

**TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF STREET HAWKING IN ILORIN
METROPOLIS: IMPLCATIONS FOR COUNSELLING**

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Abstract

This paper investigated the perception of teachers' on street hawking by children in Ilorin metropolis. Street Hawking as used in this study refers to children who sell goods or items on the streets of Ilorin. The study made use of one hundred and fifty participants. The data for the study was collected by means of a self-designed questionnaire. Three null hypotheses were formulated and tested using t-test statistical method and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The results indicated that there was no significant difference between teachers' of different age range and marital status (Single and married) in their perception on street hawking by children while there was a significant difference between male and female teachers in their perception of street hawking by children. Implications of the study for counselling were highlighted, especially the provision of remedial services and free education to the affected children.

Introduction

Every family all over the world rejoices at the birth of a healthy baby. As a matter of fact, the conception of a baby is usually received as a miracle to the parents. It is recorded in the Bible that children are a heritage of the Lord (Ps. 127 v3). In the traditional Nigerian society, children are referred to as the future of the nation and there is a necessity to cater for their well-being. Children in various homes are the source of life and hope of the parents. Despite this hope, parents sometimes have intractable problems which often end in divorce. The consequence of divorce or separation or any form of family problem affects the health, growth and wellbeing of the children. Some of these problems may lead the child to seek solace outside of the house, invariably becoming street children.

Hong and Ohno (2005) notes that the problem of street children arises from the interaction of traditional causes such as the loss or divorce of parents and new causes such as economic incentives. The importance that the world places on children cannot be over emphasized. Starting from the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has 54 articles, covering the civil, economic, social and political rights of the child, there has been a concerted push to ensure Universal Rights that are clearly defined for all children of the world. This convention, which was signed in September 1990, requires that nations report on their progress in attainment of these targets regularly. Nigeria is a signatory to this document.

In Nigeria as in other parts of the world, the sight of children selling chewing gum, sachets of pure water or shining shoes in street corners are commonplace. The problem of street hawking is well known, but the dynamic mechanism that prompts some of these children to drop out of school and go selling on the street is yet to be analyzed deeply or comprehensively (Lauter 1998 & Ennew 2003). Many studies (Oloko, 1989; Ebigbo, 1989b & UNICEF, 2006) have posited that dire poverty and parents' divorce are common to all street children in all developing countries, Nigeria inclusive.

UNICEF (2006) reports that tens of millions of children live on the streets in plain sight, but paradoxically are among the most invisible, their plight ignored and their needs neglected. Street children are vulnerable to all forms of exploitation and abuse. Invisibility of street children is one of the major difficulties for conducting survey studies. Some child workers are highly visible to any observer: shoe shiners, barrow-pushers, beggars, and vendors of all kinds including trinkets, T-shirts, tourist guidebooks, chewing gum, and lottery tickets among others. Others are much less visible: those who offer drugs or sexual services and those who only work at night. Children end up on the street for a variety of reasons. For some, the street is an escape from broken families or domestic violence as earlier posited. For others, street life is a means of supplementing family income, passing time, and even having fun. In addition, the breakdown of traditional family values, educational zeal, and community structure leaves a large number of children without necessary care and support for their sound growth and development.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as anyone below the age of 18. The age of 18 years relates primarily to the

generally accepted age of maturity, though in all countries there are legal exceptions or as UNICEF puts it “unless the laws of a particular country set the legal age for adulthood younger”. Glauser (1990) as cited by Bar-on (1997) posits that street children is the generic term used to refer to a group of children with a special relationship to the street. Street children is the most common term used by international organizations and related agencies to refer to the type of children who are the focus of this study. MOLISA defines street children as “children who leave their families, earn their living by themselves, and have unstable working and living locations; or children wandering on the street with their families” (National Assembly of Vietnam 2004, p. 2). An attempt to differentiate between “Children in the street” and “Children of the Street” shows that the former refers to children who just use the street as their work place and the latter to children who also live in the street. Studies such as ILO (2001) and UNICEF (2000, 2002) avers that all forms of street hawking including child labour are abuse. Oloko (1989) perceives child abuse as the practice of child neglect while Gill (1991) sees child abuse as the act that lowers the image of a child as a human being. Street hawking by children most often manifest when parents fail to perform their expected duties and obligations (Aliyu, 2006).

Street hawking by children is on the increase in our societies and the rate of increase has been a major source of concern for policy makers, educationist and counsellors. The issue of street hawking is an ugly phenomenon, which serves as another means of slavery, despite the abolition of slave trade that transcends the African Continent many decades ago. According to a report by UNICEF (2006), children end up in the street for a variety of reasons – poverty, abuse and neglect are chief culprits. Many families are simply too poor to provide the basic necessities for their children and abandon them to the streets. Some children are sent to the streets by their parents to earn money for the family. Other children as noted by Ebigbo (1989b) and Omokhodion, Omokhodion, & Odusote (2006) turn to the streets to escape physical or sexual abuse. Some are overwhelmed by the hardships at home such as alcoholism, drug addiction, family disintegration, and neglect and are easily lured by the excitement of street life. A little more than half of street children have a place in the house of family or friends where they can sleep at night, the rest spend both day and night on the street.

