

**THE PREVALENCE OF STREET HAWKING BY CHILDREN OF SCHOOL AGE IN
UYO METROPOLIS: INVESTIGATING THEIR EXPOSURE TO DANGERS AND
REMEDIES**

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ABSTRACT

Street hawking by children of school age has become a prevalent socio-economic issue in Uyo Metropolis, raising concerns about their safety, education, and overall well-being. This study investigates the prevalence of child hawking in the area, examining the factors that contribute to this practice, the dangers these children face, and potential remedies. The study showed that poverty, parental unemployment, lack of access to quality education, and cultural norms are major driving forces behind child hawking. These children are frequently exposed to dangers such as accidents, exploitation, abuse, and health risks. Additionally, their involvement in street hawking negatively impacts their education, leading to high dropout rates and poor academic performance. The study concluded that street hawking among secondary school-aged children in Uyo Metropolis remains a pressing socio-economic issue with significant risks. These children face dangers such as exploitation, accidents, health hazards, and educational setbacks. The root causes include poverty, lack of parental care, and weak policy enforcement. To address this issue the study recommended that the government should implement and strictly enforce policies prohibiting Child Street hawking, ensuring that offenders face legal consequences.

KEYWORDS: Street Hawking, Children of School Age and Uyo Metropolis

INTRODUCTION

Street hawking, the act of selling goods in public spaces, is a prevalent phenomenon in many urban centers across Nigeria, including Uyo Metropolis in Akwa Ibom State. This practice

often involves children of secondary school age who, due to various socio-economic factors, engage in street trading to support family income or finance their education. While it may appear as a means of economic survival, street hawking exposes these young individuals to numerous dangers and poses significant challenges to their development and well-being.

The prevalence of Child Street hawking in Uyo has been a subject of concern for policymakers, educators, and researchers. Studies have shown that a significant number of children are involved in street trading, often at the expense of their education and personal development. For instance, a study conducted in Uyo revealed that out of 225 child hawkers surveyed, only 73.03% were currently attending school, while others had either dropped out or never attended, highlighting the adverse impact on educational attainment (Akpan, & Oluwabamide 2010). Engagement in street hawking exposes children to various hazards, including physical harm, exploitation, and health issues. Research indicates that child hawkers are at risk of road traffic accidents, with 30.7% of surveyed children in Uyo reporting involvement in such incidents. Additionally, these children face threats of physical harassment, sexual abuse, and kidnapping attempts, which compromise their safety and psychological well-being.

The health implications of street hawking are also profound. Children engaged in this activity often experience fatigue, headaches, and other stress-related ailments due to long hours spent on the streets. The exposure to harsh weather conditions and environmental pollutants further exacerbates their health challenges, making them susceptible to various illnesses. Moreover, street hawking contributes to the development of unethical behaviors among children (Udoh & Joseph 2012). A study focusing on public primary school pupils in Uyo found a significant correlation between street hawking and behaviors such as substance abuse, pick-pocketing, and truancy. These findings suggest that the street environment may serve as a breeding ground for delinquent behaviors, potentially leading to long-term societal issues. Recognizing the gravity of these challenges, the Akwa Ibom State Government has initiated measures to curb street hawking. In 2021, the government announced plans to ban street hawking and illegal markets in Uyo, aiming to promote a cleaner and safer environment. This initiative, tagged 'Operation Zero Tolerance,' underscores the government's commitment to addressing the issue and safeguarding the welfare of children. While street hawking among secondary school-aged children in Uyo Metropolis is driven by complex socio-economic factors, its detrimental effects on their health, education, and moral development cannot be overlooked (Akpan, E. & Oluwabamide 2010). Addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach, including policy enforcement, public awareness campaigns, and socio-economic interventions aimed at alleviating the underlying causes of child street hawking.

OBJECTIVES

- To find out the dangers of street hawking.
- To find out the remedies of the dangers of street hawking.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the dangers of street hawking?
- What are the remedies of the dangers of street hawking?

CONCEPT OF STREET HAWKING

Street Hawking is an occupation taken up by migrants when they arrive in urban areas; offering on sale household items, vegetables or cooked food on streets for a living. According to Ezedinma, (2023) Street hawking is the act of selling goods on the road in order to generate income for the sustenance of the needs of one's family. In Nigeria, street hawking is very common among teenagers. This is as a result of various causes. One of the major causes of street hawking is poverty. Families that are poor normally seek means of sustaining their family members. As a result, the children from such families are forced into hawking as a source of income for the family.

