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**STREET HAWKING AND CHILD ABUSE IN IKWUANO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ABIA
STATE**

**DANIEL, URANTA, DSW.
Department of Social Work, University of Port Harcourt,
Nigeria**

**EKE VERONICA
College of Health Technology and Management, Port Harcourt**

AND

**CHINKATA FAITH CHIDINMA
Department of Social Work, University of Port Harcourt**

Abstract

Street hawking has been found to be majorly caused by poverty or the inability of parents or guardians to meet the needs of children. Hawking is an alternative means many families in Ikwuano community revert to seeing that they cannot meet their basic needs. Street hawking was shown to have several negative consequences, some of which includes; it denies children quality education, it exposes children to rapist, ritualist and abuse. For every child to develop adequately, children must be free from abuse, child labor and be given an opportunity to attain basic education. Governments, Non-Governmental Organizations and even parents have a major role to play in this regard. Provision of free education and even the initiation of school feeding programs for the less fortunate in Ikwuano community is recommended as means of curbing the menace of street hawking and child abuse in the community.

Keywords: Poverty, Street hawking, Child Labour, and Child Abuse.

Introduction

In order to understand the lives of children who live and work on the street, we need to find out about the lives and roles of children in any culture. There are certain African realities that affect children on the continent whatever their cultural context, geographical situation or socio-economic status (Obi, 2011). In the first place, children and young people form more than half population of most African countries, and this has implications for the distributions of resources and for policy.

Closely related to this demographic factor are the observations that significant deficits exist in the schooling systems of most African countries and that there is a general lack of provision of child care for working mothers in urban settings, both of which are likely to be significant contributory causes of streetism (Nwauzor, 2014).

Children in the urban areas quickly caught up in the daily struggle for survival and material gain (Ebigbo, 2011). A situation analysis of child abuse and neglect in Nigeria,

undertaken through the medium of newspaper, found that child abandonment, sexual abuse, child neglect, vagrancy, kidnaping and hawking were the most reported forms of child abuse and neglect (Ebigbo, 2011).

Child abuse is seen as a feature of other social phenomenon or situations, rather than as phenomenon in its own right. Thus sexual abuse and exploitation, for example, do not constitute a single category but are mentioned in this account relating it with child labour. There is no generally accepted definition for the term “child abuse”, but it simply refers to the ill-treatment of a child by his parent or any other adult. Edu and Edu (2009) describe child abuse as a wilful maltreatment of a child. Such treatment, according to them can include acts of commission (abuse) and omission (neglect).

One of the basic principles of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child is that every child must be protected against all forms of exploitation, indecent or degrading treatment, including child labour, abduction and sale (UNICEF, 2010). According to the UNICEF, exploiting the labour of child means employing a person below the age of 15 years and paying him/her less than the minimum standard wage.

Trafficked children are made to work as hawkers and petty traders, beggars, car washers, bus conductors, farm hands or cattle readers (UNICEF, 2007). The use of children as hawkers, beggars and bus conductors is widespread in the urban areas. Other worst forms of child labour include street hawking , drug peddling, herding of livestock, children used by the physically challenged in begging along busy streets and sneaking (this is a method whereby armed robbers and thieves engaged young children to pass through small inlets into their areas of operation), child trafficking, child prostitution, slavery practices, particularly in the fishing industry, child domestic servitude, exploitation of children in mines and customary servitude (Nwankwo, 2011).

Factors promoting child labour includes poverty, exploitation by the adults and children’s own choices as a result of ignorance, among other things. The problem of child labour is pervasive in nature. The Western Societies see child labourers as people suffering from some psychological and pathological problems, while in the African society: it is regarded as a natural procedure in child rearing process. Child labour has been a social in the African context and Nigeria in particular. (UNICEF, 2007).

Ebigbo and Abaga (2010) opined that in Nigeria, the rate of child abuse and child hawking has assumed a worrisome and alarming proportion. They further noted that in Ibadan, Ondo and Ogun metropolis, it is a daily occurrence to see children below 14 years hawking wares and other products along the roadsides. Hence,, this study is pertinent to the problem. We will discuss the determinant factors of street hawking as one of the parts of child abuse.

Street Hawking in Nigeria

Hawking or street selling in Nigeria and Africa at large is a unique phenomenon that arose out of the need to solve societal problems such as unemployment, poverty and consumer goods accessibility. It is a booming informal sector that has proved resilient despite various governmental effort aimed at eradicating it. it was also revealed that street hawking hampers the education of the children and their development for the future. Factors such as poverty, support for the family, and raising money for the children education were the reason identified as the causes for the children hawking and child labour.

Forms of child labour

Child abuse is more than bruises and broken bones. While physical abuse might be the most visible sign, other types of abuse, such as emotional abuse, sexual abuse or child neglect also leave a deep long lasting scars. Some of the abuses will be discussed.

