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Exploring The Impacts Of Street Hawking Among School Aged Children In Umuneochi Local Government Area, Abia State

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ABSTRACT

Recent report by International Labour Organization estimated 160 million children (around 10 percent of the global child population) are involved in child labor, of which 72 million are in hazardous work. As a consequence, many child laborers suffer from negative physical, mental, and social outcomes such as poor health, low academic achievement, low self-esteem, and limited future opportunities globally. The study examined the impacts of street hawking on the wellbeing of school aged children in Umuneochi Local government Area, Abia State. The study adopted qualitative method that is rooted on interpretative phenomenological research design. The study was carried out in Umuneochi Local government Area, Abia State. The study sampled twelve (286) participants who children that hawk goods on the street. Purposive sampling technique was used to select communities within the metropolitan urban city of Umuneochi local government area, where children hawk majorly on the street and markets, hence, Leru, Ngodo-ukwu, Lokpaukwu, Lokpata and Amuda were selected. In-depth interview guide was used for data collection. Data was coded and analysis was done thematically using verbatim quotes. The findings revealed that, poverty is a central factor that that leads to street hawking among children. Goods hawk on the street among children depends on the goods available in a particular season. Children sell bread fruits and coconut (*Aki and Ukwu*), cashew nuts, and fried plantain, bottle water and plastic drinks mostly during dry season. During rainy season many sell groundnut, mango, cashew nuts, banana, orange, tomatoes, potatoes, vegetables, bread fruits and coconut (*Aki and Ukwu*), cashew nuts, and fried plantain. Street hawking has social, health and psychological implications. The enforcement of the policies put in place to stop street hawking among children is poor in Umuneochi Local government area of Abia State. The study recommended that, there is need to intensify the public campaign of the ills of street hawking while elaborating on the social, emotional and psychological implications on children wellbeing.

Keywords: Street hawking, public health, school age children, prevalence, social implications, health implications, psychological implications.

INTRODUCTION

Street hawking by children is a serious social problem that affects many developing countries like Nigeria. Worldwide, an estimated 160 million children (around 10 percent of the global child population) are involved in child labor, of which 72 million are in hazardous work (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2023). Often, child labor is driven by poverty and lack of access to quality education, resulting in the exploitation and abuse of children's rights and well-being (United Nations Children's Fund

(UNICEF, 2020). As a consequence, many child laborers suffer from negative physical, mental, and social outcomes such as poor health, low academic achievement, low self-esteem, and limited future opportunities globally (International Labour Organization, 2020). In some contexts, child labor is normalized and rationalized by cultural or religious values, making it difficult for children to escape the cycle of poverty and deprivation (UNICEF, 2020). In this regard, street hawking is one of the most prevalent and visible forms of child labor, especially in urban areas of developing countries.

Street hawking, also known as street vending or street selling, is a form of informal economic activity that involves the sale of goods or services in public spaces, such as roadsides, sidewalks, traffic jams, or markets. Street hawking is also an opportunity for poor people who cannot afford to run shops and stalls in markets and on street corners (Umeano, 2018). The prevalence of street hawking varies across countries and regions, depending on the level of economic development, urbanization, regulation, and enforcement. In Brazil, an estimated 2.5 million children (around 5 percent of the national child population) are involved in street hawking, of which 55 percent are boys (UNICEF, 2020). According to UNICEF (2023) 7% of children in Colombia are involved in child labour while 22% of the children are involved in child labour in Nepal, and in Ukraine, 3% of the children are involved in child labour (UNICEF, 2023).

Street hawking is prevalent in Africa, as in other developing regions. According to UNICEF (2023) reports, 26% of the total child populations in Sub-Sahara Africa are exposed to child labour. In Kenya, only 11 percent of all children enrolled in primary school complete their education (UNICEF, 2020). Some other African countries where street hawking is common are Ghana, Uganda, Ethiopia, Senegal, and South Africa (Uzo, 2018). According to International Labour Organization (2018), the rate of street vendors in the total employment ranged from 0.4% in South Africa to 25.8% in Ghana in 2018. However, some cities, such as Accra, Kampala, and Nairobi, have tried to regulate or accommodate street hawking, rather than eradicate it, by providing designated areas, kiosks, or lay-bys for vendors (Umeano, 2018).

