

EFFECT OF STREET HAWKING ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL (JSS III) STUDENTS IN CALABAR EDUCATION ZONE, CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Child street hawking is a prevalent and persistent socio-economic problem affecting the educational development of children, particularly in developing countries. A street child is a child that is living on the street, working on the street, or dependent on the street for survival, even if they have some connection to a family. Among the problems children street hawkers suffer is that, many lack access to education, while those enrolled in school are often absent and have no time to do their homework or revision, as a result of their engagement in street trading. This potentially impacts their academic performance negatively, especially in English Language, which requires regular class attendance, rapt attention and regular performance of exercises for mastery of the subject. One research question and one hypothesis were formulated for the study. Ex-post facto research design was adopted. A sample of 520 respondents was randomly selected for the study using the stratified and simple random sampling techniques. The questionnaire titled “Child Street Hawking and Academic Performance of Students’ Questionnaire” (CSHAPSQ)” and English Achievement Test (EAT) were the instruments used for data collection. The instruments were subjected to face and contents validation by two experts. The reliability estimate of 0.71 to 0.80 of the instrument was established through test-retest method; simple regression analysis was the statistical analysis technique adopted to test the hypothesis. The null hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance. The results of the analysis revealed that child street hawking had significant influence on students’ academic performance in English Language. Comprehensive interventions involving government policies, community awareness, educational support programmes, and NGO involvement to mitigate the practice and improve students’ academic outcomes are recommended.

Keywords: *Academic Performance, Child Street Hawking, Child Labor, Education, Poverty.*



Introduction

Education is universally recognized as a fundamental human right and a critical tool for individual empowerment and national development. It provides the foundation for acquiring knowledge, developing critical thinking skills, and breaking the cycle of poverty. However, in many developing countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, the realization of this right is hindered by various socio-economic challenges. One of the most persistent of these challenges is child street hawking, also known as child hawking (Omozusi *et al.* 2020; Ogunode *et al.*, 2024), child street trading (Udoh and Joseph (2012), and child street vendor (Ugochukwu *et al.*, 2012; Bessong *et al.*, 2024), a form of child labor where children engage in the sale of goods in public spaces such as roadsides, markets, and motor parks, often during school hours or after school (Abongiasede, 2021; Omozusi *et al.*, 2020).

Child street hawking is driven primarily by poverty, economic hardship, and the need for families to supplement their income through any available means, including child labor (Okafor, 2010). Many parents and guardians, especially those in urban slums and rural communities, view their children or wards as economic assets who can help meet the family's immediate needs (Anumaka, 2012). As a result, children are frequently withdrawn from school or have their education interrupted to engage in street trading activities (Opara et al., 2020; Ihekoronye et al., 2020; Udoh & Joseph, 2012). In some cases, even those enrolled in school are required to hawk before or after school hours, leading to fatigue, lack of concentration, and poor academic performance (Ola-Alani and Abidogun, 2020, Folu, 2019).

The issue is further exacerbated by weak institutional frameworks, lack of enforcement of child labor laws, and societal norms that accept or even encourage children's participation in economic activities. Although international conventions such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (UNCRC) (United Nations, 1989), and the International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions prohibit exploitative child labor, the implementation and enforcement of these frameworks remain inadequate in many developing nations. Nigeria, for instance, despite having laws such as the Child Rights Act of 2003 and policies promoting universal basic education, continues to struggle with high rates of child labor and school dropouts (Oruh *et al.*, 2022; Paul et. al, 2019).

The implications of street hawking for children's academic performance are profound. Research has shown that children involved in street trading often experience disrupted schooling, irregular attendance, poor classroom participation, and low academic achievement (Anumaka, 2012; Odetola, 2015). Previous research findings indicate that, generally, child street hawking negatively impacted on the academic performance of school children in across various local government areas in Nigeria (Omozusi *et al.*, 2021; Ogunode & Olofu, 2023; Ijadunola *et al.*, 2015; Dada, 2013; Olarere, 2007). In particular, child street hawking negatively influenced students' performance in subjects such as, Practical Agriculture (Farauta & Yumbak, 2013) and Social Studies (Folu, 2019; Ubah & Bulus, 2014). However, there is paucity of information on the influence of child street hawking on the performance of junior secondary school students in English Language, hence, the need for further research.

