

HAWKING AND ITS EFFECT ON CHILD'S EDUCATION: A CASE
STUDY OF CHILDREN OF PORT HARCOURT, RIVERS STATE,
NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined hawking and its effect on child education with Port Harcourt as a case study. One hundred and twenty (120) respondents were selected from six bus stops on Aba Road using purposive sampling techniques. Research instrument was administered by means of oral interview. Hawkers interviewed were between eleven and thirty years of age. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used in data analysis. Simple percentage method was applied for the data analysis. The study revealed that most (70%) of the hawkers are males while few (30%) are females. The study discovered that majority of these hawkers are drop-outs from schools and the primary cause for this is poverty, also every other reason centre on the same poverty – 88% of the respondents were found to have dropped out of school due to poverty. The study reveals that Nigeria is continuously losing potential human resources in

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hawking, which in turn has constituted these hawkers as social nuisance in the society. The study recommends among others, free education at all levels to enable these teenagers have access to education, provision of jobs to the educated ones as a way of discouraging this bad profession.

The 2006 census by National Population Commission showed that Nigeria has a population of over 140 million people; Nigeria is the most populous black African country in the world. Nigeria plays a leading role in determining the future of Africa both at the global and regional levels. The attitude of “get-rich-quick” and the concept of westernization, have led to urban-rural drift and the emergence of poverty. These migrants take on menial jobs and form the bulk of traders in the streets and markets. The high levels of poverty in the rural areas have led to many families to send their children to families in the cities to serve as house-maids and house boys. These children are compelled to become emergency street traders who are subjected to damaging aspects of street life.

In the eastern and western parts of Nigeria some children may attend morning and afternoon school and hawk goods out of school hours, while some others trade on the street the whole day. Their income helps their families financially to pay for their school fees. Many parents in the north send their children out to the street to trade in order to make enough money for their mothers to buy household goods for them when they marry as early marriage is practiced in the Islamic part of the north.

Although endowed with rich natural resources cum extensive human resources, Nigeria has not properly achieved the fourth national goal of the National Policy of Education as a result of high level of corruption and greed of some privilege few coupled with government insensitivity to the plight of millions of children lacking basic education in the country as a result of hawking. Abject poverty intertwined with high cost of living are symptoms affecting children in particular, hence the consequences are social upheavals, cultural conflicts and slow industrialization.

Accordingly Ebigbo (1989) opined, that children in urban areas are quickly caught up in the daily struggle for survival and material gains through hawking irrespective of the fact that some children return home after the day’s struggle, others, especially girls subsist on the street with a view of making some financial gains to maintain their subsistence (Ebigbo and Isuora, 1985; Oloko, 1989).

Hawking by boys and girls is widespread, and parents clearly recognize that the practice spells dangers for children. According to Nzewi, (1988), a systematic survey of

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cases of sexual abuse of children in three major towns in Nigeria indicated that 60% involved girls below the age of 12 years, and abuse occurred on three levels: exposure to overt genital seduction, exposure to genital stimulation, and witnessing adults in the acts of sex. It was discovered that hawking is the major factor which contributed to these three levels of abuse.

Many men 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 (Ebigbo and Abaga, 1990). And 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 in certain instances is vital to the family survival (Ebigbo, 1988).

The implication is that hawkers on the street are exposed to numerous hazards ranging from physical violence to loss of goods, physical assault, risks of accident, robbery, kidnapping and even murder for ritual purposes. They are exposed to vagaries of weather (extremes of cold or heat), to insect or reptiles bites, to hunger and deprivation (Ojo, 2013). Some are sexually exploited and forced into prostitution with the risk of unwanted pregnancies and contracting sexually transmitted infection (including HIV). The consequences on the children range from malnourishment, disease, musculoskeletal disorders from heavy labor, physical and sexual abuse (Kathleen 1988). Korbin (1983); Malinosky and Hansan (1993), opined that hawking as a child labour can result into bodily injuries to the children and expose them to toxic agents in the process. Basu and Van (1998) argued that there are negative effects on the children's educational development and performance. The results is high level of illiteracy, low school attendance, and low enrolment which will have developmental and performance implications.

The consequences of street hawking by children may necessitate three effects, namely: Physical, Psychological and Social. Physical effects may include: accidents, spread of communicable diseases, food poisoning and traffic congestion. Psychological consequences of child street hawking may include: stress, fatigue, depression, anger and resultant ills. Social implications include: unwanted pregnancies, prostitution, smoking, robbery, truancy, poor academic performance, criminal abortion and eventual death; these effects are dangerous to any country.

