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## **PROFILE OF THE PARENTS OF CHILDREN SELLING WATER IN SACHETS IN KISANGANI**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study evaluated the acceptability of embedding the Filipino Brand of Service Excellence as elective competency in the Food and Beverage Services NC II curriculum. The researcher utilized a mixed methods design to gather data from thirty-seven stakeholders. These participants included learners, trainers, assessors, and industry partners. The study used structured survey questionnaires to measure the dimensions of innovation and open-ended questions to explore stakeholder perspectives. The quantitative results indicate that the integration of the FBSE competencies is highly acceptable to all stakeholder groups. The stakeholders identified the relative advantage of the program as the highest driver for acceptance. This suggests that the FBSE competencies significantly improves the employability and industry readiness of the graduates. However, the evaluation also revealed a lower rating for curriculum complexity. The participants expressed concerns regarding the difficulty of fitting new behavioral modules into the existing technical training schedule. The qualitative narratives reveal that the FBSE competencies provides the heart and attitude of service alongside technical skills. The stakeholders perceive a holistic service advantage that benefits the trainees and the hospitality establishments. Nevertheless, the findings highlight operational friction regarding the subjective assessment of cultural values and the need for trainer upskilling. These themes indicate that while the program is necessary, its success relies on clear instructional strategies. The study concludes that the Filipino Brand of Service Excellence is an essential cultural component for modern hospitality training. It bridges the gap between mechanical service and genuine guest interaction. To address the identified challenges, the researcher

proposes a structured curriculum enhancement framework. This intervention focuses on contextualized role-playing and standardized assessment rubrics. These strategies ensure that graduates are technically proficient and culturally responsive. The study recommends that training institutions adopt this framework to align their programs with actual industry expectations and national service standards.

**KEYWORDS:** Profile, parents, children, vendors and water

### PROBLEM

In the changing world, parents are tasked with raising and educating their children and preparing them for adult life, biological parents often take on the parental role, but other people such as extended family members or foster or adoptive parents can raise children.<sup>4</sup>

In the execution of this task, and according to research in psychology, there are four main parenting styles, namely democratic, authoritarian, permissive and disengaged styles, the styles are defined according to three important ingredients for the development of children.<sup>5</sup>

As such, parents are an important link between child care and community resources. In this role, they are called upon to make informed choices in the best interest of their child. This is not an easy task, given the challenges they face.<sup>6</sup>

However, in the context of the Democratic Republic of Congo in general and in particular that of the city of Kisangani, parents find themselves in uncomfortable social situations of socio-economic or even political crisis.

Some, to cover the needs of their family members, combine the performance of functions. Others resort to peri-urban agriculture, and still others resort to small jobs for their children in order to cope with the galloping cost of socio-economic life.

But the category of parents that interests us in the context of this study is those whose children do odd jobs, in this case the sale of water in sachets throughout the city of Kisangani.

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<sup>4</sup>What is the role of parents towards children? Available at [https:// www. Gov mb. It parenting.fr](https://www.Gov.mb.It parenting.fr) accessed on December 20, 2024.

<sup>5</sup>What are the 4 parenting styles? Available on <https://naitreet grow. Com>", file consulted on December 20, 2024.

<sup>6</sup>Idem

In this city, children selling water from sachets get their supplies in bulk from SNEL, individuals and places where the electricity is almost permanent, and sell it at the central market, small markets in the city, places of mourning and/or where there is often a concentration of people.

The money received from this sale is used either for their schooling, or for their clothing from small savings, or for their family food.

Concerning the family diet from the money received by children when water is sold in sachets, let us say that the exercise of this sale has several causes that stem from the social responsibility of parents. They are often unable to take care of them and push them to carry out such an activity.

This activity, good or bad for children and even unbeknownst to resolutions 16 and 12 of the United Nations conventions on the rights of the child of 1989, continues to push scientific curiosity, leading researchers to conduct scientific research in this field by asking questions about social representations of parents of this category of children who sell water in sachets throughout the city of Kisangani.

In this case, for any informed researcher, this research on social representations always has an answer that expands scientific knowledge that allows us to elaborate sociological constructions.