Statement of the Problem

Children are the biological future of the human race and their healthy growth and development should be of serious concern to everybody in society. Child development is largely determined by the quality of care received by the child. This explains why the United Nations (UN) Convention on the rights of child provided that children in the care of a parent, guardian, teacher or any other person who has the care of children should protect them from all forms of torture or inhumane treatment and especially physical or mental abuse or neglect. Unfortunately, the rights of the child have not been protected by adult.

Studies have revealed that adults in many cases do not regard some of their violent behaviours toward children as abusive, but perceived as corrective measures in the best interest of the child. In this context, according to Ohia et al (2011) and Okpala (2013), these abusers are resultant influence of socio-economic status (low or high). Thus, the child may be battered, deprived and castigated or even abandoned in extreme cases by parents, guardians or caregivers when he or she misbehaves. Regrettably, despite governmental regulations, decrees, enactments and laws on child's right, child abuse still persist. Although, street hawking can contribute to economic growth and development, however, the risks that are attached supersede the economic positive aspect of it. Risks like motor accident, rape, kidnapping, extortion, sexual molestation and the girl child involvement in robbery and other anti-social behaviours are too great to ignore.

Street hawking exposes teenagers to a lot of hazards like sexual defilement, sexual assaults, neglects and threat to punishment for speaking out as exemplified above. The 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 (UNICEF, 2010). Oloko (2017) noted that street hawking exposes teenagers to dangers posed by sex perverts and actual rapists because of their vulnerability at odd hawking hours. They are usually under personal jeopardy, harsh and hazardous conditions such as becoming an easy target to sex predators.

Although, various efforts were made by federal government and non-governmental organizations to stem the trend, such as the creation of children's games village, the passage of the Child's Right Bill in 2005 by the National Assembly and the subsequent passage by some states, not much has been achieved as the trend continues. There have been increasing cases of rape of teenagers who are hawkers of edible items, and this is a serious problem in Ikwuano Local Government Area.

Aims and Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine street hawking and child abuse (teenagers) in Ikwuano Local Government Area of Abia State. In line with the general objective, the specific objectives are:

1. To investigate the causes of street hawking in Ikwuano Local Government Area.

STREET HAWKING AND CHILD ABUSE IN IKWUANO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA.....

2. To assess the implication of street hawking on the increasing cases of child abuse hawkers in Ikwuano Local Government Area.
3. To identify measures that can be taken to curb street hawking and increasing cases of child abuse in Ikwuano Local Government Area.

Research Questions

The following are the interrogative statements posed from the objectives of our study. They are research questions that this study will answer.

1. What are the causes of street hawking in Ikwuano Local Government Area?
2. What are the implications posed by street hawking on the increasing cases of child abuse in Ikwuano Local Government Area?
3. What measures can be taken to curb street hawking and increasing cases of child abuse in Ikwuano Local Government Area?

Review of Literature

Concept of Street Hawking

Aiyehuro (2009) defines hawking as a system of trading whereby the trader carries his wares about. Street hawking refers to a wandering like movement in which an individual carries his or her goods with a tray on the head or by means of transportation such as wheel barrow, bicycle or trolley in search of customers. This is usually accompanied by at least one form of advertisement – shouting the name of the item on sale, using bell or special mannerism to attract the attention or interest of the public (Anyanwo, 2007). It is a trading activity characterized by movement across street in residential areas in which hawker aims at selling his goods to any interested buyer. Ezenwa (2011) opines that an adolescent street hawker is a person under the age of 15 years who hawks goods and renders services on the commercial road or street.

In modern day Nigeria, child hawkers are faced with a lot of risks. For instance, there are several cases involving young girls as young as teen who are sexually active and who trade in sexual favors for money along-side whatever commodities they are peddling. This scourge is not limited to the female gender alone as male children also fall victims to sexual offenders as well. The consequences of these acts include wanted pregnancies, illegal and unsafe abortions, sexually transmitted diseases and psychological trauma (Akigir, 2012). These child hawkers suffer frustration and psycho-social disorientation.

The dramatic increase in child labour and street hawking in Nigeria may be attributed to several factors. These factors include rapid population growth of many less developed countries, high rate of unemployment, inflation, low wages and deplorable working condition which have propelled children to engage in street hawking in order to help support their families. (Charles and Charles, 2004, Deth, 2007).

Ebigbo and Abaja (2003) maintain street hawking exposes children to sexual abuse and consequently to HIV/AIDS infections. Children who engage in street hawking may indulge in criminal acts like prostitution, armed robbery and pick pocketing (Hubert, 2009; Humphries, 2010). The problems associated with urbanization are human environmental poverty, declining quality of life, untapped wealth and human resources.