According to UNICEF (2023) 31% of the total child populations in Nigeria are exposed to child labour of various types, which include street hawking. This percentage place Nigeria among the country with the highest street hawking in Africa, just after Ethiopia with 45%; Burkina Faso, 42%, Cameroon, Togo and Chad 39%, Niger 34%. Street hawking in Nigeria is mostly concentrated in urban areas, such as Lagos, Abuja, Kano, and Port Harcourt, where the demand for goods and services is high and the competition for formal jobs is fierce (Adinde, 2019; Uzo, 2018).

Street hawking can be classified into different types based on the location, mobility, and goods or services offered by the hawkers. According to Oyelola and Ajiboshin (2013), street hawking can be categorized into four types: stationary, mobile, roving, and itinerant. Stationary hawkers operate from fixed locations, such as stalls, kiosks, or tables, and usually sell durable or bulky goods, such as clothes, shoes, or electronics. Mobile hawkers move from place to place, carrying their goods on their heads, shoulders, or carts, and usually sell perishable or light goods, such as fruits, vegetables, or snacks. Roving hawkers walk along the streets or roads, approaching potential customers, and usually sell small or cheap goods, such as newspapers, cigarettes, or lottery tickets. Itinerant hawkers travel from one town or city to another, following the demand and supply of their goods or services, and usually sell specialized or seasonal goods, such as herbal medicines, crafts, or festive items.

The types of street hawking vary across countries and regions, depending on the level of economic development, urbanization, regulation, and enforcement. For example, in South Africa, street hawking is more regulated and formalized, where about 40% of the hawkers are stationary, and the majority of them sell non-food items, such as clothing, accessories, or electronics (Alaye, 2021). In Ghana, street hawking is more prevalent in the capital city of Accra, where about 80% of the hawkers are mobile, and the majority of them sell food items, such as bread, water, or ice cream (Senna, 2022). In Nigeria, street hawking is more common in the northern states, where about 60% of the hawkers are roving, and the majority of them are children especially girls, who sell items, such as groundnuts, cow milk (*fura du nunu*), bread, gardening egg, and beans cake (*akara*) (Ibrahim et al., 2021; Usman, 2018). The goods or

services that street hawkers offer vary widely, reflecting the diversity and dynamism of the informal economy.

The social factors that influence the rise of street hawking among children in developed and developing countries are majorly poverty, high rate of unemployment, religion, gender and migration (UNICEF, 2023). According to Al-Jazeera (2023), poverty, unemployment and migration is the major social factors that engineer street hawking among children in the United States (US). Similarly, Goodkind (2023) revealed that poverty is the major social factor for child street hawking in Nebraska between 2021 to 2022. In Ghana, Senna (2022) reported that poverty, unemployment, gender, religion and orphans are the major social factors engineering street hawking among children. Studies in Nigeria reported that, poverty, unemployment, parent's educational status, religion and gender are the major social factors that engineer child street hawking (Umeobika & Obiorah, 2020; Ibrahim, et al., 2021). Also, Studies have shown that the most visible reason for children's participation in hawking is poverty (Bhat & Rather, 2019). According to Agboeze et al. (2021), seven out of every ten street hawkers in Nigeria live below the poverty line, although some of them are enrolled in formal or informal education.

Street hawking is engineered by the social factors, such as poverty, unemployment, low education, migration, gender, ethnicity, or religion, that determine the motivations and challenges of the hawkers and their customers (Akpotor, 2018). Street hawking is also influenced by the political factors, such as regulation, enforcement, corruption, or advocacy that affect the rights and responsibilities of the hawkers and their customers (Bhowmik, 2018; Chen, 2019; Roever & Skinner, 2016). These factors expose children hawkers to severe consequences and dangers. Street hawking as a consequence of poverty may occasionally lead to exploitation and abuse, especially in areas where protection services are scarce. The resultant effect of the above-mentioned effects of street hawkers for survival is evidenced in the number of injury cases, malnutrition, low self-esteem, sexual violence, kidnapping, disease, and death (ILO, 2019). This problem makes this study imperative and calls for academic attention. This calls for government attention to provide alternative means of livelihood for the hawkers, especially the children, who are exposed to various dangers and risks on the streets.

