because she [mother] didn't listen to me, she only believed in her husband." (Participant 04)

"They are so annoying, my father and my mother. We fight a lot when we are together, everything leads to a fight." (Participant 05)

"It's bad, we fight a lot, I yell at my mother, she hits me and I go to the streets." (Participant 06)

"It's bad, we argue a lot, to avoid it I go out and only come back at night." (Participant 08)

DISCUSSION

For this discussion, gross results were treated in a way to be meaningful and valid, according to Bardin[19], by highlighting information, and from this point on, having as background the aims of this study, we proposed inferences and interpretations articulated to theoretical references that give support to the investigation.

Regarding the reasons of departure to the streets, in a deep analysis of the reports given by the interviewed, it was possible to detect that, sometimes, what is understood by participants as a choice of free will is inserted in a context

marked by precarious relationships and life paths that struggle with several violations and attempts of survival.

Thereby, causality of the street situation should not be considered as free will rather than a result of multiple factors that impacted the individual and make them decide to leave home. In this case, departure to the street is also dictated by the way adolescents understand their life conditions and builds their representations and meanings[20].

Another factor evidenced by this research was departure to the streets because of the need to accompany the family; this situation infers that the lack of basic materials to support the family's survival and sociocultural influences experienced in everyday life are essential. For the families in this context, departure to the street is almost considered normal and inevitable, once contemporary social changes affect them, make it harder for them to survive, and weaken bonds and significant relationships, which often results in the departure of the entire family to the street.

It is important to note that one of the adolescents that participate in this study was born on the streets, which lead us to believe the vulnerable experiences lived by their parents that were previous to his birth left him with no choice but to live on the streets. In this case, there was no process of departure to the street, because he never had the experience of living in a home, only knowing life on the streets as a way of existence and sociability.

Violence situations were also identified as determining for homeless people. In these cases, when families are going through difficulties concerning their poverty and vulnerability condition, they end up losing their protective function regarding adolescents by pushing them to live on the streets, which exposes them to more risks[21].

Departure from home is a way of avoiding a situation seen as unbearable for the participants of this research, as in the case of participant 4. However, this escape from home implies the meeting of needs they often can not handle, such as the search for shelter, food and even security.

Thus, this study points out the reasons that lead the interviewed adolescents to go to the streets are several, ranging from situations imposed at birth to the break up of social or family contexts. Despite the group studied being small, and considering the particularities of each participant, there's no question that there are some regularities in the literature[15,16] regarding the reasons behind the decision of being on the streets, such as poverty and domestic violence.

It is worth highlighting that the ones that sleep on the streets ("street children") did not mention the search

for host institutions that offer overnight services for people like them. Which induces us to question the reason behind this, once these institutions could be a safer option for sleep, better protecting them from the risks of the night on the streets, as well as meeting other basic needs, considering their multiprofessional teams could facilitate adolescents' access to several social rights. This can be interpreted from the knowledge on some accessibility problems of this type of care, such as: the existence of strict rules of internal coexistence to which some do not fit; insufficient number of vacancies; distance from where these people spend the day searching for survival resources[14,22].

Another aspect pointed out in the interviews was the association between the need to search for a job, low income and low education. According to participants, searching for an income on the streets is given for several reasons, such as: supply material needs at home; desire to buy things for themselves that their parents can not give; daily life with almost no meaningful activities for them at home; and the lack of educational and leisure activities to spend the time.

It is interesting to point out that, from what the results have shown, the insertion in a religious institution can also promote work on the streets.

Despite child labor not being the focus of this study, we call attention to the implications of this activity in the lives of these young people, as it can become a risk factor that tends to worsen vulnerabilities and reproduce poor conditions of life and work in the future. When working on the streets, adolescents are being prepared for unemployment, informal jobs, and sub-citizenship conditions, once they leave aside educational and professional development opportunities that would ensure formal and qualified activities and, consequently, a worthy future.

In this sense, Souza[33] says that,

The pressure to contribute to the family's income is one of the factors that enhance low education among Brazilian adolescents. The combination of low education and the precarious insertion in the job market results in lasting barriers for the professional future of Brazilian adolescents, which favors the maintenance of social exclusion, rights violation and social insecurity.