Aderinto (2006) asserts that street trading exposes the operators to various risks and health hazards as most children end up engaging in various economic activities like bus conducting, load carrying, car washing, hawking earlier as a means of survival. In Nigeria, hawkers are seen on the streets of major cities and majority of them are young people mostly teenagers. These children are usually sent out to hawk by their parents or guardians in order to earn money for the family. However, these child hawkers are exposed to certain dangers. In some cases, they are knocked down by reckless drivers. These are cases where some of these children are abducted and used for ritual purposes.

Female hawkers are raped by either male customers or strangers. Many of these children do not attend school and even when they do, they have little or no time to work on after school assignment or to rest. Due to the usual high level of trekking involved in hawking activity, risks of road traffic accident, physical exhaustion, sexual harassments such as rape, molestation and different forms of exploitation are believed to be associated with street hawking (Okojie, 2007). Some social and psychological problems are also associated with street hawking. For instance, it exposes the not yet-fully equipped maturing child hawker to thirst due to sweat and hunger following long trekking but more importantly to undue exposure to strangers including those with ignoble intention (Ezenwa, 2011).

Several studies have examined the physical and psychological hazards associated with adolescent street hawkers but one area which has received little attention is the social and physical health factors associated with street hawking. African Network for Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN, 2013) study on street children in Nigeria shows that hawkers mentioned the following problems like tiredness, hunger, loss of money to criminals. Headache, body pains, problem with their masters, lack of school attendance, pains in the eyes, touching of sensitive part of their body especially their breasts and buttocks, heaviness of head and neck, dizziness, etc. in his own contribution, Maduka (2006) identified some problems associated with street hawking to include increase in teenage pregnancy, high rate of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) among teenagers, rape, high illiteracy among the youth, youth alcohol and drug addiction.

In a study carried out by Ekpenyong and Sibiri (2011) on street hawking and child labour, the findings indicate that street hawking and child labour reflect chronic urban poverty which can compel parents to send children of school age to work to boost family income for many hours each day. The study shows that 64% of the hawkers are females while 36% of them are males. The implication is that more females engage in street hawking than males. Results of the study also show that 98% of the respondents are from very poor families opening the door to survival driven occupation. Ogbuagu (2014) carried out a study in Akwa and the findings of his study show that children engage in hawking due to lack of income and education of their parents.

Causes of Street Hawking

The dramatic increase in child labour and street trading in Nigeria can be attributed to several factors. The rapid population growth of many less developed countries, high rates of unemployment, inflation, low wage and deplorable working conditions have contributed to incidents of street trading and child labour as children attempt to help and support their families.

DANIEL, URANTA, DSW, EKE VERONICA & CHINKATA FAITH CHIDINMA
STREET HAWKING AND CHILD ABUSE IN IKWUANO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA.....

The major cause of child abuse is economic. This is associated with poverty. This hawking of wares and food product on the roads and motor parks is an economic means of making ends meet, either sponsored by parents or the child personal interest (Ebigbo, 2003). Cultural beliefs in treating the child are also another cause of child abuse as children are seen more as mere properties of their parents (Fawole et al., 2013). Another cause is violence against the child caused by emotion on the part of parent or guardian and ignorance. Several reasons have been put forward as predisposing factors to child street hawking. These factors include poverty, high cost of living, lack of sponsorship, poor school performance, single parenthood, large family size, peer group pressure, poor home conditions, lack of parental care, parents' unemployment, parental pressure, poor scholastic achievements (Fawole et al. 2013). Under unemployment in Nigeria has made provision of social welfare services like education, healthcare, water supply and energy not only inadequate, but expensive, thereby promoting parents to resort to child labour and exploitation. Hence, some Nigerian parents and guardians abuse their children through street hawking in order to support family income and this hawking is encouraged because it is convenient for those who purchase their needs while in traffic, motor parks, offices and business centres (Oloko, 2010).

Appel (2009) has identified structural inequalities as the cause of child hawking, while Nwabueze (2012) sees poverty and inequality as the major causes of street hawking and child labour. Okojie (2010) postulates the causes to be an adverse economic environment, underemployment, massive retrenchment, unemployment and a poor quality of life. Ebigbo (2013) contended that while poverty is often postulated as the principal cause of forcing children into labour, lack of social services at home, lack of good housing, inadequate food and health care service have been known to compel parents to send their children into street hawking and child labour. The least privileged children, including children without families and/or without homes are the most vulnerable to these social ills.

The economic constraints also force people to look for wealth at all cost to the detriment of their children. Although these causative factors may not be true to most family especially those who have standard upbringing.

