

PERCEPTIONS OF FEMALE SCHOOL-AGE STREET HAWKERS AND THEIR PARENTS ON ACQUISITION OF EDUCATION IN BIU AND KWAYA KUSAR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF BORNO STATE, NIGERIA

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This article reports a study in Biu and Kwaya Kusar L.G.A, Borno State, it analyzed the perceptions of female-aged street hawkers and their parents regarding formal education and hawking. The study found that Galdimare had the highest number of respondents, disagreeing that hawking alone would lead to success. In Kwaya-Kusar, the opposite was true, with many hawkers viewing formal education as a time waste. The study also revealed significant barriers to education and employment, perpetuating poverty. The study recommends the government address these issues by fostering economic and social empowerment for female school-aged hawkers in Biu and Kwaya Kusar L.G.A.

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Introduction

Street hawking is a growing but disturbing activity, especially among school-age children who are either school dropouts or have never been to school. This unhealthy development among girls has been a common thing in most parts of developing countries (Mike 2017). It's a phenomenon of, especially school-age children hawking goods on the streets that became noticeable in the 1980s and is now a common feature of the urban and rural landscape of Nigeria.

Children of school age between 6 to 17 years are compelled by parents, who often advance poverty as a reason to hawk goods on the streets. These children are sometimes withdrawn from school to fully engage in the hawking from dawn to dusk daily. According to Okeke (2015), child street hawking is a common practice in Nigerian streets. Children sell products such as boiled groundnut, sachet water, fruits etc. they carry on a tray balanced on their heads. Okeke (2015)

noted that the practice is on the rise. Ebigbo and Abaga, (2003) pointed out that in Nigeria, the rate of child hawking has assumed a worrisome and alarming proportion. It is a daily occurrence to see children below 14 years old hawking wares and other products along the roadsides in most Nigerian towns and even rural communities.

There is a wide range of Child Rights efforts at both the global and national levels. For example 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 2000). There is also the Child Rights Bill that was signed by President Olusegun Obasanjo in July 2013 which seeks to check child hawking by prescribing penalties for the parents and guardians who allow children onto the streets. In 2017 Nasiru El Rufa'I, Governor of the Kaduna State threatened through a tweet that "Any child of school age hawking in

Kaduna will be asked to show us the parents – who will then be arrested”. There are also constitutional provisions. Section 30(2C) of Part III of the Child Rights Act (2003) states that: “A child shall not be used for hawking goods or services on main streets, brothels or highways”. Subsection 3 of it further states that “A person who contravenes the provisions of subsection 2 of this Act commits an offence and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term of 10 years without an option of fine. In 2008, the Lagos State government banned Child Street Hawking during school hours to reduce the practice. What is baffling is that these practices are on the increase. Ogunubi (2016) noted that despite legislative measures put in place, child street hawking and other child labour practices remain a major source of concern in Nigeria.

The street hawking among school-aged children cuts across the region of Nigeria but according to Mathias (2015. 3) “Northern State of Nigeria has remained unable to address the challenge of street begging and hawking. The region is worse hit first and foremost because of poverty, added to ignorance, cultural and religious trappings that see child labour as a norm, whereas it has for long been defined as abusive and exploitative”.

It is noticeable that the most involved in this practice is the girl child. For example, in the Northern part of Nigeria, they are the most likely to be withdrawn from school or not enrolled completely. This made the girl child the most involved in street hawking. Okeke (2015) noted that this has made the young girls involved vulnerable to molestation and other risks.

Biu Local Government Area of Borno State is not immune from hawking by school-age children. It is common to find them across Biu town and its surrounding settlements hawking one thing or the other. Some are completely out of school (dropouts), some have temporarily left

school and some are combining school with hawking. There is a prevalence of female street hawkers, selling fruits, groundnuts, food items etc.

The categories of school-age street hawkers (dropouts, temporarily in school and a combination of school and street hawking) hold opinions about hawking and about school or acquiring education. It is common sense that the opinion one holds drives one's activities or disposition to an activity. “When children participate in the decision-making process on issues affecting their lives, they will be more creative, positive and energetic, offering ideas devoid of prejudices and stereotypes, she said”. (Vanguard, 2017 paragraph 25). The perception of a child helps the child develop a positive or negative attitude towards a thing. One would then ask, what is the perception of school-age female street hawkers in Biu, about acquiring education.

Therefore this study will examine the perception of acquiring education among female school-age street hawkers in Biu & Kwaya Kusar, Borno State.

There are several works on street hawking; the dramatic increase in child labour and street hawking in Nigeria may be attributed to several factors. These factors include the rapid population growth of many less-developed countries. High rates of unemployment, inflation low wages and deplorable working conditions have propelled children to engage in street hawking to help support their families (Charles and Charles, 2004, Deth, 2007). This study would fill this gap by examining the perception of acquiring education among female school-age street hawkers in Biu & Kwaya Kusar, Borno State, Nigeria.

Methodology

The research adopted a survey as a method.

The population of the research is some street hawkers in Biu & Kwaya Kusar Local Government Areas.

The study used a sample size of 300 females, and their parents' street hawkers in Biu & Kwaya Kusar LGA.

The research used questionnaires that the research assistants and the researcher provided guides for the respondent to fill or assist the respondent entering their responses where they were incapable of filling one.

The study adopted the quantitative and qualitative interpretation and use of percentages, and tables for presentation and explanation.