Children hawkers also encounter problems related to their psychological well-being. These include stigmatization by the public, feelings of disheartenment, stress and

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irritability, personality disorders, anti-social behaviours, alienation and isolation from their family (Amin, 1994). They are negative effects on education and overall human capital formation (Murphy, Jellinek, Quinn, Smith and Goshko 1991). Children hawkers tend to keep bad company and are negatively pressured to engage in delinquent behaviours. The common trend emerging from the synthesis of literature is that street hawking has detrimental effects for children's health, social and educational well-being. Hence this paper examines the implication of street hawking, how it affects the quality of children we are baking in the Nigerian educational system and the rationale/strategies for curbing these negative trends in the interest of the Nigerian child and the society at large.

Purpose of the Study

The general objectives of this work include: To find out hawking activities, influences or affect the educational attainment of the children in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

The specific purposes are as follows:

1. To determine the socioeconomic characteristics of children who are hawking.
2. To identify the factors responsible for hawking by children outside school.
3. To determine the state of children involved in hawking.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the socioeconomic characteristics of children who are into hawking?
2. What factors are responsible for hawking by the children?
3. What are the states of children involved in hawking?

Research Methods

The work is an expo-factor survey design in which the authors tried to investigate the effect of independent variable (hawking) on the dependent variable (child education) in Port Harcourt. Port Harcourt is the capital of Rivers State and an oil city with high population density and equally located in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The major activity in Port Harcourt is oil business with the presence of many international oil and oil servicing companies. Port Harcourt is characterized by very heavy vehicle and human traffic as every major roads experiences heavy traffic flow. Hawking in the city becomes lucrative since the State Government has not really implemented the ban on street trading and hawking. Only the hawkers were interviewed as the authors felt that they have their best reasons for joining the hawking business. It is

difficult to number the hawkers as their residences are haphazard. Some have no exact residence, time of trade and place of abode. They move as traffic congestions moves.

Research Instruments

The main research instrument used for the collection of data was the oral interview method. Twenty two items bordering on education were used for the interview. Items were based on individual disposition and response. While some responded to many questions, others responded to few. Rapport was sort for, individually at quiet moment of business and many were ready to cooperate.

Unstructured and note taking interviews were conducted. The sampling method was convenient which involved direct interviews with the hawkers. One of the authors was a sales man in Port Harcourt and had a direct business contact with some of these hawkers before going into academics. As a result it was not really difficult to interact with them. The interview took place in the late December just before Christmas which is the peak period of trading where the hawkers struggle to make money for their Christmas celebration in the village.

A total of one hundred and twenty hawkers including boys and girls were interviewed through oral discussion. Those interviewed were purposefully selected.

The area covered were some of the bus stops in the popular Aba road. The Aba road is the most popular road with the highest traffic flow in Port Harcourt. These bus stops are the Eleme junction, Artillery, Air force bus stop, Rumuola bus stop, Waterlines bus stop and ‘mile one’ bus stop. There are over two hundred hawkers in each bus stop. Ten hawkers were interviewed in each sales area, which is the heavy traffic bus stop. The hawkers have a distribution of about 70% boys and 30% girls.

Method of Data Analysis

The data obtained in the field was processed using statistical method. The data were analyzed using percentage. The cross tabulation method was used in the process of answering the research questions.

Research Question 1

What are the socioeconomic characteristics of children who are into hawking?

Table 1, Respondents on Socioeconomic Status of Children involved in Hawking

| Response | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Low socioeconomic status | 120 | 100% |
| High socioeconomic status | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 120 | 100% |

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The result in table 1 shows that all the subjects studied are of low socioeconomic status. This could be the reason for street trading and using the children to hawk. The subjects have no other source of income and depend solely on the daily income from hawking.

Research Question 2

What factors are responsible for hawking by children?

Table 2, Respondents on factors that are responsible for hawking by children

| Response | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Affected by Poverty | 106 | 88% |
| Not affected by Poverty | 14 | 12% |
| Total | 120 | 100% |

Table 2 shows that 88% of the respondents are poor. Most of them pay for their goods after their final sales. They have customers that allow them collect their products and after a week or two, they pay their indebtedness. Few hawkers about 12% could buy on cash and carry basis from the wholesalers.

Research Question 3

What are the states of children involved in hawking?

Table 3, Respondents on State of Children Involved in Hawking

| Response | No. of Respondents | Percentage |
|--------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Poor Self Concepts | 87 | 73% |
| Good Self Concepts | 33 | 27% |
| Total | 120 | 100% |

Table 3; shows that respondents self esteem and self concepts are poor. They see themselves as inferior to civil servants and others that are self employed.