In the similar argument, Crosson (2008), argued that there is link between parents with marginal incomes and the imperative to push children into work so as to supplement family income. This view, supported by Bass (2014) and Binder and Sorgin (2011), who hold that children of poor families have to help generate family incomes and compensate for economic discrepancies in the society, In such situations, poverty breeds poverty. A poor family has a high probability of staying poor since low family incomes carry with them high risks of illness, limitations of mobility and limited access to education. Thus, the legacy of poverty is passed from parents to children (UNICEF, 2011). Child labour is also one of the many manifestations of poverty in 70% of households in Nigeria, providing an essential means of income for poor families. International Labour Organization (2006) identified eight causative factors of child labour in Nigeria.

These are: cultural influence, economic problems, national debt, law, education and unemployment, inability to cope with the needs of the family members, street life and single parent's families. Oruwari (2016), Adudu (2017) and Okojie (2017) identified five factors: housing, illiteracy, and possession of consumerism, unemployment/underemployment, low

incomes and inability to cope with the needs of members of their households, as indicators of the extent of poverty among women.

Child labour and street hawking can be attributed to urbanization and modernization. Hoyano and Keenan (2007) opined that people who migrate from rural areas to urban areas in search of better prospects are often ill prepared for urban life and therefore forced to either use their children or other children to enhance their economic situation. Child labour and street hawking can also be linked to child rearing norms and the attribute of parents, where, for the purpose of socialization, children are required to carry out assigned domestic chores and economic activities (Aderinto, 2010). Child labour and street hawking has also been traced to the rise of capitalism as a system of production, where labour becomes a commodity to be bought and sold. Child labour was therefore, encouraged by capitalism (Ake, 1981).

The structure and functions of families play central role in shaping the behaviour and skills of children. Children must be raised to be responsible members of society with appropriate values, beliefs and training. The ability of the family to function effectively is a factor in child development. Child labour is a sign of family dislocation and disorganization. As a result of child labour, the welfare of the children is adversely affected as they are exposed to other social ills and dangers. They are forced to live in the adult world away from their families.

Concept of Child and Child Abuse

A child can be seen as a person not more than 18 years of age. According to Ebigbo (2011) defined a child as a human, a person made up of mind, body and soul and should not be older than 16 years. However, the convention on the right of the child (1999), maintained that a child is every human being below the age of 18 years.

Austin (2010) sees a child as a young human being who is not yet an adult. As stated by Obi (2016), a child is any human being below the age of 18 years. The various children and young person's enactments define "child" as a person who has not attained the age of fourteen years and young person as one who has attained the age of fourteen years but has not attained the age of seventeen years.

There is no generally accepted definition of child abuse as a result of differences in the perception of what generally is acceptable as abuse or not. Barnes (2013) defined child abuse as the intentional, unintentional, moral and educational welfare of children. Child abuse can be seen as any act of omission or commission, physical or psychological mistreatment of a child by its parents, guardians, caregiver or other adults that may endanger the child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development.

In this definition, wrongfully maltreating a child or selfishly making an unfair use of a child's senses by adults responsible for the child constitutes child abuse. Thus the adult may not be directly related to the child but a person in whose care the child is left can be an abuser. This may include the educators, healthcare workers, day care workers or other responsible adults (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2018).

According to Nwankwo et al (2011), the term child abuse refers to the violence, mistreatment or neglect refer to the violence, mistreatment or neglect that a child or adolescent may experience while in the care of someone they either trust or depend on, such as a parent, sibling, other relatives, caregiver and child abuse and neglect has devastating

consequences for victims. Child abusers inflict physical, sexual and emotional trauma on defenceless children every day. The scars can be deep and long lasting.

Okpala (2010) highlighted the forms of child abuse, psychological, emotional abuse, child neglect, child labour/exploitation, child trafficking, street children, child marriage and female genital mutilation.

Child Labour

In every society, children are required to do some work and such work may differ depending on the society involved. This type of work is an important part of a child's basic education and means of handling over necessary skills from parents to children. This kind of work is beneficial to the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development provided it does not interfere with schooling, recreation and rest (Ohia et al, 2012).

Child labour in contrast is work by children under conditions harmful to their health usually for long hours and for very low wages. Such work is destructive and exploitative. Children are not physically suited to long hours of strenuous and monotonous work. They are usually aware of dangers neither do they have enough knowledge of the precautions they should be taking (Mbakogu, 2014).

Forms of child labour include: domestic servant, child beggars, street hawking, commercial sexual exploitation of children, industrial and agricultural child labour.

Physical Abuse

This can be referred to as physical aggression directed at a child by an adult. It can involve excessive beating, striking, kicking, battering, burning, bruising, shaking, corporal punishment etc. (Okpala, 2010). Physical abuse involves deliberately using force against a child in such a way that the child is either injured or is at risk of being injured. Physical neglect is the denial of care, nutrition and medical care.