Street hawking exposes the hawkers to various risks and challenges, such as sexual abuse, physical exhaustion, vehicle accidents, death, malnourishment, and drug abuse. Street hawking also creates problems for the regions by causing traffic congestion, environmental pollution, public nuisance, lawlessness, and violation of human rights (Eboh, 2018; Akpotor, 2018; Adedayo, et al., 2021; Senna, 2022). Street hawking also affects the academic performance of children (Ego, 2020; Paul, Allison & Dickay, 2019). Therefore, street hawking is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that requires a holistic and inclusive approach to address its causes and consequences (Roever & Skinner, 2016).

Legislations opposing children street hawking were formulated and implemented by the colonial regimes in 1950s, prior to Nigeria's independence (Akpotor, 2018). In the same vein, post-independence Nigeria has passed legislations prohibiting street hawking, most importantly, the Child Right Act (CRA) of 2003. One fundamental stipulation of the CRA is that utilizing children for hawking is a punishable offence under the Act. Also, Section 59 (b) of the Labor Act disallows the engagement of children under the age of 16 years in any work, which is hazardous and harmful to their general well-being (Akpotor, 2018). Based on this law, government has a duty to protect the rights of the child and to address the problem of street hawking in Umunochi Local government Area, Abia State in line with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Child Rights Act of 2003. These include enforcing the law, creating alternative livelihoods, ensuring access to quality education for the children, removing hawkers from the streets, confiscating their goods, and imposing fines or arrests (Adeyemi, 2016).

In addition, studies on the effects of street hawking on children have been conducted in Nigeria by researchers such as Bhowmik (2018) who examined causes and consequences of street hawking on the academic, behavioural, and socio-emotional development of children in different regions of Nigeria. Eboh (2018) studied perceived effects of street hawking on the well-being of children in Anyigba, Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria. However, most of the existing studies on the factors and impacts of street hawking among children were carried out outside Umunochi Local government Area,

Abia State, which is fast turning into an urban city in Abia State with increased sight of children hawking on the street and major roads. This dearth of literature on the situation of street hawking among children in Umunneochi Local government Area, Abia State, where the practice is equally problematic considering the increase in kidnapping and cases of raping. More also, there is paucity of a comprehensive and holistic analysis of the factors engineering the child street hawking, consequences, and solutions of street hawking, taking into account the multiple dimensions and perspectives of the issue. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by investigating the prevalence and impacts of street hawking on the wellbeing of school-aged children in Umunneochi Local government Area, Abia State

Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study is to examine the impacts of street hawking on the wellbeing of school-aged children in Umunneochi Local government Area, Abia State. However, the specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Identify the factors that lead to street hawking among school-aged children in Umunneochi Local government Area, Abia State
2. Identify the types of goods school-aged children hawk in Umunneochi Local government Area, Abia State
3. Examine the impacts of street hawking on the wellbeing of school-aged children in Umunneochi Local government Area, Abia State
4. Identify the policies that have been put in place to stop street hawking among school-aged children in Umunneochi Local government Area, Abia State

METHODS

Design of the Study

The study adopted qualitative method that is rooted in interpretative phenomenological research design. Smith (2017) opined that interpretative phenomenological approach is a qualitative study that is appropriate for investigating the personal lived experience of an individual regarding a phenomenon over a period of time. Phenomenological research design allowed the researcher to explore and understand the structure of human experiences (Moustakas 2014). This design enabled the researcher to collect data through in-depth interviews, or observation of participants' experiences, and analyzed the data using a process of thematic analysis, identifying common themes, patterns, and essential structures that emerge from the data. This aligns with the aim of the present study, hence the reason for the adoption of the approach for the study.

