



Characterization of Delinquencies Associated with Street Juvenile Hawkers in Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

Street hawking is considered a form of child abuse because it endangers the health (physical, spiritual, psychological and social) and safety of the child; interferes with his/her education and deprives him/her the right to normal and happy childhood. The study sought to establish the causes, characteristics and effects of street hawking among juveniles in Calabar metropolis in Cross River State, Nigeria. One research question was formulated to guide the study. Survey design was used to ascertain the causes, effects and characteristics associated with street hawking among juveniles school children in the study area. A sample size of 200 was drawn from street hawkers and their parents/guardians, teachers, students in schools, youth and leaders using the stratified random sampling technique. Questionnaire/checklist was used to collect the data which was analyzed using percentages. Poverty, illiteracy, insecurity, poor family planning and child trafficking were identified as the major factors responsible for child street hawking. Juveniles hawkers were characterized as school dropouts, single parents, teen pregnant mothers, street fighters, smokers, drunks, homeless, insane persons and a lot more attributes. It is recommended that education be made free, provision of employment, qualitative and engaging in order to motivate the children towards completion of school. Implementation of the child right act of 2012, construction of orphanage homes in Calabar metropolis, reaching out to the poor in the society and the amendment of some religious practices were some of the recommended solutions.

Keywords: Street hawking; Juvenile delinquencies; school dropout; teenage pregnancy

INTRODUCTION

Historically, hawking appears to be part of the Nigerian culture and understandably so Nigeria being among the poorest economies in the world with the accompanying effects of unemployment, poor infrastructural facilities and lack of human empowerment has been most of her populace living in abject poverty.

Street hawkers according to Muhammed (2013) is a license to sell by retail from one street to another by any means to render a service or sale. In its simplest form, it is the selling of things (good or services) along the road sides and from one place to another by young children of school age who may be either male or females.

Therefore, because of the low socio-economic status of most families in Nigeria and the high rate of poverty, most parents cannot help but push their wards into the streets where they spend long hours at the mercy of environmental elements, selling pure water (sachet water), fruits, confectionaries, beverages and so on; so that the proceeds may contribute to family upkeep. This

situation is alarming because street hawking is a form of child labour and abuse which is on the increase in Calabar metropolis.

Street hawking is considered a form of child abuse because it endangers the health (physical, spiritual, psychological and social) and safety of the child; interferes with his/her education and deprives him/her the right to normal and happy childhood. According to Ebigbo, 2003, the traditional farming and trading in the Nigerian society had impacted negatively on the economy and polity, increase cultural conflicts, unemployment, illiteracy and urban drift, leading to exploited, uneducated, abused and malnourished child.

Nevertheless, as Cruzador (1998) pointed out, there is nothing wrong with work.what is wrong is the way the children are exploited, beaten and sexually abused. This basic assumption holds insofar as the Nigerian economic situation is concerned. Taken differently, juvenile work is a good form of industrial training given to children and should not be completely eradicated. What is required to allay the threat of child labour and abuse is a more myopic view of the children's contribution to family income and livelihood.

Most children start hawking at a very tender age, when they are still in their formative years. On the other hand, general standards of morality and social norms that govern acceptable pattern of behavior are on the decline. When children are by street hawking, exposed to the corrupting influences of the debased society without commensurate or even more positive influence from the family circle, they may develop patterns of speech and behavior that may deviate considerably from socially desirable and acceptable standards. These hawkers may become trained to indulge in bad behaviour which may thwart their progress in life. Thus, this study seeks to discover behavioural effects of street hawking of the hawkers in Calabar municipality, in Nigeria.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research question: the study formulated some research question which included thus; what are the delinquencies associated with street juvenile hawking in Calabar? Factors such as poverty, poor parental background, child trafficking, war and illiteracy have been identified as responsible factors.

Methodology adopted for the study: The study adopted a survey research design and employed same for the study because it focuses on determining the nature of situations, as at the time of investigation. It suits this particular study since it concerns itself with ascertaining and establishing the status quo, facts or pieces of information at the time of research, presenting such information as they are captured.

Population used for the study

A sample size of 200 was drawn from street hawkers and their parents/guardians, teachers, students in schools, youth and leaders using the stratified random sampling technique. Questionnaire/checklist was used to collect the data which was analyzed using percentages. Poverty, illiteracy, war, poor family planning and child trafficking were identified as the major factors responsible for child street hawking.

