

Original Article**PERCEIVED EFFECTS OF STREET HAWKING ON THE WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN IN ANYIGBA, DEKINA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KOGI STATE, NIGERIA**Alfred Eboh¹

¹Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Kogi State University, PMB 1008, Anyigba, Kogi State Nigeria.
Correspondence: Alfred Eboh, E-mail: ebohalfred@gmail.com, Contact: +2347035820720

Abstract

Background: The hawking of wares by children has been a serious issue confronting the Nigerian society. Children hawk in some of the most horrible conditions conceivable, where they face a serious risk of injury, chronic illness, kidnapping, rape or death.

Objective: The focus of this study was to assess the perceived effects of street hawking on the well-being of children in Anyigba, Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State.

Methods: The population of this study consists of parents of the street hawkers in Anyigba while cross-sectional survey design was used through the purposive sampling technique to choose the sample size of one hundred and sixty-two (162) respondents. The validated structured questionnaire and In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) served as the instruments for the data collection respectively. The hypotheses were tested using Chi-Square at a predetermined 0.05 level of significance. The quantitative data were analysed with the aid of the SPSS (version 20).

Results: The results indicated among others that street hawking had significant social implications and physical consequences on children's moral behaviour as well as health status in the study area.

Conclusion: The study, therefore, concluded that the government of Kogi State should carry out an enlightenment campaign through the media and religious institutions on the negative consequences of street hawking are recommended as panacea. Also, the child right act instrument and its implementation should be strengthened in order to curb street hawking in the study area.

Keywords: Street hawking, perception, child labour; determinants.

Introduction

Child labour has emerged as one of the serious problems that have engaged the attention of scholars, professionals, social workers, and law enforcement officials. Many people are concerned about child labour because they perceive it as an impediment to the proper well-being of children generally. It is essentially exploitative and injurious to the physical, social, cognitive and moral development of the child (10). The International Labour Organisation (ILO) approximates that there are more than 246 million children engaged in labour in the world (14). These children hawk in some of the most horrible conditions conceivable, where they face a serious risk of injury, chronic illness, or death, kidnapping, rape among others. In Anyigba, children face safety and health hazards from carrying heavy loads, inhaling harmful dust and particles while hawking for either their biological, foster parents or guardians. Child hawking exposes the child to a lot of hazards like sexual defilement, assaults, neglects and the threat of punishment for speaking out these social vices. Some of the dire consequences of these acts usually result in an

unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, psychological problems and a gradual withdrawal from a healthy relationship with the opposite gender (33). It has been noted with great concerns that street hawking exposes both the male and female children to dangers posed by fraudsters and ritual murderers because of their vulnerability at odd hawking hours (29; 30).

The concept of child labour evokes emotional and varied reactions among child welfare practitioners and agencies, making it a problematic social discourse. The policymakers and ILO organizations favour a total ban on child labour. However, representatives of NGOs and working children's organisations argued that children need to work in order to survive and improve their position in society, while some scholars (7; 23) maintained opposing views that children have no right to work at all. Contentious issues in child labour include a potential for harm, appropriateness, the location of work, economic benefits and time it is taken (9; 23). These mix reactions regarding child labour among various groups necessitated this present study on perceived effects of street hawking on the well-being of children in Anyigba,

Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State.

Based on the problem of this study, the main objective is to assess perceived effects of street hawking on the well-being of children in Anyigba, Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State, while the specific objectives are to determine the perceived social implications and physical consequences of street hawking on children's moral behavior in the study area. Similarly, the study is designed to test the following hypotheses namely: Ho₁: Street hawking has no significant social implications on children's moral behaviour in Anyigba; Ho₂: Street hawking has no significant physical and health consequences on children's health status in the study area.

It has been demonstrated in the literature that street hawking by children partly constitutes child labour (4). Children in urban areas are quickly caught up in the daily struggle for survival and material gains (11). In the Eastern and Western parts of Nigeria, children may attend schools in the morning or afternoon and hawk goods outside of school hours, though there are some children who trade on the streets the whole day. Their income may help their family augment financially or pay for their school fees. Although most Nigerian children must return home at the end of the day, a growing number including girls, subsist on the streets (29). Hawking by boys and girls is widespread, and parents clearly recognise that the practice holds dangers for children. This abuse occurs at three levels, viz: exposure to overt genital seduction, exposure to genital stimulation, and witnessing adults in the act of sex. It was discovered that hawking is the major factor which contributed to these three levels of abuse mentioned above. Men may lure young female hawkers by buying up all their wares and giving them money in addition to this, or they may pay them to run errands. These girls may be shown pornographic pictures in magazines or pornographic video films (27). Since the girls have been driven through poverty from homes, to sell goods from door to door, their parents are happy to receive money which may in certain instances be vital to the family survival (11). The girl hawkers learn to adorn themselves daily to draw interest before embarking on hawking business. Unfortunately, parents are unable to intervene since the girls keep their premature clandestine sexual activities undisclosed because of certain prohibitive societal taboos against sex discussion (28).