Discussion of Findings

Hawking affects academic performances of the children as most of them who hawk in the morning hours before school time are perpetual latecomers. They lack concentration in class work due to fatigue and stress arising from the practice of early hawking. The results are poor academic performance, juvenile delinquencies and truancy behaviour, manifesting in behavioural problems, low self-esteem, withdrawal syndrome, oppositional behaviour and learning difficulties.

Children hawkers may end up becoming 'street children' when they run away from parental or guardian abuse, to leave independently (Finkelman, 1995). The physical and health consequences of children participating in hawking include diseases (respiratory problems) due to direct cold in the street, injuries, rapes and molestations, mal nourishment, extortion of income, police harassment and participation in harmful or delinquent activities. Such children will likely face robbery, inadequate sleep due to fatigue and long hours on the illicit jobs (Ross, 1996).

Accordingly, poverty makes children to hawk and this is a major setback to educational development. All the hawkers agree that high cost of education contributed to their involvement in hawking, it is also possible that this group of people would go back to school if education becomes completely free at all levels. In fairness, large family size additionally compelled some children to venture into this dastard hawking business.

The survey shows the age brackets to fall between twelve (12) and thirty five (35) years, majority of the adults being males. Though few of those in their late twenties (20's) and thirties (30's) are some of the millions of unemployed graduates of the Nigerians whom joblessness have driven into hawking as an alternative means of survival in the country. It is also revealed that many of these set of adults graduated from the teens to the adults in the hawking euphoria.

The survey also shows that 60% of the hawkers are from the neighbouring states of the south east of Nigeria - Cross Rivers, Delta and Akwa Ibom states. Indigenes or natives of the states were not found to be involved in the hawking in Rivers state.

Conclusions

For people or the society to see hawking as unacceptable type of trade for the young ones, it must first be addressed. Campaigns against hawking through the media will be a mirage if the issue of poverty in this country is not addressed as Nigeria will continue to loss potential manpower and will not develop its potentials in human resources – such as medical doctors, scientists, engineers, accountants, administrators and educationists. The consequences are the downward trends in manpower development and rise in societal and social menaces. It is a truism that when the citizens are developed, the nation is equally developed.

Hawking in Port Harcourt commences as soon as vehicular movement of the day begins and closes as the vehicular movement stops. The implication is that hawking

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can commence as early as 5.30am and stops as late as 11.30pm provided there are heavy traffic on the roads.

There is a long distance between the hawker's formal education centres and their place of hawking operations, thus indicating that such a base quite a stretch and the centres of formal education will leave no stone untouched in contributing / affecting their educational attainment negatively.

Recommendations

Nigeria is blessed with resources both natural and potential human resources that can be harnessed. It is not only natural resources that can lead a country to technological breakthrough / advancement, but the development of her human resources. The states of origins of these hawkers together with Rivers state have much ado in bringing an end to hawking in Port Harcourt. Thus, the following recommendations if considered and implemented by the stakeholders will make hawking a thing of the past.

It is not only the ban in principle that matters but its enforcement to the letters. It is on record that previous civilian government of Rivers State once banned hawking but did not last as the enforcement process was faulted - the hawkers gallivanted to areas of less emphasis. To this end the present government can strategize with the given recommendation in enforcing the ban on hawking via putting every necessary measure in place in ensuring that the habit of drifting is checkmated by the taskforce within the city and hawkers are arrested / fined exorbitantly to act as a deterrent.

Since poverty has been identified to be the major cause of sparking hawking activities, parents / guardians should be empowered by the various governments concerned to have gainful employment and those in farming are given soft agricultural supports like loans, fertilizers and improved seedlings in addition to make available recent agricultural practices that will bring boost in productivity to their door steps. This will help to alleviate and support the education of their children.

Governments of the concerned states should provide free education at the 9 - years Basic Education programme which include fees, levies, books and school uniforms at these levels, so, it will enable children from poor family backgrounds acquire necessary education that will help combat this social menace constituting nuisance in our societies.

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Government should provide job opportunity for the teeming young graduates as well as make the curricula of schools (post-primary and tertiary) to emphasize learning that can make students to become self – employed via establishing cottage businesses, by this, there will be positive achievements in the areas of vocational and technical training together with technological savour.

Media houses should continue their campaigns against street hawking. Posters of victims of hawking should be displayed in public places and should be run on TV screens as a way of discouragement. Government should give the media houses legal backing in all forms of display of victims of hawking to avoid any litigation from victims or their relations which is characterized in our societies.

The population education programme should not only be taught in the regular schools but be extended as part of adult education programme in the rural areas. This will help to moderate / discourage the issue of large family size which is prevalent in our country.

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