Children on the streets are exposed to dangers of all sorts including contracting HIV because of sexual contact ranging from consent to forced sex. Tens of millions of children live on the streets in plain sight, but paradoxically are among the most invisible, their plight ignored and their needs neglected. Street children are vulnerable to all forms of exploitation and abuse. Through exploitation, children are also at risk of drug or other substance abuse as well as HIV/AIDS (UNICEF 2002). In countries most seriously affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic (e.g., sub-Saharan Africa), extended families or other communal "safety nets" are breaking down, being overtaxed or over-extended. This in turn has led to an increase in child-headed households but has also left many other "HIV/AIDS orphans" traumatized, stigmatized, and left to fend for themselves, some resorting to street life. While increased vulnerability to HIV/AIDS is a consequence of life on the streets for many children (West 2002), HIV/AIDS is also an increasing cause of children coming onto and remaining on the streets. Many children who are abandoned come from families affected by HIV/AIDS or are HIV positive themselves. The phenomenon of "AIDS orphans" has brought some children onto the street. Children who are HIV positive experience stigmatization, discrimination and poor self-concept.

Lusk (1992) developed four categories of children found in the street. Each group has its own psychological characteristics. First, there are poor working children returning to their families at night. They are likely to attend school and not be delinquent. Second, there are independent street workers. Their family ties are beginning to break down, their school attendance is decreasing, and their delinquency is increasing. Third, there are children of street families who live and work with their families in the street. Their conditions are related to poverty. In India, they are referred to as pavement dwellers (Patel, 1983), whereas in the United States they are the children of homeless families (Oberg, Bryant and Bach 2005). Finally, there are the children who have broken off contact with their families. They are residing in the streets full time and are the "real" street children. They are the most vulnerable (Ebigbo, 2003). Although endowed with rich natural resources and extensive human resources, Nigeria has not developed the necessary technological, industrial, managerial and political know-how to pull its resources together in a sound economy to take care of the basic needs of its population. As a result, poverty and hard living conditions are prevalent, affecting children in particular. Nigeria faces social upheaval, cultural conflict, gradual

industrialization and imperfect attempts at westernization. In northern Nigeria where the Moslem religion is predominantly practiced and begging is allowed, young boys and girls lead handicapped adults about on the streets to beg and they receive a pittance for their services (Kisekka 1981). What happens when these adults die? The children end up becoming street children.

A situation analysis of child abuse and neglect in Nigeria, undertaken through the medium of Nigerian newspapers, found that child abandonment, sexual abuse, child neglect, vagrancy, kidnapping and hawking were the most reported forms of child abuse and neglect (Ebigbo 1989b). Socially, it has been discovered that Nigeria has witnessed numerous cases of street children. The harsh Socio-economic conditions have rendered many families poor and deprived. Many parents are not bothered whether their children go to school or not, whether or not they are healthy or well fed, and this is manifested in children often seen poorly dressed and not well fed by the roadside. In view of these realities, one can say that education plays a prominent role in people's attitude to street hawking by children. The purpose of this study therefore was to investigate the perception of teachers on street hawking by children in Ilorin metropolis.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for testing:

1. There is no significant difference among teachers of different age ranges in their perception of the factors responsible for street hawking by children.
2. There is no significant difference between single and married teachers in their perception of the factors responsible for street hawking.
3. There is no significance between the male and female teachers in their perception of the factors responsible for street hawking by children.

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive design

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The target population for this study consists of all secondary school teachers in Ilorin metropolis, but because not all the teachers in Ilorin can be involved in the study, a stratified sampling technique was employed in selecting the participants for the study. One hundred and fifty (150) teachers participated in the study. In choosing the teachers, twenty-five were randomly selected from six secondary schools.

Instrumentation

The instrument used for this study was a self-designed questionnaire. The instrument was first administered on thirty primary school teachers with a second administration after a three-week period. The correlation coefficient from the test retest reports a reliability of 0.77. After the main study was conducted, a split-half reliability co-efficient of 0.81 was obtained. The researcher considered the instrument satisfactory for the conduct of the study.

Procedure for Administration of Questionnaire

The questionnaire forms were personally administered on the one hundred and fifty participants in the six schools. This was to prevent any questionnaire from missing.

Data Analysis

The t-test statistical method and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to analyze the data.

Results

Table 1: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of respondents according to Age Range

Source	Df	SS	MS	Calcd F value
Model	3	127.9325	42.644	1.26*
Error	146	4952.0675	33.918	
Total	149	5080.0000		

*Significant at 0.05 level

Table 1 shows that the calculated F-value of 1.26 $p < 0.05$ is less than the table value of 2.60. Based on this result, it was concluded that there is no statistically significant difference in the perception of street hawking by teachers with different age range. The hypothesis was sustained.

Table 2: Means, Standard Deviations and t-test value of respondents according to marital status.

