

Child Labour: An Impediment to the Total Development of the Nigerian Child

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Abstract

The arrival of a child into Nigerian communities encapsulates happiness and celebration. In spite of the elaborate celebration that marks the birth, its survival and development are threatened by some cultural practices and activities. Nevertheless, one of the fundamental global problems facing Nigeria today is the fact that incidences of children who work outside the family to earn a living or to support their families are increasing on daily bases. In Nigeria, most especially in the urban areas, children of between the ages of five and fourteen are seen working. The situation of most Nigerian children remains critical due to their socio-economic, cultural and developmental circumstances. Children are compelled by circumstances beyond their control to contribute to family income. In the long run, working children are disadvantaged in several ways due to their involvement in all sorts of hazardous works which affect their health and developmental process. In addition, sending children to hawk in the streets is a negation of the rights of children as guaranteed by the Child Rights Act (2003). It is within this purview that hawking (a form of child abuse) is examined. This article considers the consequences of hawking on the Nigerian child and proffers recommendations to ameliorate its menace in the country. One of the fundamental global problems facing Nigeria is the occurrences of children who work outside the family to augment the family income and other efforts. The objective of this study is to find out whether children engage in hawking in Suleja, Tafa and Gurara local government areas in Niger State, Nigeria. In most urban centres in Nigeria, children between the ages of five and fourteen years are seen hawking. The situation of most children remains critical due to their all round circumstances. They are forced by forces beyond their control to contribute to family income. In the end, this group of children is disadvantaged in several ways due their

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involvement in hazardous works which affect their health and developmental growth process. The population of the study is child-hawkers who were purposively selected from Suleja, Tafa and Gurara local government areas due to their proximity to Abuja, the Federal Capital City of Nigeria. The sample size is one hundred and forty (140) child-hawkers purposively selected on availability. Direct interview and observation were used to elicit data from the child-hawkers and simple frequencies and tables were used to present the findings. The results showed that a greater proportion (55%) of the child hawkers combined hawking with schooling. Furthermore, majority (72.9%) of the respondents agreed to exposure to risk of being hit by motorcars or motorcycles as the major hazard of hawking on the various locations of the study. The article recommends strict enhancement and respect of the rights of children as enshrined in the CRA while low income parents should be empowered.

Introduction

In every human society, parents with a view to socializing their children and providing necessities of life carry out certain cultural practices and economics activities. The engagement of children in hawking is a typical example of child labour, which is a form of child abuse. For example in 2000, UNICEF reported that 250 million children between the ages of 4 and 15 years in developing countries out of which children 22 million were working and 1 out of 3 children in Lagos earn money as street hawkers. Furthermore, in the same year 3072 out of 4591 beggars in Zaria streets were children (UNICEF, 2000). This is a social phenomenon, which has taken dangerous dimension and causing devastating effect on the physical and mental development of children in Nigeria. Hawking is an activity that could be found in major cities and villages in the country today. Weekly Trust (2019) reported that 'children are forced to hawk wares of all sorts and have become a sore sight sorts in Nigeria with under aged kids denied the joy of childhood and expose to danger of all kinds'. This report revealed that child hawkers are regular sights found on major streets in cities and towns in the country. This is a violation of their African Charter on the rights and Welfare of the African Child adopted in Addis Ababa-Ethiopia, in 1990 (UNICEF, 2000). The phenomenon of hawking is gaining currency and has attracted condemnation. The problem has become so critical that parents, who are supposed to protect their children, expose them to risks and dangers in the society. This is critical and questions raised about hawking; how it is done;

factors responsible for it; and the consequences thereof. In addressing the above issues, an effort is made primarily to operationalize some basic concept, such as hawking, threats, development and child. Hawking can be defined as engaging children in the sale of crops and households goods from place to place. Women in Nigeria (WIN, 1996) define hawking as 'a form of trade which wares are carried about for sales. It could be from house, on the street, highways, and the market place or at particular sites, where large number of customers can be reached such as construction sites, motor parks and the likes.