The stratified simple random sampling technique was used to select 20 streets in Calabar metropolis, 20 women who are parents to street hawkers, 20 men who are parents to street hawkers, 10 teachers, 100 street juvenile hawkers, 40 dropout hawkers and 10 parents/guardians/relatives of the juvenile street hawkers, yielding a sample size of 200 population size. The survey instrument further consisted of a checklist, titled role of parents on students' career choice the checklist.

RESULTS

The research question sought to establish the consequences, contributory factors and characteristics of street juvenile hawkers in Calabar Metropolis. Data were analyzed using percentages and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Contributing factors of street juvenile hawking in Calabar Metropolis (N=200)

Contributory factors	yes	(%)	No	(%)	Total No.	Total percentage
Poverty	175	89	25	11	200	100
Illiteracy	129	62	71	38	200	100
Insecurity	106	58	94	42	200	100
Poor family planning	112	74	88	26	200	100
Child trafficking	152	75	42	25	200	100

Identified contributory factors and Causes responsible for street hawking includes

- i. Poverty is responsible for 89% of the respondents to send their children into street hawking while the same factor was not responsible for 11% of respondents action (Table 1)
- ii. Poor family planning revealed that 74% of the respondent sent their children to hawk in the street due to poor family planning and management of their income. But for 26% of the respondent, this was not responsible for their actions (Table 1).
- iii. Child trafficking is estimated to be the cause of 75% of the respondents to send their children to hawk in the street while the same was not true for 25% of the respondents (Table 1).
- iv. Insecurity in terms of food, theft and threat to life is found to instigate 58% of the respondents to send their juvenile children to street hawking while 42% of same sets of respondents did not yield to this fact. (Table 1).
- v. Illiteracy of guardians, parents and relatives of street juvenile hawkers was identified to be responsible for 62% of the respondents to send their juvenile children to carry out street hawking while the remaining 38% of respondents did not see this as the reason for their action. (Table 1).

Characteristics/Effects of juveniles engaged in street hawking

According to responses and reports from the study, the following are the characteristics /effects of street hawking on juvenile children;

- i. Children involved in street hawking do not always stay in school during school hours
- ii. Street juvenile hawkers in Calabar metropolis often play truancy in school
- iii. Street juvenile hawkers do not like staying in school for extra classes
- iv. Students involved in street hawking often leave school to roam the streets
- v. Street juvenile hawkers often leave school without permission
- vi. Street hawkers often get involved in examination malpractices
- vii. Children involved in street hawking develops various behavioural problems
- viii. Street hawkers are often disrespectful of others
- ix. Female children involved in street hawking often become prostitutes and are very prone to rape
- x. Street juvenile hawkers are most likely to be involved in petty theft
- xi. Children involved in street hawking often resort to the use of hard drugs such as cocaine, heroin and cannabis.
- xii. Some of the aforementioned characteristics agrees with Ekpenyong and Sibiri (2004) position and Nite (2005) who demonstrated that while some street hawkers sell for parents to augment their lean income, others sell for a morsel of bread; others sell for relations in the form of disguised child labour and some others sell to make out a living. Hidden from the causes observed is the aspect of child prostitution which is an off shoot of combine hawking and poverty. The author observed that this group are usually aged

between 11 and 14 years and at times encouraged by their parents, guardians and employers. This category makes up the most hazardous street children because of HIV/AIDS scourge and the too many unwanted pregnancies associated with street juvenile hawkers.

Simple probable solutions to street juvenile hawking delinquencies in Calabar metropolis

Recommended simple probable solutions to street juvenile hawkers delinquencies according to Mohammed (2013) includes the following;

- i. Implementation of the child right act of 2012.
- ii. Construction of orphanage homes in Calabar metropolis
- iii. Reaching out to the poor in the society
- iv. Amendment of some religious practices

DISCUSSION

Early deprivation of children's right to normal life could lead to behavioural problems. Thus, the behavioural manifestations of problems associated with street hawking include problems of social maladjustments, moral decadence, emotional reactions and insecurity. Dantiye and Haruna (2004) had observed that street hawking is highly detrimental to children physical, mental, psychological and social development. Also, in a similar study by Aderinto and Okunola (1998), children submitted that they were pushed into street hawking by maintenance needs. Onibokun (2000) also found and reported that children are forced into street hawking by the need to contribute to family income, lack of relevant education that can guarantee employment after training and demands of traditions. Other factors identified as sustaining street hawking in some parts of Nigeria by Dantiye and Haruna (2004) include hawking as a means by which young girls attract suitors and a means for raising money for buying items in preparation for marriage for the juvenile hawkers. The international labour organization (ILO) in 1998 had submitted that 40% of street children are employed as sex workers, drug peddlers, car washers and bus conductors for economic purpose. Street juvenile hawking has a negative effect on the level of education attained, school attendance, school grades, illiteracy and overall human capital formation. It is also found to result in low school enrolment with developmental and performance implications (Onibokun, 2000). In another study conducted in Asia, child labour was also found to negatively affect the educational outcomes of children. In Africa and particularly in rural Nigeria, it has been observed that child labourers generally have lower school attendance (Robinson, 2004).