The most glaring form of this neglect is the various incidents of abandoned babies. Also the problem of street children is a direct result of this type of neglect. Many unloved and unwanted children run away from home and take to the streets exposing themselves to further abuse.

Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is widely regarded as a cause of mental health problem in adult life. Sexual abuse, is taking advantage of child's tender years and innocence in order to subject the child to engage in sexual activities that he/she does not fully understand and to which he/she cannot give any informed consent (Ohia et al, 2012). Child sexual abuse does not always consist of penetration; it may be purely verbal rather than physical. Sexual abuse can have long term consequences. Many abusers have a history of being sexually abused themselves. Some of the more frequently cited kinds of sexual abuse are:

- **Incest:** This is a sexual relation who occur between two people in the same family, such as father and daughter or mother and son, sister and brother, daughter-in-law and father-in-law. Incest may include sexual activity which falls short of intercourse. Incest is a particular difficult subject for the child involved for reasons which include shame, embarrassment and often a sense of guilt that they have consented or encouraged it.

- **Paedophilia:** This refers to sexual attraction towards the very young. A child may be either obliged or persuaded to have sex with an older person to fulfil the latter sexual desire and is a form of sexual abuse because of the immaturity of the child.
- **Rape:** it is the forcing of sexual intercourse on an unwilling male or female. Rape is particularly traumatic for a child with no prior experience of intercourse; and it may be accompanied by additional physical as well as psychological abuse. Sexual intercourse with a minor, however defined ought to be treated as rape even if the child consents since the child is not considered to be mature enough to make an informed judgement (Ohia et al, 2002).
- **Prostitution:** This is the involvement of children in exchanging sex for money or other favours and is often seen as sexual abuse. Most children were forced into this, some do it out of desperation and others are too young to make a mature voluntary choice.
- **Sexual Harassment:** This may take many forms including repeated teasing or embarrassment often, but not always by boys or men towards girls or women.

Emotional Abuse

This is difficult category to document since the effects of emotional abuse tend to become apparent over time. It involves harming a child's sense of self and can include acts (or omissions) that result in, or place a child at risk of, serious behavioural, cognitive, emotional or mental, health problems (Kassan, 2015). Emotional abuse includes instances of verbal abuse like subjecting a child to constant criticism and humiliation and never commending child for his/her efforts. Normally this results from having an unreasonable expectation from a child.

Also many parents fail to express love to the children, such attitude shatter a child's fragile ego and convey the message that the child is unloved and unwanted. It may also lead to feelings of depression, guilt and fear. The emotional well-being of a child will ensure that he/she grows into a balanced and well-adjusted adult (Ohia et al, 2012). Emotional or psychological abuse includes any form of rejection, ridicule, degradation, criticism, humiliation, isolation among others which crude the victim's self-esteem.

Street Hawking and Child Abuse in Ikwuano

In many societies, Ikwuano Local Government Area, teenage girls face double discriminations in general by age and sex. Unequal treatment and child abuse against teenage girls remain a significant problem in Ikwuano. Young girls who are street vendors in open places and crowded areas are vulnerable to all forms of abuse. This is not to say that the boys do not suffer child abuse from customers, but it is more prevalent on the part of teenage female hawkers in Ikwuano (Orji, 2014).

Teenage female hawkers in Ikwuano Local Government Area have suffered sexual manipulation and domination, forced sex or forced sexual practice. In a study done by Abaribe (2010) in Ibeku, it was found that many teenagers hawk edible items even at odd time, and many have been involved in sexual activities not intended.

For Omankwe (2010), many teenagers have been forced to have sexual intercourse just to make sales. This is because their guardians will beat them mercilessly for not making sales. For others, they were deceived by these customers. These customers ask these teenage

hawkers, mostly girls to follow them with the promise that they will buy all the goods; this is not the case as they (customers) end up raping these teenage hawkers.

For Ayogu (2008) in his research, it was discovered that young female hawkers in Ikwuano are vulnerable to sexual abuse by men. The men prefer young girls as sexual partners because they assume these young females are sexually inexperienced and as such, are less likely to be infected with sexually transmitted disease.

In a descriptive study done by Nwankwo (2014) in Umuokpara and Omuegwu communities in Ikwuano Local Government Area, a sample of 200 respondents was collected. Majority of the respondents were street hawkers and they stated that they been sexually harassed by customers, both verbally and physical.

For Abdullahi (2015), there is an increasing rate of sexually transmitted diseases among young persons in Abia State. This will not be unconnected to the increasing rape cases of young persons in the State, and some communities have prevalent cases than others.