Hawking as a form of child labour is said to be very common in most cities in Nigeria, where the incomes are low and have proved inadequate to cater for a whole family (Owolabi, 2012). Accordingly, under this circumstance, a child may be made to hawk along the busy streets and major highways some common items like cold soft drinks, fruits of every kind, cold-water sachets, clothing materials, footwear, and other material in order to supplement the family income. Studies conducted in most Nigeria cities show that street hawking is the most common form of child labour in Nigeria cutting across major cities. For the purpose of this paper, impediment is viewed as a menace and danger to the growth and development of a Nigerian child, while development is the process of experiencing a gradual growth and increase in the quality of lives of individual children. The definition of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (Article I); the Africa Union Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child Article II (1990) and Child Rights Act (Section 277, 2003) of a child as 'any human being below the age of 18 years' are used.

Child labour is a form of child abuse (CYPL, 1958; ANPPACAN, 1997; AUCRWC, 1990; CRA, 2003). Child labour has assumed a disturbing dimension with girl-children made to among other things care for infants, clean and undertake laundry for the entire household. In cities, children are withdrawn from school to hawk goods in street and motor parks to support their families. These children are found everywhere hawking and meandering in and out of traffic. The child-hawkers lives are jeopardized by hazards often encountered while at their duty posts. While some are able to combine schooling with their work, many are however exploited and cheated and molested by adults and peers. Many suffer from malnutrition, illness and low self esteem.

Methodology

Table 1:
Sample Size and Location of the Respondents

Location by LGA	F	%
Gurara	50	35.7
Suleja	50	35.7
Tafa	40	28.6
Total	140	100

Source: Field Survey 2018

The study was conducted in Gurara, Suleja, and Tafa local government areas in Niger State. They are urban, semi-urban and rural local government areas in the Niger East Senatorial zone of the state. The dominant tribes are Gbagyi, Nupe, Kadara and Hausa. Others are the tribes from all over the country especially in Suleja local government area as a result of its proximity to the Federal Capital Territory. Christianity and Islam are the dominant religions in these local government areas. The population of the study is child hawkers between the ages of 5 and 14 years. One hundred and forty (140) child hawkers were purposively selected. Questionnaire and observation were used as the instruments of the study.

Socio-Demographic Data of Child-Hawkers

This section presents the Socio-Demographic data of respondents. Age, sex, religion, educational attainment and that of their parents are some of the variables examined. Others are the occupation and income of parents.

Table 2:
Socio-Demographic Data of Child-Hawkers

Age	F	%
5-7yrs	30	22.9
8-10yrs	57	40.7
11-13yrs	51	36.4
Total	140	100

Sex		
Male	53	37.9
Female	87	62.1
Total	140	100

Religion		
Christian	51	36.4
Islam	89	63.6
Total	140	100

School Attending		
Non-formal Education	9	6.4
Islamic	21	15
Apprenticeship	33	3.6
Western Education	77	55
Total	140	100

Staying with Parents		
Yes	91	65
No	49	35
Total	140	100

Position in Family		
1 st -3 rd	66	47
4 th -6 th	59	42
7 th -10 th	15	11.8
Total	140	100

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

Table 2 shows that 22.9% of the child-hawkers belonged to the 5-8years category, while 40.7% and 36.4% belonged to 9-11 and 12-15years categories respectively. Only 37.9% were male, while 62.1% were females. 6.4% were not attending Islamic nor western education while 15%, 23.6% and 55% were attending Islamic school, apprenticeship and western education respectively. In addition the table also shows that 63.6% of the child-hawkers are Muslims while the remaining 36.4% are Christians. In Tafa local government area, the child hawkers were interviewed at their duty post comprising filling stations along the major Abuja-Kaduna express road, Sabon-Wuse market and at kilometre 3 Suleja army security check point. Items hawked include banana, sachet water, bread, and groundnut, garden eggs, vegetables, soft drinks cola nut, plantain chips, oranges and wheel barrow pushers (load carriers).