This reflection aims to show the way in which the inhabitants of the City of Kisangani socially represent themselves on the profile of the parents of children who sell water in sachets.

## **2. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1. Method and techniques**

To analyse the information collected, the study used the systemic method supported by documentary technology relating to the issue of children in the world, in Africa, in the DRC and more particularly in the city of Kisangani (magazines, archives, etc.). Electronic documents, especially Internet browsing, have been a useful help to us in completing documentary technology. The technique of disengaged direct observation: the observation helped us to see, as inhabitants of the City of Kisangani, how the children circulate under the sun in the different corners of the school, in the central market of Kisangani, in the small markets of the different communes of the City of Kisangani, in the place of mourning, in football stadiums, ball, etc. The semi-structured interview technique: The research took place in Kisangani in the period from 2021 to 2024. As our survey population is heterogeneous, we interviewed the direct and indirect social actors of this phenomenon, including children, family members, those responsible for children who sell water in sachets (parents) and

bosses (the freezer owner). This interview focused mainly on the profile of the parents of the children who sell water in sachets.

Thus, being faced with an infinite population, we reasonably chose our respondents on the basis of the following criteria: being responsible for a freezer (bosses), being the parents of a child selling water in sachets, and being a child seller of water in sachets in the City of Kisangani. They were boys and girls ranging in age from 8 to 17 years old.

We extracted a sample of 100 subjects per quota based on their theoretical and practical knowledge of the sale of sachet water, divided into three groups: according to the categories as we have labelled them, i.e.

"Technical (the bosses (10), i.e. the owners of the freezers who use the children's service in return for payment of a sum of money.)", "practical (the children selling water in sachets (60))" and "intermediary (the childminds of the children (parents 30))".

Spatially, it is the city of Kisangani where relatives, following the socio-economic crisis situation that this urban entity is going through, find it difficult to make ends meet in their households. To this end, some send their children to sell water in sachets to at least alleviate this socio-economic crisis.

In terms of time, this is the period from 2021 to 2024 when the presence of children selling water in sachets that are sent by their parents for the exercise of this sales activity has been observed in Kisangani in places where people gather, mourning ceremonies, religious cults, markets, football matches, crossroads of avenues, etc.

## 2.2. Study environment

The city of Kisangani, capital of the province of Tshopo, is located in the north-east of the Democratic Republic of Congo. It extends on the banks of the Congo River, where it becomes navigable after the Boyoma Falls. The city is divided into six communes: Lubunga, Makiso, Kisangani, Tshopo, Kabondo and Mangobo. It is a strategic crossroads between the east and west of the country, although its road isolation limits its development<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> MONUSCO, Profile of the City of Kisangani, Kinshasa, 2018, p.21.

The population of Kisangani is estimated at more than 2 million, with a high proportion of young people. Rapid population growth, due to rural-urban migration and conflict-related internal displacement in the east of the country, is putting considerable pressure on infrastructure and public services.<sup>8</sup>

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 3.1. Low level of education

**Table 1: Employers' Education Level (Freezer Owner)**

| <i>Level of education</i> | <i>f</i>  | <i>%</i>   |
|---------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Primary                   | 2         | 20         |
| Secondary                 | 2         | 20         |
| Academic                  | 4         | 40         |
| No level                  | 1         | 10         |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>10</b> | <b>100</b> |

This table tells us that the majority of bosses have a university education of 4 people, i.e. 40% against a minority 2 people, i.e. 10% who cannot read or write.

The results on the link between the level of education of freezer owners (bosses or entrepreneurs) and their economic performance show that education promotes business expansion and efficiency. The data obtained by Jacques Kiambu Di Tuema in his study on *economic empowerment through access to microfinance products in the DRC* contradicts our results. The author notes that university-educated entrepreneurs have significantly higher net employee growth (+19.6%) than those with a high school level (11%). Access to storage equipment (such as a freezer) and the management of a micro-enterprise are positively correlated with a higher level of education, which allows for better credit management and an increase in economic activities<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>8</sup>National Institute of Statistics, Demographic Projections of the City of Kisangani, Kinshasa, 2020, p.31.

