**Original Research Article**

**INVESTIGATING THE SOCIOECONOMIC EFFECTS OF STREET HAWKING ON TEENAGE GIRLS IN UDENU LOCAL GOVERNMENT, ENUGU STATE: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE**

ABSTRACT

**Aims**  
This study investigates the socioeconomic effects of street hawking on teenage girls in Udenu Local Government Area, Enugu State, Nigeria, with a view to informing policy and practice. It explores the underlying causes such as poverty, rapid urbanization, and family disintegration, while assessing the multifaceted impacts on the educational, psychological, and social well‐being of affected girls.

**Study Design**

A cross-sectional survey design was employed, integrating quantitative methods through structured questionnaires and qualitative insights via semi-structured interviews. This mixed-methods approach ensured both breadth and depth in data collection.

**Place and Duration of the Study**

The research was conducted in Udenu Local Government Area, Enugu State, Nigeria. Data were collected from a representative sample of the community over a defined period, ensuring that the findings reflect current socio-economic dynamics.

**Methodology**  
Using Taro Yamane’s formula, a sample size of approximately 100 respondents was determined. Primary data were gathered through questionnaires and follow-up interviews, while secondary data provided contextual background. Data were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), employing descriptive statistics and the chi-square test to validate research hypotheses at a 95% confidence level.

**Results**  
Findings reveal that a majority of respondents attribute street hawking to deep-rooted socio-economic challenges. Over 70% recognized significant negative social, political, and economic impacts, including pervasive abuse of teenage girls. While opinions on the psychological impact varied, 95% acknowledged that abuse is prevalent. Importantly, 85% agreed that viable solutions exist to mitigate these challenges.

**Conclusion**  
Street hawking among teenage girls is a complex phenomenon with far-reaching adverse effects. The study underscores the need for targeted policy interventions and community-based strategies—such as regulating hawking schedules and providing educational support—to safeguard vulnerable populations and promote sustainable socioeconomic development.

*Keywords:* Socioeconomic Effects, Street Hawking, Teenage Girls, Udenu Local Government,

1. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, the most populous Black nation, had an estimated population of approximately 140 million people as per the 2006 census. This vast country is endowed with abundant natural resources such as oil, tin, limestone, zinc, and natural gas, and it features a diverse climate ranging from equatorial in the south to arid in the north. Despite these assets and its status as the third-largest producer of crude oil globally, Nigeria struggles with a poverty rate of nearly 70% (Ugochukwu & Ertel, 2008). The nation’s paradox of wealth amid widespread poverty can largely be attributed to prolonged military rule, mismanagement, and systemic corruption, factors that have stifled economic progress and contributed to the emergence of various anti-social behaviors, including the proliferation of street hawking.

Street hawking, defined by the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (2000) as the recruitment, transportation, or harboring of individuals through coercion, deception, or abuse of power for exploitation, has escalated into a significant socio-economic issue in Nigeria. This practice is regarded as the third-largest criminal activity globally—only behind arms and drug trafficking (Ugochukwu & Ertel, 2008) — and it predominantly affects vulnerable populations, particularly teenage girls. Many impoverished families, facing the harsh realities of unemployment, large family sizes, and rapid urbanization, are often deceived into relinquishing their daughters with promises of improved economic prospects. Instead, these girls frequently find themselves trapped in exploitative conditions that expose them to hazardous labor, forced servitude, and other forms of abuse, while being denied their fundamental rights to education, identity, and freedom (Ezeudu & Tukur, 2024, Kuddus et al., 2020)..

In response to this pressing issue, the present study seeks to explore the historical evolution of street hawking in Nigeria, identify the underlying causes such as poverty, rapid urbanization, and the disintegration of traditional family structures, and analyze the extensive social, political, and economic impacts on affected teenage girls in the Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State. The study further aims to propose evidence-based policy recommendations and practical interventions designed to mitigate the adverse effects of street hawking. By examining these multifaceted dimensions, the research aspires to contribute significantly to academic discourse, inform policymakers, and pave the way for future studies on human trafficking and child labor in similar socio-economic contexts.

Existing literature underscores that street hawking has evolved from a traditional form of small-scale trade into a complex socio-economic phenomenon characterized by various forms such as child street-trading, teenage hawking, and juvenile street vending. Historical records indicate that the practice of child hawking dates back to the 1970s, when children were primarily involved in selling agricultural produce to support their families (Ogungweru, 2023). More recent studies have highlighted the gendered nature of the practice and its detrimental effects on educational attainment and overall human capital development. Researchers have noted that while street hawking can provide a temporary economic lifeline for impoverished families, it simultaneously exposes children to physical hazards, psychological stress, and social risks that collectively undermine their educational prospects and long-term development (Ashimolowo et al., 2010; Eghosa, 2010; Udoh & Joseph, 2010).