Street hawking can also be as a result of the nature of a person's job. Teenagers who are employed to market products are sometimes required to hawk their employer's products on the streets for people to patronize them. This usually applies to food and household items. Ngada & Kyar (2025) sees street hawking in its simplest form as the selling of things along the roads and from one place to the other. Street hawking is considered as the act of canvassing for sale, items carried by the hawker along the street, from house to house or in the public places in town. According to Nseabasi and Oluwabamide (2010), Street hawking is a negation of the international convention on the right of the child. It is indeed inhuman for anyone to engage a child in money-making venture; such a child is denied basic education which is a right for every child

Street hawking as the process whereby the hawker hawks his goods by carrying it on his or her head by means of a tray, or minor forms of transportation like wheel barrows, bicycles, trolleys etc. This is being done in search of customers in the process of whom the hawker could employ the use of bells or shout the name of the item he or she is hawking in order to attract the attention of prospective customers. Obuzor and Gabriel-Job, (2022). As street hawking has become a part of our culture, it is easy to forget that it is also a form of child abuse. When children are sent out into the streets to hawk, it has attendant negative consequences on the child.

Street hawking as a system of trading whereby the trader carries his wares about. Street hawking refers to a wandering like movement in which an individual carries his or her goods with a tray on the head or by means of transportation such as wheel barrow, bicycle or trolley in search of customers. Street hawking is a global problem faced by developed and developing countries (Anyo, 2021). It is gaining popularity in several middle and low-income countries despite laws prohibiting it (Udoh & Joseph, 2012; Umar, 2018).

PREVALENCE OF STREET HAWKING IN UYO METROPOLIS

Street hawking is one of the commonest forms of child labour in Nigeria and indeed sub-Saharan Africa. This aimed at determining the social implications and factors associated with

street hawking among children in Uyo, South-South Nigeria Child hawking involves the selling of things along the road and from one place to the other by children below 18 years.

Sibiri (2011) also found that the prevalence of street hawking is proliferating and must be addressed as a national emergency situation. Furthermore, 98% of their sample submitted that a compromised socio-economic situation is the bane of street hawking in the study region and that street trading is contemporaneous with a number of dangers, including, accidents and the influence of negative or criminal peer groups. The study also revealed that street trading has a negative impact on society as it leads to underdevelopment rather than development of the nation in the long run

Street trading has been reported to have numerous negative consequences. Children who engage in street hawking more often than not are deprived among other things of the opportunity of being in school completely or partially because of the long hours they are expected to work. According to the ILO, child labour is defined as “work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. Globally, 111 million children under 15 years were reported to be in hazardous work in 2006. As at 2012, it was estimated that 168 million children were engaged in some form of child labour with sub-Saharan Africa accounting for the highest incidence worldwide. This situation is a cause for concern especially considering the negative effect on the future of the child

According to Nsiong A. Udoh (2012) Children from the bulk of street hawkers. In a study carried out in 2014 in Aba, Nigeria, 58.0% of the hawkers were children between the ages of 10 and 19 years. The objectives of the present study were to determine the social implications and factors associated with street hawking among children in Uyo, metropolis in South-South Nigeria with the intention of making recommendations to relevant stakeholders

The study was carried out in Uyo the capital of Akwa Ibom State, one of the States located in the southern part of Nigeria. The estimated population of Uyo metropolis is 413,381. Most inhabitants are civil servants and traders. Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. Data analysis was done using descriptive statistics (Frequency, proportions, means and standard deviation to summarize variables) and Inferential statistics (chi square, to test the significance of association between two categorical variables) with level of significance set at 5%

DANGERS OF STREET HAWKING

Street hawking, particularly among children and adolescents, poses significant risks to their social, physical, and psychological well-being. Recent studies have highlighted several dangers associated with this practice:

➤ Exposure to Sexual Abuse and Exploitation

Research indicates a high prevalence of sexual abuse among female street hawkers. A study published in the Nigerian Postgraduate Medical Journal found that a significant number of female

hawkers had experienced various forms of sexual abuse, emphasizing the need for parental education and policy interventions to curb this menace. Street hawking exposes individuals to health risks such as sexual assault, leading to increased vulnerability to diseases like HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections. Additionally, there is a heightened risk of unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions.