Theoretical Framework

Anomie Theory

The social problem of street hawking could be explained by the anomie theory of crime, propounded by Robert Merton (1938). This was built upon Durkheim's (1897) concept of anomie, a relative absence or confusion of values and a corresponding lack of clear norms guiding behaviour. Merton's model is built upon the gap between aspirations and achievements in society. He argued that societies teach culturally valued goals and socially approved means of achieving them. In a situation in which not everyone has the means of achieving the valued goals, there tends to be a problem.

Merton believed that in order to make ends meet in a society where everyone does not have equal means to become successful and wealthy, people engage in illegal/illicit activities, such as theft, cheating or prostitution, etc. This is because the poor are restricted by the fact that they are poor and do not have what it takes to be rich in a society that places much importance on material prosperity. If the constraints of poverty is removed, there will be no room or need for crime, as most of these criminals are poor, deprived persons. Every family is expected to be able to fend for the needs of its members and also maintain the family composition.

This is culturally the role of the adult members of the family, precisely the parents or guardians. The poor in the society accept this cultural role but lack the socially approved means of attaining the roles. They are forced by societal inequality and injustice to seek illegal means of child labour (street hawking precisely) in meeting financial and edible needs. The theory helps in understanding the reason why children are many on the street hawking food and drink items. Abia State through the prolonged military rule has experienced several institutional collapses, destruction of the economy, which has resulted in widespread poverty of Abia State residents, including those residing in Ikwuano Local Government Area.

The return of democracy in 1999 in Abia State has not brightened the blurring situation for Abians. Successive civilian tenures have brought untold hardship, since the resources in the State are pillaged and channelled to the pockets of private individuals. There is a high rate of unemployment, crime, low industrialization in the State that houses enormous natural resources.

Since many families are poor due to the escalating rate of poverty, child abuse in the form of street hawking has become pronounced in Abia State, especially in Ikwuano Local Government Area. Families are trying to survive in a State where things are getting expensive daily. It must be noted that child abuse is a serious crime but families have no choice. Sadly when these children, mostly the girls, are sent to hawk food and drinks, they engage in sexual activities with customers so as to make sales in order to avoid beating from their parents or guardians.

Methodology

Study Area

Ikwuano is a Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria. Its headquarters is in Isiala Oboro. Ikwuano Local Government Area was among the new local government areas that were created on 27 August, 1991, when the General Ibrahim Babangida's administration created Abia State from the old Imo State. It was carved out of the old Ikwuano-Umuahia Local Government Area. It is one of the five LGAs that make up Abia Central Senatorial District. The first executive chairman is Chief Chima Onyemachi.

A researcher used survey design method because of the size target audience. Data used for this research work were from two sources: primary and secondary sources of data. The primary source of data was from questionnaires distributed to respondents. For the secondary source of data, books journals, government publications, internet, etc. are used by the researcher to support the information from the primary source.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample is a smaller, manageable aspect of a larger group. It is a smaller, manageable aspect of a larger group. It is a subset considerate of the features of a bigger populace. Samples are employed in statistical testing when population sizes are too big for test/research to contain all possible members of the stated population.

A sample size is very vital for researchers because it helps researchers to be precise, objective and unambiguous. In view of this, the study will sample 180 respondents. These 180 respondents are drawn from six localities: Olo-koro, Uba-kala, Umuo-para, Isingwu, Ibere, Ibeku. These respondents are parents/guardians, youths, married and single.

In addition, a sampling technique is the name or other identification of the specific process by which the entities of the sample have been selected. For this study, the simple random sampling will be used. This sampling technique ensures that all members in the study area have equal chances of being involved in the study.

1. The sample technique was purposive and cluster, these were chosen because each village was unique and would mean precision of the outcome hence the sample pattern.
2. The sample size was six villages chosen for their peculiarities. 180 respondents were spread amongst these villages in such a way that each clan got 30 copies of questionnaires to ascertain their response.
3. In addition, data used in this research work were gotten from questionnaires, interviews, government articles, journals, publications, newspaper, the internet, etc. The questionnaires were structured in close-ended format. The responses pattern used by the researcher is the four-Likert scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Strongly Disagree, and

DANIEL, URANTA, DSW, EKE VERONICA & CHINKATA FAITH CHIDINMA
STREET HAWKING AND CHILD ABUSE IN IKWUANO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA.....

Disagree. The questionnaires had fifteen items. The first four items were the personal features of respondents. The other items were questions drawn from the research questions.

Data Analysis

Data collected were analysed in line with the research questions. The views of respondents were measured in simple percentages and results shown in tables.

Socio-economic Demographic

Table 1 Age of the Respondents

Age Range (years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
20-25	66	36.7
26-35	67	37.2
36 and above	47	26.1
Total	180	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 1 shows the age distribution of respondents, from this table we see that the age range; 20-25 years makes 36.7% of the sample, 26-35 years makes up 37.2% while 36 years and above makes up 26.1% of the sample.