For the purpose of this study, one research question and one hypothesis were stated as follows:

- 1) To what extent does the use of children for street hawking influence JSS students' academic performance?

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

- 1) The use of children for street hawking does not significantly influence students' academic performance.

Methodology

The study was carried out in the Calabar Education Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria. The zone has eighty-one (81) secondary schools. The area shares a common boundary with Akwa Ibom State with the latitude of 5°4'52.46"N and a longitude of 8°20'59.7"E, Cameroon with latitude 4° 5' and 5° 40' and longitude 8° 25' and 8° 32 East. The zone comprises of Akamkpa, Akpabuyo, Bakassi, Biase, Calabar Municipality, Calabar South, and Odukpani Local Government Areas (LGAs). The topography is undulating with a gentle slope (Wikipedia, 2021).

The population of the study was 5200 JSS III students, as recorded by the Secondary School Education Board of the State. The study employed the stratified sampling and simple random sampling techniques. The study sample comprised 520 JSS III students comprising of 10 % of the students randomly selected from the 81 secondary schools in the seven LGAs in

the Calabar Education Zone. Ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. A sample of 520 respondents was randomly selected for the study using the stratified and simple random sampling techniques. The questionnaire titled “Child Street Hawking and Academic Performance of Students’ Questionnaire” (CSHAPSQ)” and English Achievement Test (EAT) were the instruments used for data collection. The instruments were subjected to face and contents validation by two experts. The reliability estimate of 0.71 to 0.80 of the instrument was established through test-retest method; simple regression analysis was the statistical analysis technique adopted to test the hypothesis, with street hawking as the independent variable and students’ academic performance as the dependent variable. The null hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance.

Result and Discussion

Table 1 shows results of the regression analysis that tested the null hypothesis, which states that the use of children for street hawking does not significantly influence their academic performance. The results indicated a negative but significant r-value of 0.604 which was highly significant at .00 and .05 levels of significance. The results imply that the highly children are involved in street hawking, the lowly they perform in their academic studies. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Table 1: Simple linear regression analysis of the influence of the use of children for street hawking on academic performance of JSS III students in English Language

Model	Sum of square	Degree of freedom	Mean-square	F-ratio	p-value	R	R ²	Remark
Regression	8596.246	1	8596.246	464.737	.000	.604	.364	Rejected
Residual	9600.020	519	18.497					
Total	18196.24	520						

This finding is attributable to the fact that, street hawking leads to low attendance to school by the children hawkers, the children hawkers trek long distances roaming the streets, markets and public places hawking, and some run after moving vehicles, all of which make them fatigued and leaves them with little or no time to attend to their academic work. This finding generally agrees with that of previous researchers. For instance, Folu (2019) reported poor academic performance among students involved in street hawking in Ado-Ekiti, southwestern Nigeria, while Farauta and Yumbak (2013) recorded similar poor academic performance of students that hawk in Taraba State, northeastern Nigeria.

The findings of Dada (2013) indicated that children who hawk were not aware that hawking was the major contributor to their poor academic performance. Furthermore Njoku, (2010) noted that street hawking predisposes the involved children to truant behaviours such as absenteeism from school, watching cable network, European League Football and video games on television, as well as engaging in secret cult activities. Other vices that the street hawking children face include betting, sexual harassment and accidents (Bosah *et al.*, (2015). All these invariably impact the academic performance of a child street hawker and their productivity in the society at large.

The findings of the present study demonstrate that street hawking leads to low academic performance among students and therefore becomes a veritable tool for educational counsellors and extension agents for advising parents/guardians and their children/wards on the need to shun street hawking. This will enable the students succeed in their academics through high academic performance which can lead to higher educational achievement and attainment, and ultimately a better living standard in the future.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that street hawking has a significant negative influence on the academic performance of students, it was also revealed that hawking leads to reduced class attendance and overall participation of students in academic activities, the tedious nature of street hawking leaves the children fatigued and gives them little or no time to attend to their academic work.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- Governments and relevant agencies should enhance the implementation and monitoring of existing child labor laws to prevent children from engaging in street hawking during school hours through ensuring strict penalties on those who exploit children for hawking.
- Social welfare initiatives and poverty reduction programs targeting low-income families should be expanded. Providing economic support and income-generating opportunities for parents can reduce their reliance on children's earnings from hawking.

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