Study Area

The study was carried out in Umunneochi Local Government Area of Abia State. Umunneochi local government area is made up of three major septs: Umuchieze, Nneato, and Isuochi. The major towns of Umunneochi are Umuelem, Ndiawa, Amuda, Umuaku, Achara, Lomara, Ngodo-ukwu, Lokpaukwu, Leru, Lomara Lokpanta, Lekwesi and Mbala. With a total area of 368 square kilometers and an average temperature of 27 degrees Celsius, Umunneochi LGA is quite large.

Participants

The study sampled twelve (286) participants, which includes; 186 children that hawk goods on the street, 95 parents and 5 child welfare officers in Umunneochi Local government Area. Multiple staged sampling technique was employed in selecting the desired participants. In the first stage, purposive sampling technique was used to select communities within the metropolitan urban city of Umunneochi local government area, where children hawk majorly on the street and markets, hence, Leru, Ngodo-ukwu, Umuaku, Lokpaukwu, Lokpata and Amuda were selected. Second stage involved the use of accidental sampling to select and interview any child seen hawking on the street of these three communities selected. Snow ball sampling technique was used to select the parents whose children hawk on the street, the children interviewed will be requested to describe the location of their house or where their parents work for the researcher to identify and interview them. The welfare officers will be selected using simple random sampling technique which led to selection of 2 officers.

Instrument and Methods for Data Collection

In-depth interview guide was used for data collection. The IDI guide consists of open-ended questions with probes that enabled the researcher to access the experience and opinions expressed by the participants in the interview session as regards to street hawking among children less than 18years. The rationale for using the IDI guide was to obtain detailed information on the subject matter. The questions in the instrument were organized in two parts. The first part was designed to elicit information on the socio-demographics of the participants while the second part was designed to elicit information on the substantive issues of the research which addressed the research questions. The researchers and two research assistants who are fluent in Isuochi dialect carried out the interview along the street, where any child seen hawking who gave his/her consents was interviewed. The researchers first promise to buy the goods the child is hawking to enable them relax to provide detail information. The researcher and the research assistants visited households to interview their parents. The Child Welfare officials were interviewed in their various office by the researcher and the research assistants. The interview sessions were conducted in English and Igbo language and it lasted for 30minutes to 1hour. Smart phone was used to record the interview session and for confidentiality the participants were instructed not to mention their names. Secondly, the researcher assured the participants that any information they provide will be treated and used for research purposes alone.

Data Analysis

The recorded interviews and discussions were transcribed and translated into English language for analysis. After the transcription, the data was compared with the notes taking during the interview. The final version was arranged into themes in line with the research questions. The responses were presented using verbatim quote.

RESULTS

The data collected are presented, analyzed and interpreted. The first part focuses on socio-demographic characteristics of participants, while the second part discusses the substantive issues using various themes and direct quotes that emerged

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of Children who Hawk on the Street of Umunneochi LGA

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	63	33.9
Female	123	66.1
Total	186	100.0
Age Range		
9-14years	39	21.0
15-18years	147	79.0
Total	186	100.0
Religion		
Christians	173	93.0
Muslims	13	7.0
Total	186	100.0
Level of Education		
Completed Secondary School	14	7.5
Primary School Dropout	111	59.7
Secondary School Dropout	49	26.3
Never Attended School	12	6.5
Total	186	100.0

Data in table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of children who hawk on the street of Umunneochi LGA. Out of 186 children that hawk on the street of Umunneochi LGA, majority 66.1% were female, while 33.9% were male. Majority of the children who hawk on the street, 79% were between the ages of

15-18, while 21% were between the ages of 9-14years. The mean age of the children is 15.7years. Majority of the children, 93% were Christians, while only 7% were Muslims. More than half (59.7%) of the children who hawk different goods on the street of Umunneochi LGA were primary school dropout; 26.3% were secondary school dropout; 7.5% completed secondary school; while only 6.5% never attended school all their life.