➤ **Involvement in Unethical Behaviours**

Engagement in street hawking has been linked to an increase in unethical behaviours among school-aged children. A study in the *FUO-Journal of Educational Research* reported a strong correlation between street hawking and behaviours such as substance abuse, pick-pocketing, and truancy among primary school pupils in Uyo. The study recommends that parents discourage children from participating in street trading to prevent these negative outcomes. As observed by Ajake, Etuk, & Omori (2010), most young pupils apprehended in cities in Nigeria including Lagos, Akwa Ibom, Calabar, Ibadan, Kano among others are due to pick pocket. sometimes, these children perpetuate this acts by invading the window openings of trapped vehicles on bad roads or in traffic jams to raid passengers and even car owners of their belongings such as phones, monies, wristwatches, necklaces, and other valuable items catching their eyes. Such condition seems to occur because of parents allowing their children to hawk consumable and non-consumable items

➤ **Compromised Physical Health and Safety**

The physical demands and environmental hazards of street hawking can adversely affect children's health. In Port Harcourt, research highlighted that child hawkers are at risk of accidents, exposure to harsh weather conditions, and other physical dangers. The study called for stricter enforcement of child labour laws to protect children's well-being. Street hawking leads to increased exposure to antisocial activities like smoking, drug and alcohol abuse, cultism and crime. When children are involved, in addition to above listed risks, they are deprived of education, bad habits evolved and are denied of good sound health and these constitute child abuse (Ugochukwu, 2012; Amoo, Ola-David, Ogunrinola and Fadayomi, 2012; Ekpenyong and Nkereuwem, 2011).

➤ **Educational Disruptions and Psychological Stress**

Street hawking often interferes with children's education, leading to poor academic performance and school dropouts. Additionally, the pressures and challenges faced during hawking contribute to psychological stress and developmental issues. Udoh and Joseph (2012) averred that street hawking contributes to students' moral laxity laziness and truant behaviours capable of negatively influencing their academic performance. Farauta and Yambuk (2013) found that street hawkers recorded low academic performance in practical Agriculture as the finding revealed a significant difference in academic performance of students involved in hawking and those not involved

➤ **Legal and Social Challenges**

The informal nature of street hawking presents challenges for law enforcement and contributes to broader social issues, including congestion and unregulated economic activities. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive policy approaches that consider the socio-economic factors driving street hawking.

CAUSES OF STREET HAWKING

A number of factors have propelled children into hawking in various streets. It is not as if the children are not happy to join their mates in schools to enjoy the breeze of good Western Education but something caused such condition to take place, amongst them are;

➤ Poverty:

Some families find it difficult to meet up with their basic needs; food, cloth, shelter and provision of other essentials that are necessary for survival. In the absence of that the means of meeting up with the affirmations, parents result into sending their children to the street in other to hawk goods to provide income needed in the family. Studies indicate that most children who hawk are motivated by poverty. The search for money to make ends meet in a depressed economy is obviously one of the major reasons for parent and guardians sending their children or wards to hawk. Nseabasi and Oluwabamide (2010) identified unemployment, poverty loss of parents among others as the major causes of street hawking, Udoh and Joseph (2012) found that poverty is a primary cause of street hawking.

➤ Poor family planning:

Some families do not adopt and practice family planning; they give birth to more than the number of children they can cater for because they see children as a free gift of God; therefore, children brought into the world by these parents face difficulties as a result of this. It is not only the children that face hardship but also the parents that gave birth to them. The parents begin to think on how to get support to train the children and end up sending the children to the streets to make money through hawking of goods on the streets.

➤ Child trafficking:

Child trafficking is one of the principal causes of street hawking. Trafficking is defined as the recruitment, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation. This is in line with the definition of street hawking by The UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000);

➤ War/Death of Parent:

When war occurs, children are most likely to lose their parents, as the war situation come with many killings and bloodshed. When these children lose their parent that cares for them, either through sickness, sudden death or as a result of war, persons who takes care of them

may not be diligent as they see these children as not their own. They are most times subjected to street hawking as their parents are no longer alive to love, educate, house and cloth them properly.

➤ **Illiteracy:**

Illiteracy in some part of Nigeria, has contributed to high level of street hawking by children in the nation. In some part of Nigeria, especially in the North, there are parents with high illiteracy level. These kinds of parents are bankrupt on the importance of education to nation building. As a result of this, they prefer to send their children to the streets where they will make money for them. The illiteracy that the parents of the children suffered from will be transferred to the children because the children do not attend schools when their mates were learning in their various classrooms.

EFFECTS OF STREET HAWKING

Street hawking, prevalent in various regions, has been extensively studied for its multifaceted impacts on children and adolescents. Recent scholarly articles highlight several key effects:

➤ **Academic Performance:**

Engagement in street hawking has been linked to diminished study habits and lower academic achievements among students. A study in Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria, revealed that student hawkers exhibited poor study habits, leading to decreased academic performance. Udoh and Joseph (2012) averred that street hawking contributes to students' moral laxity laziness and truant behaviours capable of negatively influencing their academic performance.