Group	N	Mean	SD	Df	Calcd t-value
Single	39	59.385	6.323	148	0.52
Married	111	59.946	5.682	.	(NS)

NS= 0.05 level.

Table 2 shows that the calculated t-value, which is 0.52, is less than the critical t-value which is 1.96 $p > 0.05$. Based on this result, it was concluded that there is no statistically significant difference in the perception of street hawking by Single and Married teachers. Hypothesis 2 was also sustained.

Table 3 Mean, Standard Deviations and t-test value of respondents according to Sex

Group	N	Mean	SD	Df	Calcd t-test
Male	77	61.0390	5.915	148	2.73*
Female	73	58.4932	5.500		

* $P < 0.05$

Table 3 shows that the calculated t-value which is 2.73 is greater than the critical t-value which is 1.96 $p < 0.05$. Based on this result, it was concluded that there is a significant difference in the perception of street hawking by male and female teachers. Hypothesis 3 was therefore rejected.

Discussion

The first hypothesis formulated for the study stated that there is no significant difference among teachers of different age range in

their perception of the factors responsible for street hawking by children. This is confirmed because the findings indicated that age made no significant difference in the perception of the teachers towards factors responsible for street hawking by children. Irrespective of the age range of the teachers (20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59 and 60 years and above), they still had similar, if not absolutely the same perception towards street hawking by children. In the same vein, the result of the findings indicated that marital status made no significant difference in the perception of teachers towards street hawking. Both the single and married teachers viewed the subject from the same angle. However, the result of the findings in this study indicated that there was a significant difference in the perception of the teachers towards street hawking by children based on sex. Male and female teachers had different perceptions; they viewed the subject from different or separate angles. Therefore, hypothesis 3 was rejected.

This study has shed more light on the problems faced by children during street hawking. Over seventy-four respondents agreed with the statement that street hawking is detrimental to their health and development. To buttress this point, World's Children (1997) stated that street hawking can endanger children in the following ways; physical development, cognitive development, emotional development, social and moral development. Moreover, the research findings have indicated that the issue of street hawking by children has been terribly looked down upon. Based on the findings, one hundred and thirty-two respondents agreed that children's street hawking should be totally eradicated because it jeopardizes the future of the children involved. The next possible question is: who eradicates it, is it the government, parents, educational institutions, law enforcement agents or the street hawkers? Though this is not the focus of this study.

Implications for Counselling

It is a common saying that "children are the future", apart from this, they are also the "present" because Nigeria's future depends on their healthy development today. They are the most vulnerable, the most resilient and the most precious in society. In African society, as in many cultures around the world, children are a gift and a means for parents to secure their own futures. In traditional African societies, children are to be protected and supported, and assisted to reach

their full potential. Counsellors are indispensable in this respect because they have been professionally prepared for the task. Most of these children can be reunited with their families where they exist as it has been proven that some of these children have no families to return to. Also, Counsellors can create, with the support of the government, professional bodies and non-governmental organizations rehabilitation centres or as it is called in other places care centres, home or shelter for the homeless. It is equally advocated that religious leaders be incorporated into the fight against street hawking by children. Religious leaders should be made to propagate the ills associated with hawking on the street, such as accidents, bullying, taking to drugs, criminality, arrest, sexual assault especially for female children and the fear of contacting sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

Education is highly advocated because it is capable of giving a new life and a secured future to these children. Ignorance or illiteracy is no doubt one of the impediments to the rights of children. Hence, mass education can be a very strong weapon in orienting the general public toward a more favourable attitude to children's right. Education should be really free not just on paper and coupled with this is the incorporation of effective school guidance from the elementary level up until the highest possible level. Early exposure to proper guidance has the tendency to wade off delinquencies. The entry of democracy into Nigeria's landscape encouraged effecting changes in the educational sector and this led to the relaunching in September, 1999 a Universal Basic Education Scheme (UBE) which aims at achieving the following specific objectives:

- Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for Education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
- The provision of free, Universal Basic Education for every Nigerian child of school going age.
- Reducing drastically the incident of drop-out from the formal school system (through improved relevance, quality and efficiency).
- Catering for school dropouts, and out-of-school children/adolescents, through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education.
- Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills (as well as the ethical, moral and civic values) needed for laying a solid.

Effective implementation of this policy will surely reduce the incidence of children going unto the streets to hawk and do some menial jobs.

Conclusion

A misunderstanding of the real problems and a complete lack of commitment in tackling them is obvious from the fact that policy after policy and scheme after scheme, have failed to make any appreciable impact. What it indicates is a near total absence of responsibility in the system, in effect almost a refusal to take responsibility for ensuring the provision of this basic service, or rather of guaranteeing a fundamental right. All children outside the school are child labourers or potential child labourers and the flow of children into work can only be stemmed by realizing universal and compulsory primary education

In conclusion, the researcher has been able to find out many problems that are associated with street hawking by children and these are:

- i. Illiteracy
- ii. Poverty or financial hardship
- iii. Unemployment
- iv. Large number of children
- v. Marital instability (divorce or separation) etc.

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