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of Parents whose Children Hawk on the Street of Umunneochi LGA

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	28	29.5
Female	67	70.5
Total	95	100.0
Occupation of Parents		
Farmer	12	12.6
Trader	50	52.6
Okada Rider	18	18.9
Keke Rider	14	14.7
Security Man	1	1.1
Total	95	100.0
Level of Education of Parents		
No former education	45	47.4
Primary school	31	32.6
secondary school	19	20.0
Total	95	100.0
Age Range of Parents		
30-40years	17	17.9
41-50years	6	6.3
51-60years	48	50.5
Above 60years	24	25.3
Total	95	100.0

Data in tables shows the demographic characteristics of Parents whose Children Hawk on the Street of Umunneochi LGA. Majority 70.5% of the parents interviewed were females, while 29.5% were male. More than half of the parents, 52.6% were traders; 18.9% were Okada riders; 14.7% were Keke riders; 12.6% were farmers, while 1.1% were security men. Almost half of the parents, 47.4% had no former education. More than half of the parents were between 51-60years; 25.3% were above 60years; 17.9% were between 30-40years, while only 6.3% were between 41-50years.

Substantive issues of the study

The major findings of the analysis were discussed under themes: (i) factors that lead to street hawking among school-aged children in Umunneochi Local government Area, Abia State; (ii) types of goods school-aged children hawk in school-aged children in Umunneochi Local government Area, Abia State; (iii) impacts of street hawking on the wellbeing of school-aged children in Umunneochi Local government Area, Abia State; (iv) policies that have been put in place to stop street hawking among children in Umunneochi Local government Area, Abia State. Nevertheless, some of these themes had sub-themes for a more precise interpretation of the data.

Research Question 1: *What are the factors that lead to street hawking among school-aged children in Umunneochi Local government Area, Abia State?*

From the IDI interview responses, economic factor such as poverty, high cost of food and payment of students' school fees are the major factors that leads to parents sending their children to hawk different kind of goods on the street of Umunneochi local government area, Abia State. This is because it is difficult for most parents who are underemployed to cater for the wellbeing of their family mostly

ensuring adequate availability of food and payment of school fees for their children. The participants (children who hawk on the street) explained that they hawk daily to support their parents and the goods they hawk belong to their mother. One of the children interviewed explained that “I hawk goods on the street because my parents are poor and cannot buy enough food at home. Before I started hawking, me and my other brothers and sisters use to be hungry most times” (**Child hawker/male/secondary school student/16yrs**)

In support of this, another participant added;

My parents have no money to buy enough food to the house and sometimes it was difficult for daddy to pay for our school fees. So mummy asked me to start selling different things for her to make additional money to support the family (**Child hawker/male/secondary school student/14yrs**).

Another child that hawks on the street interviewed stated that; “most times during rainy season we use to stay hungry once it started raining in the morning and I could not go out to sell for my mother” (**Child hawker/female/secondary school dropout/14yrs**).

In the words of one of the children: most of my friends at school and home sell on the street for their mother to make more money after school” (**Child hawker/female/secondary school dropout/14yrs**).

Similar to the response of the children is that of parents interviewed. One of the parents explained that:

Children sell on the street to help their parents to meet up with bills as things are very expensive now and it is difficult to most parents to provide for their family alone, hence, children are used to help in some petty trading (**Parent/male/SSCE/57yrs**)

Research Question 2: *What are the types of goods school-aged children hawk in school-aged children in Umuneochi Local government Area, Abia State?*

Responses from the participants (children who hawks on the street) showed that, children hawk varieties of goods on the street depending on the season and availability. The children hawk varieties of goods which are seasonal, thus, children sell what their mother provide for them to sell which ranges from fried plantain, groundnut, bread fruits and coconut (*Aki and Ukwu*), cashew nuts, banana, orange, tomatoes, potatoes, vegetables, and moi-moi, however, these goods are available only during its season of harvesting. The data analysis from the participants showed that, both boys and girls hawk almost the same goods on the street depending on the availability in the market. One of the children stated that; “I bottle water at along major roads and at Leru park, sometimes I hawk cashew nuts and during groundnut season I also hawk ground nuts for my mother” (**Child hawker/male/secondary school student/16yrs**).