<sup>9</sup>Kiambu Di Tuema J., Economic Empowerment through Access to Microfinance Products in the DRC, FinDev Gateway, 2011, p.20

Our results do not corroborate those obtained by Orlando Muamba<sup>10</sup> in his study on the socio-demographic profile of small traders in Kinshasa. The author demonstrates that the level of education (state diploma or diploma) directly influences the ability to invest in fixed commercial assets. The choice to buy a freezer for the resale of fresh food products (fish, chickens) is an indicator of the economic rationality of more educated bosses, who are better equipped to amortize the cost of energy and manage the risk of power cuts.

We are also far from the results obtained by Régine Nambuwa, which focuses on the dimension of material autonomy and the socio-economic conditions of heads of households and entrepreneurs in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It highlights the fact that access to a freezer is not just a tool for domestic comfort but is a real micro-entrepreneurial productive asset. Employers with a higher level of education are more likely to integrate this equipment into a strategy of financial empowerment and income diversification.<sup>11</sup>

In a joint ADA Impact (Appui au Développement Autonome) study on small businesses in Africa: Profiles and constraints of entrepreneurs show that among owners of micro-enterprises in expansion in sub-Saharan Africa, the level of education is the first lever for the sustainability of investments. Refrigeration equipment (freezer, refrigerator) requires basic financial calculation skills (management of working capital, payment of electricity bills), which bosses with a secondary or higher education master more effectively<sup>12</sup>.

**Table 2: Parents' level of education**

| <i>Level of education</i> | <i>f</i>         | <i>%</i>          |
|---------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Primary                   | 2                | 6,67              |
| Secondary                 | 13               | 43,33             |
| No level                  | 15               | 50                |
| <b><i>Total</i></b>       | <b><i>30</i></b> | <b><i>100</i></b> |

<sup>10</sup>Orlando Muamba., Personality of the entrepreneur and its impact on the success of micro-enterprises in Kinshasa in the DRC, European Journal of Economic and Financial Research, 2024, p.148 and 149

<sup>11</sup>Régine Nambuwa: Analysis of living conditions, education and entrepreneurship in the DRC, Doctoral thesis defended at ULiège, 2012, p.112 to 135

<sup>12</sup>ADA Impact Thematic Report (Support for Autonomous Development), Small Enterprises in Africa: Profiles and Constraints of Entrepreneurs, 2020, p.11

It emerges from this table that almost all the parents of children selling sachet water in Kisangani do not know how to read or write, 15 out of 30 parents examined confirmed this, i.e. 50% of the respondents against a minority of 2 subjects who have a primary level of education, i.e. 6.67% of the cases.

These results are consistent with those of Saviour Ayertey Abiaw<sup>13</sup> who demonstrates that the level of education of parents (often incomplete primary school or illiteracy) is the main predictor of child labour. The lower the level of education of the head of household, the higher the probability that the child will sell water to supplement the family income.

The level of training and education of parents determines the level of learning, education and instruction and even the future of their children, i.e. an educated parent, an educated child and vice versa, a thieving parent, a thieving child and vice versa and a smoking parent, a smoking child and vice versa, etc. In short, to say such a father, such a son, unless the child can experience a social ascension given a high status.

In this regard, Pierre Erny<sup>14</sup> discusses the transmission of knowledge. Among water vendors, practical street education (quick calculation, negotiation) replaces formal education. Parents value this resourcefulness because they do not have codes to accompany their children in the traditional school system. They just send them in and wait for the results.

### 3.2. Low level of education

**Table 3: Education of Other Family Members**

| <i>Level of education</i> | <i>f</i>  | <i>%</i>   |
|---------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Primary                   | 8         | 13,33      |
| Secondary                 | 12        | 20         |
| Academic                  | 5         | 8,33       |
| No level                  | 35        | 58,34      |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>60</b> | <b>100</b> |

<sup>13</sup>Abiaw, S. A., Socio-Economic Factors and Child Labour in Ghana. Accra, Ghana, Woeli Publishing Services, 2014, p.72.

<sup>14</sup>Erny, P., L'enfant et son milieu en Afrique noire, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1987, p.143.