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), child labour is a work that deprives children of their childhood, including potentials and dignity. It is considered harmful to the children's physical and mental development. It refers to such work that is mentally, physically, socially, or morally hazardous to children and or interferes with their schooling by depriving and denying them of the opportunity to attend school, thereby making them to drop out of school prematurely, or requiring them to combine school attendance with an excessively long and heavy workload (14). Resulting

from the foregoing are that children work in conditions perceived exploitative and damaging to their health and physical and mental development; alienated from their families, often deprived of educational training opportunities; and compulsively made to lead adult lives prematurely (14). As such, child labour equally deprives children of their childhood, compromises their dignity and endangers their capabilities and latent abilities.

There are some disturbing nuances beclouding the understanding of the duo concepts of child labour and child work (20). In fact, child labour and child work are often used interchangeably to refer to children's participation in economic activities, that is, children in paid work activities or in unpaid informal employment either for self, a relative or non-relative within or outside the home (7). The term child labour has often been used generically to define the work that children do, whether harmful or beneficial and at other times to refer only to those harmful work activities or working conditions that can be said to endanger children's dignity and personal development (18). Different but related studies have defined child labour as synonymous with children's work. However, some studies have made a distinction between the two, characterising child work as something that adds positive value to children's welfare and development (25) and child labour as something that causes injury to children and their best interests (7). This lack of definitional consensus finds expression in arguments over children's economic and labour involvement and has created opposing camps among child welfare activists and development workers. Some believe that children should be allowed to work whilst others claim that work is injurious to children's wellbeing. The former perceive work as a necessary evil that has positive and negative effects (21) and is more concerned with protecting children from harmful workplaces, while the latter advocates that children be kept out of work and that child work should be eliminated, particularly for those under a certain age twelve. This study, however, restrains itself from reconciling the crisis of conceptual definition beclouding child labour and child work as it is beyond the confine of the objective that was hitherto advanced.

Moreover, there has been a perception that hawking of wares prepares the children for adult roles. This notion does not take cognizance of the fact that the juvenile hawkers on the street are exposed to numerous hazards, ranging from physical violence to loss of wares, risk of accident, robbery, kidnapping and even murder for ritual purposes (4). They are also exposed to vagaries of weather (extremes of cold or heat), insects and reptiles bites, hunger and deprivation. The most troubling, perhaps, is the fact that some are sexually exploited and forced into prostitution with the risk of unwanted pregnancies and contracting sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS (10). It has been argued that child labour impact negative physical consequences on the children. These range from

malnourishment, disease, musculo-skeletal disorders from heavy labour, physical and sexual abuse (16). Similarly, child labour could result in bodily injuries to the children and expose them to toxic agents in the process (19). It is also contended that socially, children could experience negative effects on their educational development and performance (5).

Street hawking does not endanger only the lives of the hawkers, but also the food hawked and the consumer society at large. Contamination can occur from indiscriminate exposure of food items to air, dust, flies and specks of dirt (31). Child street hawkers spend most of their time outside the home in a bid to sell their wares. They do not only hawk during the early mornings but at night and during harsh weather. Some of the hawkers are welcomed home with battering by their parents or caretakers when they could not make a profit from their wares or when they could not finish selling their wares. Above all, hawking affects the academic performance of the children. Most of the hawkers who hawk in the morning hours before going to school are perpetual latecomers. They lack concentration in class work due to fatigue and stress. These result in poor academic performance, delinquency and truant behaviour. They tend to show behavioural problems, low self-esteem, withdrawal syndrome, oppositional behaviour and learning difficulties (11).

Child hawkers may end up becoming, "street children or children of the street" when they run away from parental or guardian abuse, leaving them to take out a living on their own (12). The physical and health consequences of children participating in the sales and service sector in Latin America, Asia and Africa include diseases (respiratory problems) injuries, rape and molestation, mal-nourishment, extortion of income, police harassment and participation in harmful or delinquent activities. Such children may face robbery, inadequate sleep due to fatigue and long hours on the job and confinement in juvenile homes (32).