Table 2 Distribution of Respondents by Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	90	50
Female	90	50
Total	180	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents by sex. The sample was made by equal number of males and females so as to balance research. Thus, males accounted for 50% of the sample so likewise females.

Table 3 Occupation of Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Entrepreneur	67	37.2
Student	93	51.7
Civil servant	20	11.1
Total	180	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

Table 3 shows the occupation of respondents, from this table we see that 37.2% of respondents are entrepreneurs, where as 51.7% are students. Only 11.1% of the sample population were civil servants.

Table 4. Distribution of Respondents by Community

Community	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Olo-koro	36	20
Uba-kala	24	13.3
Umuo-para	30	16.7
Isingwu	30	16.7
Ibere	40	22.2
Ibeku	20	11.1
Total	180	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 4 shows the distribution of respondents by community. Respondents from Olo-koro community made up 20% of the sample population. Respondents from Uba-kala community made up 13.3% of the sample population. Respondents from Umuo-para and Isingwu made up 16.7% of the sample population each. Respondents from Ibere and Ibeku made up 22.2% and 11.1% of the population respectively.

Table 5 Responses to Questions on Causes of Street Hawking

Question items	Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Unemployment is a cause of street hawking in Ikwuana?	Strongly Agree	86	47.8
	Agree	93	51.7
	Strongly Disagree	0	0
	Disagree	1	0.6
	Total		180
The need to support the economic survival of the family is a cause of street hawking?	Strongly Agree	104	57.8
	Agree	68	37.8
	Strongly Disagree	4	2.2
	Disagree	4	2.2
	Total		180
Poverty is a cause of street hawking in Ikwuano?	Strongly Agree	112	62.2
	Agree	68	37.8
	Strongly Disagree	0	0
	Disagree	0	0
	Total		180
The need to exploit the labour of children is a cause of street hawking in Ikwuano?	Strongly Agree	14	7.8
	Agree	27	15
	Strongly Disagree	90	50
	Disagree	49	27.2
	Total		180

Source: Field Survey 2021

DANIEL, URANTA, DSW, EKE VERONICA & CHINKATA FAITH CHIDINMA
STREET HAWKING AND CHILD ABUSE IN IKWUANO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA.....

Table 5 shows the responses of respondents when asked about the causes of street hawking. From the table, we can clearly see that, the most of the research participants is of the opinion that unemployment is cause of street hawking in Ikwuano community. 47.8% strongly agree and 51.7% agreed that unemployment is a potential cause of street hawking. Only 0.6% of the respondents had a contrary opinion.

In the same vein, most of the research participants noted that the desire to support one’s family is a potential driver of street hawking. On this note, 57.8% strongly agreed that supporting one’s family is a potential cause of street hawking, while another 37.8% agreed to this assertion.

Respondents who strongly disagree and disagreed that the need to support one’s family is not a potential cause of street hawking were only 2.2% each.

Furthermore, respondents were asked if poverty is a potential cause of street hawking in Ikwuano community. An overwhelming 62.2% strongly agreed that poverty is a cause of street hawking. While 37.8% of the research participants agreed. None of the respondents disputed that poverty is a cause of street hawking.

Lastly, when asked if street hawking is inspired by the need to exploit the labour of children, 50% of respondents strongly disagreed, another 27.2% disagreed. Respondents who strongly agreed were 7.8% while those who strongly agreed were 15%.

Table 6 Responses to Implications of Street Hawking

Question items	Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Street hawking denies the children the attainment of quality education?	Strongly Agree	74	41.1
	Agree	82	45.6
	Strongly Disagree	14	7.8
	Disagree	10	5.6
Total		180	100
Street hawking exposes children to the harsh weather that can cause sicknesses?	Strongly Agree	59	32.8
	Agree	71	39.4
	Strongly Disagree	28	15.6
	Disagree	22	12.22
Total		180	100
Street hawking exposes children to rapists, ritualists, and other bad person?	Strongly Agree	124	68.9
	Agree	50	27.8
	Strongly Disagree	2	1.1
	Disagree	4	2.2
Total		180	100
Street hawking exposes children to pedophiles on the streets, roads?	Strongly Agree	98	54.4
	Agree	50	27.8
	Strongly Disagree	28	15.6
	Disagree	4	2.2
Total		180	100

Source: Field Survey 2021

Table 6 shows the responses of respondents on the implications of street hawking. 45.6% agrees that street hawking denies children of quality education. Another 41.1% strongly agreed that children are denied quality education as a result of street hawking. On the contrary, 7.8% strongly disagree that street hawking denies children of quality education. Also, 5.6% disagreed on street hawking denying children of quality education.