It emerges from this table that the majority of family members of children who sell sachet water in Kisangani do not know how to read or write, 35 people surveyed confirmed, i.e. 58.34% against a minority of 5 subjects who have a university education, i.e. 8.33% of cases. The level of training and education of family members is determined by the level of learning, education and instruction of parents. In this case, if the basis has not been well laid at the level of the parents, we observe consequences at the level of their families, which further affects the future of future generations.

These results are in line with those of Marie-France Lange<sup>15</sup>, who notes that parents, who have themselves had little schooling, often perceive education as an uncertain investment compared to street trade. Children are then schooled intermittently (evening schools or chronic absenteeism) in order to give priority to the sale of water during peak hours.

Fatou Sarr<sup>16</sup> explains that mothers who sell water, often illiterate, integrate their daughters into the water sales circuit from a very young age. The lack of education of parents limits their understanding of children's rights and reinforces the vision of the child as an economic right-hand man.

### **3.3. Low purchasing power of parents**

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<sup>15</sup>Lange, M.-F., *L'école en Afrique: Enjeux nationaux et défis internationales*, Paris, Karthala, pp.162-164

<sup>16</sup> Sarr, F., *L'entrepreneuriat féminin au Sénégal: La transformation des relations de genre*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1998, p.85.

**Table 4: Distribution of respondents by father's occupation**

| <i>Profession</i>         | <i>f</i>  | <i>%</i>   |
|---------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Biker                     | 14        | 23,33      |
| Military                  | 5         | 8,33       |
| Congolese National Police | 3         | 5          |
| Commercant                | 2         | 3,33       |
| Pastor                    | 2         | 3,33       |
| Minks                     | 2         | 3,33       |
| State agent               | 2         | 3,33       |
| No profession             | 30        | 50         |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>60</b> | <b>100</b> |

Compared to the profession of father of children selling sachet water, this table shows that 30 respondents, or 50%, said that dads are without a profession, 14, or 23.33%, of dads are bikers against 2 subjects, or 3.33% are either shopkeepers or state agents.

These results show that the fathers of children who sell water mostly belong to the informal sector of the economy or to state agents, without paying, characterized by chronic instability of family economic income.

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<sup>17</sup>Fall, A. S., Op.cit. p.132.

**Table 5: Distribution of children selling sachet water by profession of mother**

| <i>Profession</i> | <i>f</i>  | <i>%</i>   |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Housewife         | 10        | 16,66      |
| Water seller      | 14        | 23,34      |
| Resourceful       | 06        | 10         |
| No profession     | 30        | 50         |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>60</b> | <b>100</b> |

If we read this table carefully, it teaches us that the majority of the respondents have mothers without a profession, 30 respondents or 50%. 14 respondents, or 23.34%, have mothers who sell water, 16.66% say that their mothers are housewives, and 10% have resourceful mothers. The high rate of unemployed (50%) is justified by the fact that the majority of respondents have a parish social representation of the term profession. According to them, there is a profession when you are a state employee with a salary. The lack of a profession reflects the lack of employment or unemployment, which has a close or direct correlation with the income of mothers as well as the types of activities carried out by them.

These results go hand in hand with those of Abdou Salam Fall<sup>17</sup> who observed that in Dakar, fathers are often day labourers, dockers or construction workers, while mothers work in small street trade (selling vegetables and doughnuts). These are small-time jobs where the financial contribution of the child water seller is essential to make ends meet the daily food budget.

In the same vein, Fatou Sarr<sup>18</sup> has highlighted the figure of the micro-entrepreneur mother of the informal sector. In many cases, the mother is herself a seller (market or street). The child does not sell water independently, but acts as an extension of the maternal profession, allowing the sales area of the family unit to be increased.

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<sup>18</sup>Sarr, F., Op.cit. p.94. <sup>19</sup>Bonnet, M., Op.cit. p.68. <sup>20</sup>Yaro, Y., Op.cit. p.112 <sup>21</sup>Lange, M.-F., Op.cit. p.171.