The hawkers' perception of whether they would succeed in life without formal education is given in Table. In all the three wards (villages) sampled, on the frequencies, percentages and cumulative, it shows that Galdimare had the highest number of respondents, followed by Zarawuyaku then Dugja. They strongly disagreed that only hawking would not allow them to succeed in life without formal Education. While an insignificant number of the respondents were undecided.

The parents' perceptions on Hawking vs formal education are given in Table 2 in all the three wards sampled, on the frequencies, percentages and cumulative it shows that Galdimare had the highest respondents followed by Dugja wards who strongly believed that schooling is better. Very few respondents say Hawking is better.

The hawkers' perception of whether they would succeed in life without formal education is given in Table 3. In all the three wards sampled on the frequencies, percentages and cumulative, it shows that Peta had the highest number of respondents, followed by Bila then Gusi. They strongly agreed that Hawking would like then succeed in life without formal education; while few of the respondents were undecided that is, the level of acceptance of education is low.

The parents' perception of hawking vs formal education Table 4 in all three wards sampled, on the frequencies, percentages and cumulative, shows that Peta had the highest number of respondents, followed by Gusi then Bila. They said Hawking is better than formal education while few individuals were undecided.

Findings and Discussion

At Biu, it was observed that hawkers strongly disagreed that only hawking would not allow them to succeed in life without formal education. This agreed with the finding of Paul E, 2020, who stated that once, you are not given formal education in a society you are oppressed. It is believed that in all wards, they prefer to be trained through formal education to have something in the future i.e. economic empowerment through employment.

Table 1. *Hawkers perception on whether they would succeed in life without Formal Education (Case study of Biu L.G.A)*

Respondents	Zarawuyaku	Per.	Cum.	Dugja	%	Cum.	Galdimare	%	Cum.
Strongly Agreed	60	20	20	80	26.7	26.7	60	20	20
Agreed	20	6.7	26.7	20	6.7	33.4	10	3.3	23.3
Disagreed	08	2.7	29.4	07	2.3	35.7	05	1.7	25.0
Strongly Disagreed	210	70	99.4	190	63.3	99	220	73.3	98.3
Undecided	02	0.6	100	03	01	100	05	1.7	100
Total	300	100	100	300	100	100	300	100	100

Table 2. The parents' perceptions on Hawking vs Formal Education in Biu LGA.

Respondents	Zarawuyaku	Per.	Cum.	Dugja	%	Cum.	Galdimare	%	Cum.
Hawking is better	107	35.7	35.7	102	34.0	34.0	92	30.7	30.7
Schooling is better	187	62.3	98.0	192	64.0	98.0	201	67.0	97.7
Undecided	06	02	100	06	02	100	07	2.3	100
Total	300	100	100	300	100	100	300	100	100

At Kwaya Kusar, it was revealed that both parents and the hawkers strongly agreed that hawking is the only way to succeed in their lives, they believed that formal education is a time wastage. This was contrary to the finding of Paul, 2020, who stated that a person without formal education in society would be

oppressed, but was in accordance with the finding of Christina (2013) who stated that engaging in hawking allows female hawkers to perceive hawking as a way to gain independence and personal agency, taking initiatives in their financial support and decision makings.

Table 3. Hawkers perception on whether they would succeed in life without Formal Education (Case study of Kwaya Kusar L.G.A)

Respondents	Bila	Per.	Cum.	Gusi	%	Cum.	Peta	%	Cum.
Strongly Agreed	180	60	60	170	56.7	56.7	193	64.4	64.4
Agreed	20	6.7	66.7	22	7.3	64.0	30	10.0	74.4
Disagreed	50	16.7	83.4	38	12.7	76.7	10	3.3	77.7
Strongly disagreed	42	14.0	97.4	52	17.3	94.0	57	19.0	96.7
Undecided	08	2.6	100	18	6	100	10	3.3	100
Total	300	100	100	300	100	100	300	100	100

Table 4. The parents' perceptions on Hawking vs formal Education in Kwaya Kusar L.G.A.

Respondents	Bila	Per.	Cum.	Gusi	%	Cum.	Peta	%	Cum.
Hawking is better	186	62.0	62.0	190	63.3	63.3	192	64.0	64.0
Schooling is better	106	35.3	97.3	101	33.7	97.0	97	32.3	96.3
Undecided	08	2.7	100	09	3.0	100	11	3.7	100
Total	300	100	100	300	100	100	300	100	100

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the socioeconomic profiles, challenges, education

and opportunities of street hawkers and their parents. The findings revealed that:

The majority of hawkers are from low-income families: Many hawkers struggle to

make ends meet, highlighting the need for support and resources.

Limited access to education and job opportunities: Hawkers and their parents face significant barriers to education and employment.

Resilience and adaptability: Despite facing numerous challenges, hawkers demonstrate remarkable resilience and adaptability in their daily lives.

Recommendations

1. Government support and resources: Provide access to education, job training and microfinance programs to help hawkers improve their socio-economic status.
2. Community engagement and empowerment: Foster community involvement and empowerment to promote hawkers' rights and interests.
3. The government should strictly adhere to children's right to education.

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Education is the bedrock of development in any society., *Education is the driving force of any economic, political and social development of any country* (Cholin 2005 & Mehta and Kalra, 2006)

Education is the strategic heart of determining and shaping the vision of positive social change in any nation.

Education is the Systematic training and Instruction designed to transmit knowledge and develop skills in individuals.

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