Also respondents were asked if street hawking exposes children to harsh weather conditions and diseases. 59 of the respondents which translate to 32.8% strongly agreed. In similar fashion, 39.4% agreed. On the other hand, 15.6% and 12.22% strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively that street hawking exposes children to harsh weather and diseases. 54.4% of the research participants agreed that street hawking have the tendency to exposes children to pedophiles. Only 15.6% strongly disagreed to this. While respondents who agreed or disagreed were 27.8% and 2.2% respectively.

Table 7 Responses on Measures that curbs Street Hawking

Question items	Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Provision of adequate employment can control street hawking and child abuse?	Strongly Agree	85	47.2
	Agree	70	38.9
	Strongly Disagree	13	7.2
	Disagree	12	6.7
Total		180	100
Punishment of child abusers/molesters can control street hawking and child abuse?	Strongly Agree	101	56.1
	Agree	79	43.9
	Strongly Disagree	0	0
	Disagree	0	0
Total		180	100
Provision of free education can help poor parents send their children to school and not the street to trade?	Strongly Agree	131	72.8
	Agree	49	27.2
	Strongly Disagree	0	0
	Disagree	0	0
Total		180	100

Source: Field Survey 2021

Table 7 shows the responses of respondents when asked on measures they feel can curb child abuse and street hawking. On this note, 47.2% strongly agreed that the provision of employment opportunities can help reduce the problem of child abuse. On the other hand, 7.2% strongly disagreed. Also, those who agreed that employment generation can curb street hawking were 38.9% while those who disagreed were only 6.7%

Another measure respondents were asked to rank in curbing street hawking and child abuse was implementing punishment on those who abuse or subject children to street hawking. On this note, 56.1% strongly agreed, while another 43.9% agreed likewise. There were no respondents who disagreed.

Lastly, respondents noted that the provision of free education can help reduce street hawking. On this 72.8% strongly agreed while another 27.2% agreed.

Discussion of Findings

This research has found that the problem of street hawking especially by under aged children (children below 18 years) is rife in Ikwuano community. Further investigation was

made to ascertain the causes of street hawking, and it was found that amongst all causes, poverty is the major causes of street hawking in Ikwuano community. Reasonably so, because poverty implies a situation where one lacks the capacity to meet basic and necessary needs, in the manner that one should. Poverty will cause an individual to search for alternative means of providing for ones need. For most families in Ikwuano this alternative is sending children to hawk in the streets. Although, we can argue that poverty is the major cause of street hawking, other factors were found too also contribute to the raising number of street hawkers in Ikwuano community. One of such is the lack of employment opportunities for the adult members of society and even a desire to exploit the labour of children. Many adults in Ikwuano lack a good paying job or a job. The lack of meaningful occupation means that they have little or nothing to fend for the needs of their families and may be forced to exploiting the labour of minors, by sending out to the street to hawk.

Street hawking was discovered to have serious negative implications not just on the children but also on the general society. Nwankwo (2014) in his research found that children who engage in street hawking were victims of sexual harassment and rape. In same manner, many of the research participants strongly agreed that street hawking exposes children to rapist (68.9% strongly supported this assertion) and pedophiles (54.4%)

Another implication of street hawking that is caused by street hawking is the denial of quality education for children. Akigir (2012), argued that even where these children have an opportunity to attend schools, they are mentally unstable and often performs poorly when compared with their pairs.

Conclusion

Children have a fundamental right to basic education. It is the responsibility of both the Government and the parents or guardians of children to help actualize this right. Subjecting children to street hawking often times denies them of the rights to basic education. More so, it hampers their social and psychological development. This study has shown that street hawking has several negative implications on children, and so there is need to devote efforts in curbing the problem of street hawking.

Recommendation

To curb the problem of street hawking in Ikwuano community, this study recommends the following solutions. Firstly, there is need for the state and local government authorities to be vocal against street hawking especially street hawking carried on by children. Government authorities can send teams to the various streets especially streets with the reputation of having the most of street hawkers.

These teams can apprehend children who are selling on the streets and trace their families, to understand the conditions that have necessitated the child to go into street hawking. Where the problem is a mere negligence in the path of the parents or guardians, the government can implement adequate sanctions. However, if the problem is that poverty and unemployment, supportive measures can be implemented to see that the child acquires basic education.

Another general solution to the problem of street hawking is the creation of jobs opportunities in Ikwuano community. Indeed, creating good employment will solve many social

problems, and one of such problems will be that of street hawking. The creation of free schooling opportunities for poor families is also essential to curbing street hawking. The Government should also put in place school feeding programs. The fact here is that, many children cannot feed unless they sell in the markets. Providing feeding for them and free education will serve as incentive and will help reduce the problem of street hawking in Ikwuano Community.

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