The scope of this research is confined to the Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State, offering a microcosmic view of the broader national challenges associated with street hawking. Despite potential limitations posed by financial constraints, time restrictions, and logistical challenges, this focused investigation is justified by the urgent need to understand and address the multi-layered impacts of street hawking on teenage girls. The insights generated from this study are expected to inform the development of targeted strategies that not only alleviate immediate economic hardships but also strengthen child protection measures and promote sustainable socio-economic development, thereby contributing to social stability and improved educational outcomes for vulnerable populations.

2. material and methods

**Research Methodology**

This chapter details the systematic procedures used to collect and analyze data, ensuring that the methods align closely with the study’s objective of examining the effects of street hawking among teenage girls in Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria. The approach combines well-established methods with significant modifications where necessary, allowing future researchers to reproduce the experiment with a high degree of fidelity.

**Research Design**

A survey research design was adopted for its proven efficiency in gathering quantitative data from a defined population, as described by Creswell and Creswell (2017). This design was chosen because it offers a robust framework to assess the impact of street hawking on both academic and social outcomes among teenage girls. In this study, the survey design was enhanced with modifications to capture additional qualitative insights through follow-up interviews, thereby generating evidence-based findings that address this pressing socio-economic issue in a timely manner.

**Population and Sample**

The study targeted residents of the Udenu Local Government Area in Enugu State, selected for its relevance to the research problem and logistical proximity to the researcher. The total population consisted of 134 individuals, from which the sample was derived. Utilizing Taro Yamane’s formula (n = N / [1 + N(e)²]) with a significance level of 5% (e = 0.05) as outlined by Yamane (1967), the calculated sample size was approximately 100 respondents. This sampling method was carefully chosen to ensure that the sample is statistically representative, thereby enhancing the reliability and generalizability of the study’s findings.

**Research Instrumentation and Data Sources**

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire specifically designed to capture detailed information regarding the effects of street hawking on teenage girls. In addition to the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather nuanced insights from selected respondents. These primary data sources were complemented by secondary data obtained from textbooks, scholarly journals, and reputable periodicals, which provided essential contextual background and helped triangulate the findings. The combination of these sources facilitated a comprehensive analysis of both quantitative and qualitative dimensions of the study.

**Validity and Reliability of Instruments**

To ensure that the research instruments were both valid and reliable, a face validation process was undertaken. An initial draft of the questionnaire was reviewed by a subject matter expert, namely the study supervisor, who provided critical feedback regarding its alignment with the study’s objectives. The instrument was refined accordingly, ensuring clarity and relevance to the research questions. Reliability was further assessed using a test-retest method.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

Data collection involved both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained directly from respondents via the administered questionnaires and follow-up interviews, while secondary data were extracted from established literature sources. Once the data were collected, they were systematically coded and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. Descriptive statistics such as frequency tables, percentages, and mean scores were used to summarize the data, while inferential statistics, specifically the chi-square test of independence, were applied to test the research hypotheses. The chi-square statistic was computed using the formula X² = Σ [(o – e) ² / e], where o represents the observed frequency and e denotes the expected frequency. Degrees of freedom were calculated using the formula df = (r – 1) (c – 1), with r representing the number of rows and c representing the number of columns in the contingency table. A 95% confidence level (α = 0.05) was maintained throughout the analysis to ensure rigorous statistical evaluation.

3. results and discussion

**Results**

**Analysis of Demographic Data of Respondents**

The demographic analysis provides a detailed profile of the 100 respondents from the field survey. These data help contextualize the subsequent psychographic analysis and establish the basis for interpreting the influence of street hawking on teenage girls in Nigeria.

**Table 1: Gender of Respondents**

|  | **Frequency** | **Percent** | **Cumulative Percent** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Valid** |  |  |  |
| Male | 65 | 65.0 | 65.0 |
| Female | 35 | 35.0 | 100.0 |
| **Total** | 100 | 100.0 |  |

*Source: Field Survey.*

According to Table 1, the total number of respondents is 100, with 65% being male and 35% being female. Although the study primarily targets teenage girls, including data from both genders offers a broader societal perspective on the issue.

**Table 2: Age Range of Respondents**

|  | **Frequency** | **Percent** | **Cumulative Percent** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Valid** |  |  |  |
| 20–30 years | 15 | 15.0 | 15.0 |
| 31–40 years | 10 | 10.0 | 25.0 |
| 41–50 years | 25 | 25.0 | 50.0 |
| 51–60 years | 20 | 20.0 | 70.0 |
| Above 60 years | 30 | 30.0 | 100.0 |
| **Total** | 100 | 100.0 |  |

*Source: Field Survey.*

Table 2 presents the age range of the respondents. The data indicate that 15% of the respondents are in the 20–30 years range, 10% are in the 31–40 years range, 25% fall within the 41–50 years’ bracket, 20% are between 51–60 years, and the largest group, comprising 30%, is above 60 years of age. This distribution suggests that the majority of the respondents are older, which may influence the perspectives shared on the issue under study.