The child-hawkers in Gurara local government area were found in Lambata and Diko market, Kwaka-Gwacipe and Dikko army security check point and Diko-Abuja-Kaduna junction and Motor Park. While motor parks, filling stations, and Bakin Iku and Madalla security check points and Madalla market are the major focal points of child-hawkers in Suleja local government area. Some of the wares hawked by the child hawker in Gurara and Suleja local government areas are though not limited to garden eggs, fura (local millet battered pudding), madidi (local corn battered pudding), kola nut, soft drinks, sachet water, cell phone accessories, chinchin, banana, cakes, plantain chips, sugar cane, boiled corn, foot wears, top-up cards, wheel barrow pushers groundnuts and beggars. 49 (35%) of the child hawkers do not stay with their parents while 65% stay with their parents. The hawkers also indicated that they were either between 1st-3rd born, 47%, 4th-6th born, 42% or 7th-10th born of their parents.

Socio-Economic Attributes of Respondents Parents

This section describes the social and economic activities of the parents of child-hawkers interviewed during the study.

**Table 3: Socio-Economic Background of Respondents' Parent
Fathers' Educational Attainment**

Non-formal Education	33	23.5
Quaranic Education	27	19.3
Primary Education	55	39.3
Secondary Education	18	12.9
Post secondary Education	7	5
Total	140	100

Mothers' Educational Attainment

Non-formal Education	67	47.9
Quaranic Education	18	12.9
Primary Education	39	27.9
Secondary Education	13	9.3
Post secondary Education	3	2.1
Total	140	100

Fathers' Occupation

Farming	49	35.0
Artisanship	41	29.3
Business	23	16.4
Civil service	27	19.3
Total	140	100

Mother' Occupation

House wife	79	56.4
Business	47	33.6
Civil service	14	10
Total	140	100

Fathers' Income

Less than NGN 5000	78	55.7
NGN5000- NGN 10000	43	30.7
NGN11000 and above	19	13.6
Total	140	100

Mothers' Income

Less than NGN 5000	119	85.0
NGN5000- NGN 10000	13	9.3
NGN11000 and above	8	5.7
Total	140	100

Source: Field Survey 2018.

Table 3 furthermore shows that the parents of the respondents are of low socio-economic background with 23.5% fathers and 47.9% mothers who have no any form of formal education while only 5% fathers and 3% mothers has post secondary education. In terms of occupation, findings in the table reveals that 35% fathers and 56.4% mothers were farmers and house wives respectively. Only 19.3 fathers of the respondents and 10% mothers of the respondents are civil servants earning NGN11000 and above monthly, by only 13.6% of fathers and 5.7% mothers of the respondents. The table explained vividly the level of evolvment of parents pushing the children to hawk because of poverty.

Factors Responsible for Hawking

This section discusses reasons why child-hawkers engage in hawking among which they gave several explanations including helping to augment family income or save for future plan like marriage.

Table 4: Factors influencing Hawking by Child-Hawkers

Why do you Hawk

To support my parents	110	78.6
For my mother to save for my marriage	25	17.8
To take care of myself	5	3.6
Total	140	100

Source: Field Survey 2018.

When the respondents were asked why they hawk, findings in table 4 shows that 78.6% mentioned raising money to help parents to take care of family, 17.8% training to be self reliant in adult life. Girl-child hawkers said their mothers would use the process to buy items for marriage and were also being trained not to be idle when they marry. Some child-hawkers (3.6%) on the other hand said they had to hawk because they did not have anybody to take care of them.

Consequently, poverty and hard living conditions in homes of child-hawkers in particular, push parents to send children to hawk. Thus, the desire to work to generate income for the members of their families is the major driving force behind hawking by children in addition. Nigeria's frequent social upheavals, cultural conflicts, gradual industrialization and imperfect attempts at westernization push some families to send their young ones to hawk and it (hawking) was reported as the most frequently reported form of maltreatment.