Child hawkers also encounter problems related to their psychological well-being. These include stigmatisation by the press and public, feelings of disheartenment, stress and irritability, personality disorders, antisocial behaviours, alienation, and isolation from their family (2). There are negative effects on education and overall human capital formation cannot be quantified (22). Child hawkers tend to keep bad company and are negatively pressured to engage in delinquent behaviours (13). The common trend emerging from the synthesis of literature is that street hawking has detrimental effects on children's health, social and educational well-beings.

Some authors conducted a study titled female youth in street trading: implications for sexual harassment in HIV/AIDS risky environment. The study findings showed that girls in younger ages (10-14 and 15-19 years) were 1.724 and 1.111 times more likely to be harassed compared to the other girls but self-employed girls enjoy 'immunity' from harassment because they have higher

economic worth than their counterparts in paid or unpaid street trading activities. The study posited that exposure of girls to harassment increases the propensity for higher HIV/AIDS incidence in Nigeria and other sub-Saharan African countries (3). Similarly, another study indicated that the dynamics of child labour was relatively common to children from poor and difficult parental backgrounds. The study also showed multiple consequences of child street hawking activities on schooling and general well-being of the children. It highlights the tendency for the children's future to be compromised with antecedent consequences such as increasing anti-social behaviours and the tendencies for the transition from delinquency to criminality in the metropolis (24).

In a separate but related development, the socio-demographic characteristics of hawkers, as well as the health and social implications of street hawking and the factors contributing to it, were noted to have some interlinks. This further confirmed that all the child hawkers are vulnerable to one form of an accident or the other. In the same study, 58.7% had been physically molested, while 73.6% of the female respondents had suffered sexual molestation (26). Furthermore, hawking has a negative effect on the socio-emotional development of the children. It exposed children to dangers such as armed robbery, prostitution and other vices (6).

Methodology

This study used descriptive research in which a cross-sectional survey design was adopted. The design focused on data generated through questionnaire and interview to examine the perception of street hawking and children well-being in Anyigba, Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State. The study area, Anyigba is located in the Eastern Part of Kogi State in Dekina Local Government Area. The town is between longitude 70121 east of the Greenwich Meridian and latitude 70361 north of the Equator.

The population of this study consists of the members of the public in Anyigba metropolis in Dekina LGA of Kogi State. The elements of the population consisted of street hawkers, shops owners, market women and civil servants who residents in Anyigba, Dekina LGA of Kogi State. The elements of the population were drawn from this category of the people because some of their children were perceived to be mostly involved in street hawking while the street hawkers were the people who are directly involved in hawking, they are in the position to give reasonable answers regarding the questions. The interviews were conducted on elderly people in their respective shops in Anyigba. The sample size of this population was one hundred and sixty-two (162) respondents comprising the parents and guardians of the child hawkers. This sample size was arrived using purposive sampling technique involving snowballing. This entails tracking every mother, caregivers or guardians of street hawker through their wards. The primary data for the study were generated through the

questionnaire and In-Depth Interview (IDI) administered to the respondents. A four-point Likert scale of strongly disagree, disagree, agree and strongly agree was used. There were fourteen (14) items in the questionnaire with each objective of the study having questions structured to address it. There are also eight (8) questions in the interview schedule to generate qualitative data. The researcher interviewed 5 elderly parents of the child street hawkers in their respective trade points. However, to ascertain the validity of the research instrument, the questionnaire was properly structured by the researchers and cross-checked. Similarly, Cronbach's Alpha reliability test was conducted and the reliability coefficient of .982 was obtained. Data were presented using tables while mean score of rating was used to interpret the respondents' responses. The mean scores were compared with the average mean of 2.5 for decision making. The average mean was arrived at as $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10/4 = 2.5$. Any mean that was equal to 2.5 and above was accepted while any mean below 2.5 was rejected. Chi-Square test was used to test all the null hypotheses formulated. Analysis of data was done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 software. The qualitative data elicited via the In-Depth Interview were content-analysed to corroborate the quantitative data. The decision rule was that if the asymptotic significance is equal to or less than 5% (0.05) reject the null hypothesis. On the other hand, if the asymptotic significance is greater than 5% (0.05) accept the null hypothesis. Ethically, the respondents consented through a written letter and agreed to participate in this research, which lent credence to this study.