➤ **Psychological Well-being:**

Street hawking negatively influences the psychological health of secondary school students. Research in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State found that students involved in hawking experienced adverse psychological effects, with parental socio-economic status playing a significant role in this dynamic. Andrew, (2025) Involving secondary school students in street hawking is considered a form of child abuse because it endangers the health (physical, psychological, and social) and safety of the children, interferes with their education, and deprives them the right to normal and happy childhood.

➤ **Social and Physical Well-being:**

Children engaged in street hawking face risks to their social and physical well-being. A study in Port Harcourt highlighted that factors such as poverty and the need to support family income contribute to street hawking, exposing children to dangers like accidents, exploitation, and health issues. The dramatic increase in child labour and street hawking in Port Harcourt local government area may be attributed to several factors. These factors include the rapid population growth of the city, high rate of unemployment, inflation low wages and deplorable working conditions

which have propelled children to engage in street hawking to help support their families (Charles and Charles, 2004, Deth, 2007).

➤ **Moral Development:**

Street hawking affects the moral upbringing of underage children. Research in Yobe State indicated that hawking exposes children to environments that may lead to moral laxity, use of vulgar language, and other behavioural issues. Ngada, B. J. & Kyari, M. (2025), The effects of the street hawking range from bad behaviours, moral laxity, use of vulgar languages, truancy and exposure to sex at early age. Based on these findings the following recommendations were made; government through its agencies and NGO's should be involve in the fight against underage street hawking, religious and traditional rulers should be involved in sensitizing members of the communities on the effect and dangers of underage street hawking and government should create a welfare scheme to cushion the hardship faced by unemployed parents and family with large size.

➤ **Social Adjustment:**

Involvement in street hawking impacts the social adjustment of secondary school students. A study in Mushin Local Government Area of Lagos State found significant effects on students' social behaviours, influenced by factors such as parental socio-economic status and gender. Emeriand Adelanwa, (2020), governments should ensure that appropriate sanctions be meted out to parents whose children are found hawking on the streets either during or after school hours. Sociologists of education also need to be involved in educating the public on the detriments of juveniles hawking on the streets and how it contributes in the increased rate of drop-outs.

REMEDIES OF THE DANGERS OF STREET HAWKING

Street hawking, the act of selling goods in public spaces, poses significant risks to individuals and communities, including physical dangers, health hazards, and impediments to educational attainment. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses legislative measures, educational initiatives, economic alternatives, and community engagement. Below are several remedies supported by recent scholarly research.

➤ **Legislative and Policy Measures**

Implementing and enforcing laws that prohibit child hawking is crucial. Legislation should focus on safeguarding children's rights to education and protection from exploitation. Parents and guardians who permit or compel children to engage in hawking should face legal consequences. Such policies can deter the practice and emphasize the importance of child welfare. Ugo, (2024), underscores the need for legislation prohibiting street hawking by children, with legal repercussions for both parents and children involved in the practice. Prioritizing education and safeguarding children from the dangers of street hawking is essential for their holistic development and future societal contribution

➤ **Educational Campaigns and Advocacy**

Raising awareness about the detrimental effects of street hawking on children's psychological and academic well-being is essential. School counselors and community leaders can organize seminars and workshops to educate parents and guardians on the negative impacts of street hawking. These initiatives can foster a community-wide understanding of the importance of formal education and the risks associated with street hawking, as of Edo State. Andrew and Ige, (2025), besides, street hawking has arrays of risks on the wellbeing of the students. It is crucial to highlight that the impact of street hawking on the psychological wellbeing of secondary school students who hawk is enormous.

➤ **Economic Empowerment and Alternative Livelihoods**

Providing alternative income-generating opportunities can reduce the reliance on street hawking. Training programs that equip individuals with skills for formal employment or entrepreneurship can be effective. For instance, introducing e-commerce platforms as an alternative to street vending has been suggested as a viable solution. By transitioning to online marketplaces, vendors can reach customers without resorting to street hawking, thus mitigating associated risks. According to Oberlin and Lutege, (2022) the aim is to enhance business performance and competitiveness in the global economy.

➤ **Community-Based Interventions**

Engaging local communities in developing and implementing solutions ensures that interventions are culturally appropriate and sustainable. Community programs that offer vocational training, microfinance opportunities, and support networks can empower individuals to pursue safer and more stable livelihoods. Additionally, community policing and monitoring can help enforce anti-hawking laws and protect vulnerable populations.