Weekly Trust (2000) examined the predisposing conditions associated with hawking by children in Nigeria. In its report, a 12 year old boy said that his mother engages him in hawking to get money to feed them. A mother, who hawks with her 14 year old daughter, noted, 'somebody has to help me support my children.' According to her;

My husband has three other wives and each of us has no less than four children. The boys go to school but the girls stay back to help with petty trading and housework until they are ready for marriage. He can hardly provides a descent meal for the entire family, nor can he give them good clothes even during festive periods. So sending them all to school when they can be useful to us in the other ways is a waste and unnecessary luxury for us (Weekly Trust, 2009).

Closely related to the cultural factors are the economic factors. Here, there are two basic issues-early marriage and purdah. Associated with early marriage is the fact that boys are regarded as future breadwinners and bearers of family name. Girls on the other hand are usually married off early to avert 'pollution' of any kind (Kolo, 2008). Part of the proceeds they make from hawking is used to buy them goods they will take to their husbands' houses. Similarly, the practice of purdah in northern Nigerian restricts adult women to their home during the day, and as such, the younger children are meant to do the work the adult should be doing. Some of their girls start hawking at an age where they are too young and ignorant to count money properly (WIN, 1999). Okoro (2001) observed that parent

does not see child-hawking as any form of child abuse, but as an act of traditional training in businesses activities. However, most of these factors are associated with the general socio-economic problem in the country, such as poverty, unemployment, low educational attainment of the parent and cultural practices of the people.

In Nigeria for example, lack of income has forced many families to withdraw their children from school and send them into work force including hawking. This act has often exposed them to violence, abuse and untold hardship (UNICEF, 2000). Hawking is child labour and an act of exploitation and inhuman treatment that degrades the dignity of a child. It is a form of child abuse. The United Nation convention on the Rights of the Child frowns at hawking (child labour) and provides that,

Every child must be protected against all forms of exploitation, indecent or degrading treatment, including child labour, abduction and sale.

According to CRC, exploiting the labour of a child means employing a person below the age of 15years and paying him less than the minimum standard wage. The Child Rights Act, (2003) is the current law protecting children and has this to say in its provision against child labour.

No child shall be subjected to any forced or exploitative labour and no child shall be used for hawking of goods or services on main city streets, brothels or highways (Section 28 (1a) and 30 2 (c)

Table 5: Hazards Encountered by Child-Hawkers

Types of Hazards

Being hit by cars or motorcycle	102	72.9
Loss of money or products	7	5
Hunger	11	7.9
Going to school late	10	7.1
Tiredness	5	3.6
Breast fumbling	3	2.1
Stay out of school	2	1.4
Total	140	100

Source: Field Survey 2018.

In their responds to problem to problems faced while hawking during this study, respondents in Table 5 reveals that some 73% said being hit by cars or okada (motorcycles) was the major hazard. 5% mentioned loosing products and money when customers or when their wares pour because of hurrying to reach out to customers who sometimes cheat them. Others, 7.9%, 7.1%, 3.6%, 2.1% and 1.4% claim hunger, going to school late, tiredness, breast fumbling by big boys and some customers and staying out of school are some of the consequences of being out on the street hawking. These findings are in consonant with the findings in some studies conducted by Shelleng (1991). Okeshola and Mudiare (1996) and Ibigbo (1999). According to them hawking is a form of child abuse which has devastating effect on the physical and mental development of the Nigerian child. In addition, they review that children left on their own to take on the responsibility of working for the survival of the family, usually performed badly in school and often drop out in the process. They established that school children who are forced to hawk complain of fatigue and inability to study at home they found that such children performed badly and often below their chronological ages. Furthermore, they opined that child-hawkers were very often expose to the risk of motor accidents, malnourishment and scavenge garbage dump for dispose food items and sexual assault and harassment to the girl-hawkers when they are lured by male customers. Although, sexual intercourse was not reported in this study, previous studies (Ebigbo and Abaga, 1990) revealed that child-hawker engage in sexual intercourse during hawking, or sometimes kidnapped by their 'customers'. Hawking by children according to studied has brought in its trail rape and abduction of children by ritualist in some instances. A woman interviewed by weekly Trust reported case of rape involving child-hawkers, she is a mother of 12 year old girl, who reported that:

My daughter has been a hawker since she was barely 6year and ever since she has been very active and successful in any kind of wares she is given to sell. As a woman in need, she has always impressed me to the extents that I do reward her for efforts, not knowing that there is this old guide in the GRA that abuses her sexually. Sometime last year, she fell sick and when taking to the hospital, it was confirmed that she was pregnant. She pointed at the guard who is old enough to be her grandfather. There and then I vowed that none of my girls will ever hawk again no matter how bad my financial situation (Weekly Trust, 2009).

The distances covered are so long and they pass through highways, thus exposing them to accidents when crossing the roads, in addition to harsh climatic condition and excessive heat or cold. Some of the children on the other hand are cut up in the social vices of the environment, adding to the ranks of drug addicts, streets and political thugs (weekly trust, 2009).

Discussions of the Findings

It is of interest to know that both male and female children are engaged in hawking, although there are more female hawkers than their male counterpart. In addition, most of the child hawkers live with their parents and cut across socio-economic background. Furthermore, it was observed that during hawking, the younger child hawker 5-8years categories are found to be attached to older ones and hawk items of lesser money value like sachet water, kolanut, madidi, and fura that go for NGN10 or NGN20. The older child-hawker 8-11years and 12-14years on the other hand hawk wares that are of high money value or involve complex transactions like soft drinks, cell-phones accessories, foot wears and such likes. These findings agree with the submissions in earlier studies conducted by Kolo (2008) and Okeshola and Mudiere (1999). It was also observed that the older ones abuse drugs although they claimed it was normal to take something 'ordinary' like panadol or paracetamol (analgesic) to wear off fatigue from their hustle. Poverty and hard conditions of living corroborate the findings of earlier studies conducted by (Ebigbo, 1999, Win, 1999 Okoro, 2001: Kolo, 2008 and weekly trust, 2009). In these studies it is averred that although Nigeria is the largest black African country with a population of over 140 million people (NPC, 2006), it is a fact that it has not developed adequate technological capabilities and managerial skills for effective management of her resources to achieve sustainable growth and development.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Hawking is a social and economic activity carried out by children in Nigeria. It is manifested through the sale of different crops and household commodities such as groundnut, sachet water, bread, and other materials, from one location to another in major streets and public places in the country. Economic problems and cultural practices of the people are major predisposing factor responsible for this activity. Hawking generally is harmful to the physical, mental, social, emotional and educational interests of the child. In short, it has serious negative effects on the total well being of the child.

Street trading negatively affects the development of children in any society. Therefore, to attain sustainable growth and development in any sector of the Nigeria economy, deliberate effort must be made to provide necessary care and enhancement of the welfare of the nation. No nation can achieve any meaningful development if the children in such country are not adequately protected and nurtured. Children are the future leaders and vanguard for socio-economic and sustainable development in Nigeria. As a result, the following recommendations are made. The situation where children are forced to hawk by parents to earn at the risk of their lives should be discouraged. Therefore, the rights and welfare of the Nigerian children should be enhanced and respected.

Proven cases of sexual abuse resulting from hawking should be sanctioned with severe punitive laws. Assailants should be prosecuted and made to take responsibilities for the damages done to the child. Since poverty is one of the major factor that make parents send children to hawk, parents from low economic background should be economically empowered through provision of micro credit facilities so that their children will not be engaged in exploitative economic activities.

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