Another child confirmed that children sell what is available in a given season by stating that; “I hawk any goods my mother gives to me to sell... sometimes my mother gives me tomatoes, groundnuts, pure water, plastic drinks, however, I sell vegetables and tomatoes mostly during rainy reason” (**Child hawker/male/secondary school student/14yrs**).

Research Question 3: *What are the impacts of street hawking on the wellbeing of school-aged children in Umuneochi Local government Area, Abia State?*

The responses of the participants showed that, street hawking among children have diverse impacts on the overall wellbeing of children. These sets of impacts were divided into three sub-headings; social impacts of street hawking on children’s wellbeing; health impacts of street hawking on children’s wellbeing; and psychological impacts of street hawking on children’s wellbeing

Social impacts of street hawking on children’s wellbeing

The participants highlighted the social impacts of street hawking on children’s wellbeing. From the data analysis street hawking has negative social impacts on the children’s education and social wellbeing. The participants stated that street hawking has effect on academic performance of children as it makes the children to miss class, lack of maximum concentration in class, and inability to submit assignments. One of the children lamented that; “after selling sometimes I feel very tired to do my assignments at home and

it makes me to score zero sometimes in some subjects” (**Child hawker/female/secondary school student/12yrs**).

Another child also lamented that; “hawking makes me tired at school and I use to sleep during class. I use to forget to do some of my homework after hawking at Leru Junction... hawking is very stressful” (**Child hawker/male/secondary school student/16yrs**).

Similarly, another male child hawker recalls how he use to leave school sometimes before official closing hour just to go and sell goods as instructed by the mother. In his words “I use to go home around 12pm sometimes to go and sell something because my mother use to tell me to return very early so as to sell everything she gave to me to sell”(**Child hawker/male/secondary school student/14yrs**).

One of parents interviewed lamented how street hawking affects the academic performance of children in school. In her words “Street hawking makes children to perform poorly in school” (**Parent/female/teacher/B.Ed/39yrs**)

Health impacts of street hawking on children’s wellbeing

From the responses, street hawking also affects children’s health as some of the children fall sick due to the stress of walking from house to house to hawk or when they hawk under the rain. The responses also revealed that, sometimes children get involved in road accident during hawking and sustain injury. The participants added that street hawking has negative health implications for children because some sustain injury, and all female children interviewed had experienced sexual abuse before when hawking. Others have suffered from cold and other disease and infection when rain fall on them during hawking on the street. To buttress this point, one of the children lamented; “I use to fall sick sometime due to the stress of hawking goods from one place to another. I suffer most when it rain on me during hawking because cold makes me sick” (**Child hawker/male/secondary school student/16yrs**).

Another children who was interviewed stated; “I look dirty than most of my friends and classmates who do not hawk on the street and sometimes I use to have injury when hawking on the Street” (**Child hawker/male/secondary school student/14yrs**). One of the girl-child interviewed lamented that people use to touch her in sensitive parts of her body the way she does not like. In her words “when I was selling pure water at Peace Park people use to touch my breast and other parts anyhow and I do not like it, sometimes my breast will start paining me” (**Child hawker/female/secondary school dropout/14yrs**).

Psychological impacts of street hawking on children’s wellbeing

Responses from the participants revealed that children who hawk on the street are affected psychologically as they feel less of themselves (low self-esteem and concept) when compared to other students who does not hawk after school. They also pointed out that children who suffer the major psychological trauma are those who are school dropout. They added that children who hawk on the street also experience psychological trauma each time they experience sexual, emotional, or physical abuse, while those who hawk after school have issues with concentration in class or doing their homework. In the words of one child “sometimes I feel that children who do not hawk on the street are better than me that suffer on the sun and rain and then look dirty” (**Child hawker/male/secondary school student/16yrs**).