The physical and health consequences of children participating in the sales and service sector of the economy have been identified in Latin America, Asia and Africa to include various diseases such as respiratory problems, injuries, rape and molestation, malnourishment, extortion of income and participation in harmful or delinquent activities, inadequate sleep due to fatigue and long hours on the job and confinement to juvenile homes (Ross, 1996).

Children engaged in trading encounter problems related to their psychological well-being too. Stigmatization by the press and public, feelings of disheartenment, stress and irritability, personality disorders, anti-social behavior, alienation and isolation from their family have all been identified (Amin, 1994). Still on the effects of child labour on the mental health of the child. Baland and Robinson (2000) posited that these children suffer verbal abuse, low self esteem and a loss of imagination and future direction in life. It is also a known fact that child labourers tend to keep bad company and are negatively pressured by peers to engage in delinquent behavior.

Ekpenyong and Sibiri (2011) also reported that the prevalence of street hawking is proliferation and must be addressed as a national emergency situation. Furthermore, 98% of their sample submitted that a compromised socio-economic situation is the bane of street hawking in the study region and that street trading is contemporaneous with a number of dangers including kidnapping, accidents and the influence of negative or criminal peer groups. The study also revealed that

street trading has a negative impact on society as it leads to underdevelopment rather than development of the nation in the long run.

Problems associated with street hawking have further been identified by Aderinto and Okunola (1998) to include high potential for accidents, truancy and exposure to hazards of weather and fatigue. In addition, Anabogu (2000) found feelings of inferiority, exhaustion, emotional distress, unhappiness and personality disorders to be associated with street hawking. In another study, Dunapo (2002) found that hawkers are exposed to dangers of being kidnapped, raped and /or being recruited to hawk drugs by drugs barons. He also discovered that young street hawkers are prone to early unwanted pregnancy and contracting of deadly sexually transmitted infections. Finally, Ewurugwe (1986) in another study stated that street hawking has serious effects on the social development of children. His findings could be consolidated by the fact that street hawkers come to develop attitudes that deviates from normal expectations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The adverse effect of long hours of street hawkers on the physical, mental and social growth and development of affected children could be minimized if the behavioral problems are identified early and properly managed. Therefore, it is pertinent to recommend as follows;

- i. Since poverty appears to be the primary cause of street hawking, the government at all levels should step-up efforts to improve the economy, as a matter of urgency. This they say can be done by stemming the tide of unemployment, improving the remuneration of workers, improving and providing rural infrastructure, creating job opportunities and empowering the masses in various conceivable ways. This would go a long way to raise the socio-economic conditions of most families thus reducing the poverty rate in the country.
- ii. The government at all levels should not only provide free basic education but also take practical steps to ensure that the education they give is standard and completely free, qualitative and necessarily mandatory at this level. Legislations and enforcement of punitive measures on defaulting stakeholders will enhance success in this direction.
- iii. School administrators should step up efforts to curb every form of truancy and loitering of children in and around their respective schools so that students may be disciplined to stay put in schools and pay attention to their lessons.
- iv. Parents and guardians should not neglect their responsibility to provide for members of their family irrespective of whether they are related by blood or by adoption.
- v. Parents and guardians whose wards are involved in street hawking should endeavor to protect their wards from the corrupting influence of the society. They can achieve this by training their wards to eschew unacceptable behaviours, by not allowing anything to interfere with their education and by respecting their right to a secure and happy childhood.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to find out the various problems associated with street hawking and how such problems can affect the development of the juvenile hawkers in calabar metropolis. Based on the findings of the study, the effects of street hawking on moral laxity, truancy in schools, the future of the hawkers and the role of poverty as a prime sustainer of street hawking were drawn out. Thus it became clearer that the hostile environment of conflicting norms and values to which street hawkers are exposed to make them vulnerable to the acquisition of maladjusted patterns of behavior. However, the adverse effect of long hours of street hawking on the total development of children could be minimized if the associated delinquencies of street juvenile hawkers are identified and properly managed.

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