➤ **Urban Planning and Design**

City authorities can design urban spaces that discourage street hawking by providing designated areas for vending that are safe and regulated. Creating markets or kiosks in strategic locations can offer vendors legitimate spaces to conduct business, reducing the need to hawk on the streets. This approach not only enhances the safety of vendors and consumers but also contributes to organized urban development.

➤ **Support Services for Affected Individuals**

Offering counselling and support services to individuals, especially children, who have been involved in street hawking; can address psychological and educational setbacks. Programs that focus on reintegration into the formal education system, skill development, and mental health support are vital for the holistic development of affected individuals.

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey design was adopted to carry out this research in uyo metropolis, AkwaIbom State. The targeted population for the study comprised social scientists in uyo metropolis. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 80 social scientists in uyo metropolis. From each of the 10 selected schools, 8 social scientists were selected and this gave a sample size of 80 respondents which was used to carry out this research. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled “Street Hawking by Children of School Age and Exposure to Dangers and Remedies (SHCSAEDRQ)”. Face and content validation of the instrument was carried out by an expert in test, measurement, and evaluation in order to ensure that the instrument has the accuracy, appropriateness, and completeness for the study under consideration. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.88, and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to appropriate statistical technique such as descriptive analysis was used to describe the research question.

Research Question 1

The research question sought to find out the dangers of street hawking. To answer the research percentage analysis was performed on the data, (see table 1).

Table 1: Percentage analysis of the dangers of street hawking.

DANGERS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Educational Disruptions and Psychological Stress	39	48.75**
Compromised Physical Health and Safety	15	18.75
Legal and Social Challenges	12	15
Involvement in Unethical Behaviours	9	11.25
Exposure to Sexual Abuse and Exploitation	5	6.25*
TOTAL	80	100%

** The highest percentage frequency

* The least percentage frequency

SOURCE: Field survey

The above table 1 outlines the dangers of street hawking. From the result of the data analysis, In this context the highest respondents of the respondents (48.75%) indicated that street hawking causes educational disruption and psychological stress. On the other hand, the least percentage of the respondents (4.67%) noted that street hawking causes exposure to sexual abuse and exploitation. This result corroborates with the opinion of Ugochukwu, (2012); Amoo, Ola-David, Ogunrinola and Fadayomi, (2012); Ekpenyong and Nkereuwem, (2011) who mentioned that when children are involved, in addition to above listed risks, they are deprived of education, bad habits evolved and are denied of good sound health and these constitute child abuse.

Research Question 2

The research question sought to find out the remedies of the dangers of street hawking. To answer the research percentage analysis was performed on the data, (see table 2).

Table 1: Percentage analysis of the remedies of the dangers of street hawking.

REMEDIES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Economic Empowerment and Alternative Livelihoods	26	32.5**
Community-Based Interventions	15	18.75
Support Services for Affected Individuals	13	16.25
Educational Campaigns and Advocacy	11	13.75
Legislative and Policy Measures	9	11.25
Urban Planning and Design	6	7.5*
TOTAL	80	100%

**** The highest percentage frequency**

*** The least percentage frequency**

SOURCE: Field survey

The above table outlines the dangers of street hawking. From the result of the data analysis, In this context the highest respondents of the respondents (32.5%) indicated that Economic Empowerment and Alternative Livelihoods is a remedy to street hawking. On the other hand, the least percentage of the respondents (7.5%) noted that Urban Planning and Design is a remedy to street hawking. This result corroborates with the opinion of Andrew and Ige (2025), who mentioned that street hawking has arrays of risks on the wellbeing of the students. It is crucial to highlight that the impact of street hawking on the psychological wellbeing of secondary school students who hawk is enormous

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, street hawking among secondary school-aged children in Uyo Metropolis remains a pressing socio-economic issue with significant risks. These children face dangers such as exploitation, accidents, health hazards, and educational setbacks. The root causes include poverty, lack of parental care, and weak policy enforcement. While government interventions and legal frameworks exist, enforcement remains a challenge. Effective remedies should include stricter policies, improved access to education, and social support programs. Public awareness campaigns can also help curb this menace. A collective effort from the government, parents, and society is necessary to protect these vulnerable children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The government should implement and strictly enforce policies prohibiting Child Street hawking, ensuring that offenders face legal consequences.
- Financial support and skill acquisition programs should be introduced to empower Low-income families, reducing the economic need for child hawking.
- The government should provide free education, scholarships, and school feeding programs to encourage children to stay in school instead of hawking.

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