Another child lamented that he is not happy to hawk on the street, most especially the fact that he is a primary school dropout who stopped school so that his siblings to go to school. He lamented that “I am not happy that I had to stop school just to hawk different types of goods and crops for my mother, I cry most times I see my mates coming back from school” (**Child hawker/male/Primary School Dropout/15yrs**). One of the female children interviewed also narrated her ordeal and psychological trauma due to sexual and physical abuse associated with street and lodge to lodge hawking “I use to cry each time my mate who goes to school insult me or laugh at me when coming back from school, I use to hide whenever I see them first” (**Child hawker/female/secondary School Dropout/15yrs**).

Research Question 4: *What are the policies that have been put in place to stop street hawking among school-aged children in Umunneochi Local government Area, Abia State?*

All the participants especially parents and children are not aware of any policy or law in Nigeria, Abia State and even Umunneochi local government area prohibiting children from hawking on the street. It was also revealed that, even if there is a policy, the level of implementation of such policy that prohibits street hawking among children is poor or not functional. However, officers of Welfare office, Umunneochi LGA claimed that there are policies that prohibit child's labour which street hawking is part of, though the office has not given much attention to issues surrounding street hawking among children. The office involves more on advocacy and enlightenment programmes for parents, caregiver and guidance on the implications of street hawking than enforcing the policies. One of the parents interviewed stated that; "I am not aware of any policy to stop children from hawking on the street to support their parents financially" (**Parent/male/trader/SSCE/57yrs**).

On the contrary, the welfare officers stated that, there are policies that prohibits child's labour in Nigeria which covers Umunneochi Local Government Area, however, the office involve more on advocacy and enlightenment programmes for parents, caregiver and guidance on the implications of street hawking than enforcing the policies. In the word of one of the officer:

There are policies in place to prohibit child labour, however, our office is handicapped to execute parents who send their children to hawk on street, what we do is to advocate and enlighten parents on the implications of street hawking among children
(**Welfare officer/Male/Bsc/43years**).

From the responses, there are policies that protect children from street hawking in Nigeria, however, the enforcement of these policies is poor in Umunneochi LGA.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The main goal of this research is to examine the implications of street hawking on children residing in Umunneochi Local Government Area. The findings of the study revealed that, majority of households send their children to hawk different types of goods on the street due to inability of the parents to provide the basic needs of their family, hence poverty is a central factor that that lead to street hawking among children in Umunneochi Local Government Area. The finding correspond with the report of UNICEF (2023) that, the social factors that influence the rise of street hawking among children in developed and developing countries are majorly poverty, and high rate of unemployment which makes it difficult for most parents in developing countries to provide the basic needs of their family. The findings of the study also correspond with the report of an empirical study carried out in Ghana, by Senna (2022) which found out that poverty is the major causes of street hawking among children. similarly, two studies carried out in Nigeria by Umeobika and Obiorah, (2020) and Ibrahim, et al., (2021) found out that poverty top the factors that leads children to hawk on the street. Poverty as the major factor also total agreed with the findings of Akpotor (2018) who in another earlier study carried out in Warri metropolis of Delta State, Nigeria, found out that, there is a significant relationship between parent(s) poverty and street hawking among children. Poverty orchestrated by parental joblessness is a potential drive to children involvement in hawking in order to supplement the family income.

The study found out that, children hawks for their mother who determines what they hawk daily. From the responses of the participants, the children sell cold pure water and plastic drinks mostly during dry season, many sell groundnut, fried plantain, cashew nuts, banana, orange, tomatoes, potatoes, vegetables, and moi-moi. The goods hawk on the street among children depends on the goods available in a particular season. This finding relates to the findings from the study of Ego (2020) in Delta State that, children commonly hawk banana, groundnut, 'pure water', vegetables, egg, sweets, crayfish, fruits, snacks, handkerchiefs, handset chargers, recharge cards among others. This implies that majority of the children do not hawk a particular goods, however, hawk what is available in a particular season. The goods sold

among the children also represent the common goods or crops in a particular area that is why there is no consensus on the types of goods children hawk.