Results

This study used a sample size of one hundred and sixty-two (162) respondents in Anyigba, Dekina L.G.A of Kogi State. From a total of one hundred and sixty-two (162) copies of the questionnaire distributed to the respondents, one hundred and forty-nine (149) copies were returned given a response rate of 92%. Analysis of the data was based on the questionnaire administered to the respondents to analyse the demographic characteristics, the research objectives and to test the null hypotheses formulated.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Category	Frequency (149)	Percentage (100 %)
Sex		
Male	61	41
Female	88	59
Marital Status		
Single parents	43	29
Married	106	71
Age of Respondents		
21-25	33	22
26-30	42	28
31 and above	74	50
Religion		
Christianity	66	44
Islam	83	56
Traditional Religion	0	0

Source: Field survey (2017)

Table 2 above shows that the majority of the respondents are female with the majority of the respondents being married. Similarly, the table also shows that 22% of the total respondents were within the age bracket of 21-25 years, 28% accounted for those within the age bracket of 26-30 years, while 50% were located within the age bracket of 31 and above. This implies that the majority of the respondents fell within the age of 31 and above. Within the same table, 44% of the total respondents were Christians, while 56% of the total respondents were Muslims. This implies that a little more than half of the respondents were Muslims. Table 2 above further shows that 28% of the total respondents had O' Level qualifications, 48% of the total respondents had NCE/ND qualifications while 24% of the total respondents had HND/B.Sc. qualifications. This shows that majority of the respondents were NCE/ND holders.

Table 2: Perceived Social Implications of Street Hawking on Children's Moral Behaviour.

Variable Items/Categories	N	Mini	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Exposure to prostitution.	149	1.00	4.00	3.2282	.79798
2. Risk of unwanted pregnancy.	149	1.00	4.00	3.4497	.87330
3. Smoking of tobacco.	149	1.00	4.00	3.1946	1.08850
4. Property theft & burglary.	149	1.00	4.00	2.4631	1.14799
Valid N (listwise)	149				

Source: Researcher's Computation Using SPSS 20.0 Version

Table 3, item 1 above shows that street hawking exposes children to prostitution as indicated by a mean score of 3.228 which is above the average mean score of 2.5. Also, item 2 in the table shows that street hawking causes unwanted pregnancies among children as indicated by the mean score of 3.4497 which is considered above the average mean score. Item 3 in the table equally shows that street hawking causes tobacco smoking among children as indicated by a mean score of 3.1946. Table 3, item 4 further demonstrated that street hawking does not lure children into property theft and burglary as indicated by a mean score of 2.4631 which is below the average mean score earlier stated.

Table 3: Perceived Physical Consequences of Street Hawking on Children's Health Status.

Variable Items/Categories	N	Mini.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
5. Kidnapping and trafficking.	149	1.00	4.00	3.3490	.69677
6. Mentally retarded.	149	1.00	4.00	3.1275	.65025
7. Sexual intercourse & HIV/AIDS.	149	1.00	4.00	3.4362	.73817
8. Communicable diseases.	149	1.00	4.00	3.3020	.67488
9. Road accident.	149	3.00	4.00	3.6040	.49071
10. Stress, fatigue & illness	149	1.00	4.00	3.1074	.98736
Valid N (listwise)	149				

Source: Researcher's Computation Using SPSS 20.0 Version

Table 4, item 5 shows that street hawking exposes children to the risk of kidnapping and trafficking as indicated by a mean score of 3.3490 which is above the

average mean score of 2.5. Similarly, item 6 in the table also shows that street hawking causes mental retardation for the children as indicated by the mean score of 3.1275 which is above the average mean score. Item 7 in the table equally shows that street hawking exposes children to early sexual intercourse which predisposes them to contracting HIV/AIDs as indicated by a mean score of 3.4362. Table 4 question 8 further shows that street hawking exposes children to communicable diseases as indicated by a mean score of 3.3020 which is above the average mean score of 2.5. Item 9 further shows that street hawking makes children become victims of road accident as indicated by a mean score of 3.6040 which is considered as being above the average mean score. The item 10 in the table equally holds that street hawking causes stress, fatigue, depression, anger and resultant illness to children as indicated by a mean score of 3.1074 which is above the average mean score of 2.5. This study had two hypotheses which were tested using Chi-Square test.

Test of Hypothesis One

Ho1: Street hawking has no significant social implications on children's moral behaviour in Anyigba

Table 4: Chi-square test Statistics for Hypothesis One

Variable Items	1. Exposure to prostitution	2. Risk of unwanted pregnancy	3. Smoking of tobacco	4. Property theft & burglary
Chi-Square	80.879 ^a	132.960 ^a	82.597 ^a	.718 ^a
Df	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.869

Source: Researchers' Computation Using SPSS 20.0 Version

Table 5 shows that all the significant levels are within 1% as expressed by the individual asymptotic significance of 0.00 except the variable item 4. Premised on the foregoing, the null hypothesis one is rejected, which implies that street hawking has significant social implications on children's moral behaviour in Anyigba.