We highlight how early adulthood arrives for these adolescents. Most people is not familiar with leisure activities or do not consider them particularly important, because they are always concerned to acquire resources for their family's and their own survival. Dealing with vulnerabilities is quite present in their day-to-day lives,

once they migrate from one point to another inside the urban space and establish relationships ranging from protection and risk.

When it comes to family reference, we noted that a significant part of the participants of this study (06) were not abandoned or alone, because they always keep in touch with a reference point or family group in a way that being on the streets does not necessarily implies they have no contact with their families.

In this sense, considering the context of the street is characterized by situations of risk, the presence of the family in adolescents' lives, even from a certain distance, is a differential, since it may protect them in some situations and ease the access to resources for the survival of its members. On the other hand, those who, as in the case of participant 06, live on the streets with his family, can feel driven to remain in this context; as Rizini[12] points out, the presence of affection, the feeling of safety and protection, interdependence, loyalty and generosity from family relationships make these adolescents stick with their families in street situations.

We also find situations in which adolescents only used to make sporadic contact with their families and the reasons were, generally, unfavorable conditions of structure and dynamics to which their lives are subjected. This fact contributes to the belief that the decrease in the frequency of family contact can lead to the total break up of family bonds, putting this young people in a more serious situation of exclusion. In this study, we found out that an adolescent had already gone through such a process.

When conflicts worsen due to situations of economic and assistance shortage, families not stand such conflicts and tensions and start to become a problem. These situations originate in the social place these people occupy and are also out of their control and influence, in a way that adolescents tend to feel disoriented and especially without the minimum material and symbolic support required to build good family references[24].

Thus, we should consider the perspectives included in the idea of adolescents abandonment by their families, assuming these families have searched for monitoring alternatives to the development of their children; our only task is to investigate from their context, the factors that broke this expectation and contributed to the expulsion process[7].

The difficulty in qualifying the family bonds of adolescents who live on the streets enhances the weakening or the lack of family protection. However, it is important to investigate this aspect in the attempt to understand the

extent that such measures comprise forces of inclusive and protective character or of expulsion and risk character.

In this study, five adolescents classified their relationship with their families as good, even in the face of adversities and arguing episodes. On the other hand, four adolescents have assessed the relationship with their family as bad, reporting frequent episodes of domestic violence, which, for some of them, favored their departure to the street for a period of time, followed by their return to home when the situation was considered bearable.

Despite the fact this study is of qualitative approach and, therefore, quantitative interpretations not influencing the results, perception of balance between those who have good family relationships and those who do not makes us infer that are not just the most evident conflict situations that determine departure to the street.

Data collected allowed us to reflect on some aspects that involve the departure to the street and the daily lives of these adolescents. For most people in the group under study, this process starts with the lack of material, social and emotional resources at home, which leads to the weakening of the protective capacities of these families and constant ruptures that favor the street situation.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Studying the troubling aspects of adolescents on the streets context, particularly from the perspective of their daily lives and family references, becomes relevant as the elucidation of certain verified aspects can contribute to further studies with this population.

Despite the generalization limits of the data here discussed, because of the fact the studied group comprises only nine adolescents and all of them being of the same administrative region managed by Social Approach teams, this study allowed us to get closer to the world of adolescents on the streets context of Maceió, raising data on the causality of this process and on everyday life on the streets. Even though we have already addressed some questions on family relationships, we believe the subject requires deeper studies to better comprehend the dynamics and the multiplicity of the family bonds of these young people by investigating their comings and goings until they are set in the context of the street.

However, this research allowed us to reflect on the need of dismissing the idea that adolescents in street situations have no family reference, because even when family bonds are not strong enough to take them out of the street, family reference is always present in most reports. We also noted that street situations are determined by factors of structural or social character that are out of control of these families; therefore, it is not reasonable to blame them for such condition.

Reports gathered during the interviews reveal the fragility of the Rights Guarantee System for Children and Adolescents. These adolescents expose themselves daily to conflicts and risks, struggle to meet their basic needs and live with the uncertainty of tomorrow, suffering new social disruptions everyday, waiting for support networks to help them create conditions for greater social participation and rights equality for themselves and their families.

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