The study reported that, street hawking among children has diverse impacts on the school-aged children's wellbeing. These sets of impacts were categorized into social impacts of street hawking on school-aged children's wellbeing; health impacts of street hawking on school-aged children's wellbeing; and psychological impacts of street hawking on school-aged children's wellbeing. Socially, street hawking has affected the academic performance of children as it makes the children to miss class, lack of maximum concentration in class, and inability to submit assignments. Psychologically, children who hawk on the street are affected psychologically as they feel less of themselves (low self-esteem and concept) when compared to other students who does not hawk after school. Those who suffer the major psychological trauma are those who are school dropout. Children who hawk on the street also experience psychological trauma each time they experience sexual, emotional, or physical abuse. Street hawking also affects children's health as some of the children fall sick due to the stress of walking from house to house to hawk or when rain fall on them during hawking. The responses also revealed that, sometimes children involved in road accident during hawking and sustain injury. It was also shown from the responses that, sometimes children are sexually abused during hawking. The social, health or psychological implications of street hawking among children as identified by the present study is in accordance with the findings of Adedayo, et al. (2021) who found out that, Street hawking also creates problems for the regions by causing traffic congestion, environmental pollution, public nuisance, lawlessness, and violation of human rights. Similarly, the findings of the study correspond with the earlier finding of Ego (2020) which found out that, street hawking also affects the academic performance of children. Street hawking is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that requires a holistic and inclusive approach to address its causes and consequences. In an empirical study carried out in Ghana, Senna (2022) found out that, street hawking among children have leads to high rate of school dropout and psychological issues.

Apart from the welfare officers none of the other participants understand the policy put in place to stop street hawking among children in Umunneochi Local Government Area. This implies that the enforcement of the policies put in place to stop street hawking among children is poor. The welfare officers stated that, although there are policies that prohibits child's labour in Nigeria which covers Umunneochi Local Government Area, however, the office involve more on advocacy and enlightenment programmes for parents, caregiver and guidance on the implications of street hawking than enforcing the policies. From the findings of the study, the welfare officers sometimes visit homes of children who hawk on the street to educate and enlighten their parents on the risk and danger of street hawking, and sometimes invite the parents whose children are seen hawking to advice. The welfare office also source for educational funding for children who have stopped school due to finance.

CONCLUSION

The current study sought to find out the impacts of street hawking on the wellbeing of school aged children in Umunneochi Local government Area, Abia State. The study found out that majority of households send their children to hawk different types of goods on the street due to inability of the parents to provide the basic needs of their family, hence poverty is a central factor that that lead to street hawking among school aged children in Umunneochi Local government Area, Abia State. The study also concluded that, the goods hawk on the street among children depends on the goods available in a particular season. Goods hawk on the street among children depends on the goods available in a particular season. Children sell bread fruits and coconut (*Aki and Ukwu*), cashew nuts, and fried plantain, bottle water and plastic drinks mostly during dry season. During rainy season many sell groundnut, mango, cashew nuts, banana, orange, tomatoes, potatoes, vegetables, bread fruits and coconut (*Aki and Ukwu*), cashew nuts, and fried plantain. The goods sold among the children also represent the common goods or crops in a particular area, that is why there is no consensus on the types of goods children hawk. The study also concluded that, street hawking among children has social, health and psychological implications on the street

hawking children and the enforcement of the policies put in place to stop street hawking among children is poor.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from this study, the researcher recommended the following:

1. There is urgent need for public advocacy and enlightenment programmes for parents, caregiver and guidance on the implications of street hawking than enforcing the policies is paramount to eradication the risk dangers of street hawking among children.
2. Public health professionals, especially child welfare officers should be competent in the roles they are expected to play in helping the vulnerable children who are subjected to hawk on the street, instead of attending schools.
3. The government should re-evaluate the social welfare policies and identify their loopholes to ensure adequate welfare provision to the citizenry.
4. There is need to intensify the public campaign and awareness of the ills of street hawking among children while elaborating on the implications to the overall social, emotional and psychological wellbeing of the children.

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