Test of Hypothesis Two

Ho2: Street hawking has no significant physical consequences on children's health in Anyigba

Table 5. Chi-square Test Statistics for Hypothesis Two

Variable Items	Kidnapping and trafficking	Mentally retarded	Sexual intercourse & HIV/AIDs	Communicable diseases.	Road accident	Stress, fatigue & illness
Chi-Square	108.584 ^a	181.282 ^a	118.839 ^a	117.658 ^a	6.450 ^b	62.248 ^a
Df	3	3	3	3	1	3
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.011	.000

Source: Researcher's Computation Using SPSS 20.0 Version

Considering the fact that the respective significant levels in table 6 above are within 1% as indicated by all the asymptotic significance of 0.00, the null hypothesis two

is rejected. Meaning that the phenomenon of street hawking has significant physical consequences on children's health in the study area.

Discussion

The study revealed that street hawking has significant social implications on children's moral behaviour in Anyigba. This implies that street hawking causes prostitution, unwanted pregnancies and smoking among children in Anyigba, Dekina L.G.A of Kogi State. However, street hawking does not lure children into property theft and burglary in Anyigba, Dekina L.G.A of Kogi State. These findings are in consonance with some authorities (6; 3) who asserted that street hawking had a negative effect on the socio-emotional development of the children, as it exposed children to dangers such as armed robbery, prostitution and other vices. Similarly, a study (31) classified the social implications of street hawking to include unwanted pregnancies, prostitution, smoking and poor academic performance among others. In credence to the above, the In-depth Interview (IDI) validates the above finding such that one of the interviewees responded that:

Street hawking by children, provide parents money assistance, but it leads the children into strange behaviour because they learned bad habit from outside (Male/ 68 years/ Anyigba/ IDI, 2017).

This finding abstracted from the qualitative data indicated the fact that economic factor is a motivating factor to child street hawking in the study area. Furthermore,

the view of another respondent corroborated the foregoing on the dangers inherent in street hawking by children. The view is captured thus:

Street hawking is not an easy task as it involves carrying goods about by foot. Street hawking exposes children to behaviours like worldly music, misuse of words and worldly dressing. Actually, it affects their moral behaviour (Male/ 53 years/ Anyigba/ IDI, 2017).

The study further revealed that street hawking has significant physical consequences on children's health in Anyigba. This means that street hawking exposes children to the risk of kidnapping and trafficking; it makes the children to be mentally retarded and exposes them to early sexual intercourse which may lead to HIV/AIDs. The findings, therefore, sustain and in tandem with a study discovery (26) on the social implications of child street hawking. In addition, street hawking exposes children to communicable diseases as it makes children to become victims of road accident, devastating stress, fatigue, depression and anger. These have negative health implications on the children in Anyigba, Dekina L.G.A of Kogi State. These are in agreement with the findings of a scholar (16) who argued that child labour had physical consequences on the children. It has also been opined that child labour could result in bodily injuries to the children and expose them to toxic agents in the process (19). Furthermore, some the consequences of child street hawking have been

highlighted to include accidents, the spread of communicable diseases, stress, fatigue, depression and anger (31). The foregoing findings have been validated through the IDI investigation on the negative effect of child street hawking in the study area. The view of one of the IDI respondents is vividly captured thus:

Street hawking make children exposed to harsh weather conditions like sun, cold and air pollution which is bad to their health. The children that do street hawking can get rape which can result to serious health problems **(Female/ 56 years/ Anyigba/ IDI/ 2017)**.

Furthermore, another respondent affirmed by linking the causes of children's street hawking to parents' socio-economic conditions. According to the IDI, the respondent affirmed below:

I think the causes of street hawking are poverty, illiteracy, parents' unemployment, low-income level, to pay children school fees and hunger **(Female/ 48 years/ Anyigba/ IDI, 2017)**.

Conclusion

This study assesses the perceived consequences of street hawking on the children's well-being in Anyigba, Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State. Child street hawking in the study area has been one of the causes of prostitution, unwanted pregnancies, smoking and other social vices. However, street hawking is not connected with property theft and burglary in the area of study. The menace of street hawking among children in this area must be discouraged by the appropriate authorities, to enhance children's healthy living, which constitute schooling and play. The study, therefore, recommended that the government of Kogi State should carry out an enlightenment campaign through radio, television, bill post in collaboration with some religious institutions on the negative consequences of street hawking in order to minimise the moral hazards inherent in it. In addition, indigent children should be given school fees waivers as a way of discouraging the tendency for embarking on street hawking to augment family income.

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