The results of this research are corroborated with those of Michel Bonnet<sup>19</sup> who found that the situation where parents are in a situation of long-term unemployment or disability. In this context, the parents' profession is transformed into a management of the work of the offspring. The child then becomes the main breadwinner in the face of parents without paid activity.

The results of this research also go in the same direction with those of Yacouba Yaro<sup>20</sup> who explains that for migrant children, the parents who remain in the village are subsistence farmers living below the poverty line. As the profession of farmer was no longer sufficient to feed the family, the child was sent to the city to sell water and send rural money orders.

In the same vein, Marie-France Lange<sup>21</sup> also noted that a large proportion of mothers of children who sell water work as domestic servants or washerwomen in private homes. These jobs, which are very time-consuming and poorly paid, force mothers to leave their children alone on the street to sell water to pay the rent.

**Table 6: Distribution of children selling sachet water according to the children's family of origin.**

| <i>Origin</i>                            | <i>f</i>  | <i>%</i>   |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Single Parent Family                     | 30        | 50         |
| Blended family                           | 12        | 20         |
| Polygamous family                        | 10        | 16,67      |
| Family with low purchasing power         | 6         | 10         |
| Families with low educational attainment | 2         | 3,33       |
| <b>Total</b>                             | <b>60</b> | <b>100</b> |

This table reveals that 30 respondents, or 50%, came from single-parent families (an unstructured family, either they live only with their father or with their mother), compared with a minority of 2 respondents, or 3.33%, who come from families with a low level of education.

The rate of the single-parent family is in first place, simply because it is the unstructured family where the parents are separated or divorced as a result of which the children are bearing the social and economic burden. They have become sellers of sachet water for their school care, or to meet their

urgent needs: food, soap, clothes, etc. This predisposes them to dropping out or dropping out of school.

The results of Christiana E.E. Okojie<sup>22</sup> have shown, along with ours, that the majority of children who sell water come mainly from large families (more than 6 children). In these households, resources are so limited that siblings are hierarchical: the older ones often sacrifice their education and sell water to allow the younger ones to stay in school a little longer.

Fatou Sarr<sup>23</sup> also discovered that the predominance of single-parent families headed by women (widowed, divorced or abandoned). Without the financial support of a spouse, these mothers have no choice but to integrate their children into their own business survival strategy. The sale of water sometimes becomes the economic cement of the mother-child unit.

Marie-France Lange<sup>24</sup> discovered in the same way that many children who sell water do not live with their biological parents but with an uncle, aunt or guardian in the city. In these foster families, the child is often treated as free labour whose main mission is to bring in money through the sale of water, far from the protective gaze of his biological parents.

Luc-Vincent Measari<sup>25</sup> distinguishes between families in a situation of dignified poverty and families in total rupture. For some children who sell water, the family of origin is a place of violence or rejection. The street then becomes a substitute family where the sale of water ensures autonomy from a toxic or non-existent household.

We have sometimes found that the family of origin of children who sell water focuses on the disintegration of traditional structures, household size and the role of migration networks. The family is not only the place of poverty, but also the place of arbitration between the immediate survival and the future of children.

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<sup>22</sup>Okojie, Child Labour and Health Hazards: A Study of Street Children in Nigeria. Ibadan, Nigéria : University Press PLC, 2003

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<sup>23</sup>Sarr, F., L'entrepreneuriat féminin au Sénégal: La transformation des relations de genre, Paris, l'Harmattan, p.112

<sup>24</sup>Lange, M.-F., Op.cit. p.168

Based on the social origins of the children selling water in sachets in the City of Kisangani, we wanted to know their distribution in sex, age, level of education, seniority of their activity, the profession of the father and mother, causes of the sale of sachet water, the fact that the child is sent or not, the materials used, the places of sale, people who accompany these children.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The objective of this scientific reflection was to show the way in which the inhabitants of the City of Kisangani socially represent themselves on the profile of the parents of children who sell water in sachets. Through a qualitative field survey conducted among 100 respondents, including 60 children, 30 parents and 10 bosses, we were able to highlight significant results that confirm that the majority of parents, other family members of children selling water in sachets in Kisangani do not know how to read or write, The parents do not have a job (without a profession) and come from the unstructured family, either they live with the father or with the mother (mother).

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