**Table 3: Educational Background of Respondents**

|  | **Frequency** | **Percent** | **Cumulative Percent** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Valid** |  |  |  |
| FSLC | 20 | 20.0 | 20.0 |
| WASSCE/GCE/NECO | 25 | 25.0 | 45.0 |
| OND/HND/BSC | 35 | 35.0 | 80.0 |
| MSC/PGD/PHD | 15 | 15.0 | 95.0 |
| OTHERS | 5 | 5.0 | 100.0 |
| **Total** | 100 | 100.0 |  |

*Source: Field Survey.*

Table 3 outlines the educational attainment of the respondents. The data indicate that 20% of respondents completed the FSLC, 25% achieved qualifications such as WASSCE/GCE/NECO, 35% hold OND/HND/BSc degrees, 15% have attained MSC/PGD/PHD levels, and 5% fall into the "Others" category. This distribution reveals that the most common level of education among the respondents is the OND/HND/BSc category, while a smaller proportion has pursued postgraduate studies or falls into other educational categories. This range of educational attainment provides valuable insights into how varying levels of education may influence perceptions and attitudes toward street hawking.

**Table 4: Marital Status**

|  | **Frequency** | **Percent** | **Cumulative Percent** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Valid** |  |  |  |
| Single | 30 | 30.0 | 30.0 |
| Married | 55 | 55.0 | 85.0 |
| Divorced | 5 | 5.0 | 90.0 |
| Widowed | 10 | 10.0 | 100.0 |
| **Total** | 100 | 100.0 |  |

*Source: Field Survey.*

Table 4 summarizes the marital status of the respondents. The data reveal that 30% of respondents are single, 55% are married, 5% are divorced, and 10% are widowed. This indicates that the majority of respondents are married, which may influence their perceptions on socio-economic issues such as street hawking.

**Table 5: Category of Respondents**

|  | **Frequency** | **Percent** | **Cumulative Percent** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Valid** |  |  |  |
| Civil Servant | 25 | 25.0 | 25.0 |
| Self-employed | 15 | 15.0 | 40.0 |
| Students | 25 | 25.0 | 65.0 |
| Unemployed | 35 | 35.0 | 100.0 |
| **Total** | 100 | 100.0 |  |

*Source: Field Survey.*

Table 5 (Table 5) presents the occupational classification of the respondents. The data indicate that 25% of respondents are civil servants, 15% are self-employed, and 25% are students. Notably, the largest group comprises the unemployed, accounting for 35% of the total. This breakdown highlights the diversity in occupational status among the respondents, which may influence their perceptions and attitudes toward street hawking.

**Analysis of Psychographic Data**

The psychographic data delve into respondents’ perceptions regarding the causes, effects, and solutions associated with street hawking in Nigeria. These responses are critical for understanding the broader socio-economic and psychological implications of the practice.

**Table 6: There are Causes of Street Hawking in Nigeria**

|  | **Frequency** | **Percent** | **Cumulative Percent** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Valid** |  |  |  |
| Strongly agree | 30 | 30.0 | 30.0 |
| Agree | 42 | 42.0 | 72.0 |
| Undecided | 10 | 10.0 | 82.0 |
| Disagree | 10 | 10.0 | 92.0 |
| Strongly disagree | 8 | 8.0 | 100.0 |
| **Total** | 100 | 100.0 |  |

*Source: Field Survey.*

Table 6 displays the respondents’ views on the causes of street hawking in Nigeria. The data show that 30% of respondents strongly agree and 42% agree that significant causes exist, amounting to 72% in total who acknowledge the presence of underlying factors such as poverty, lack of education, and rapid urbanization. In contrast, 10% remain undecided, while 10% disagree and 8% strongly disagree with this statement. This indicates a strong consensus among the majority regarding the existence of key drivers behind street hawking.

**Table 7: There is No Effect of Street Hawking in Nigeria, Socially, Politically and Economically**

|  | **Frequency** | **Percent** | **Cumulative Percent** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Valid** |  |  |  |
| Strongly agree | 10 | 10.0 | 10.0 |
| Agree | 15 | 15.0 | 25.0 |
| Undecided | 5 | 5.0 | 30.0 |
| Disagree | 40 | 40.0 | 70.0 |
| Strongly disagree | 30 | 30.0 | 100.0 |
| **Total** | 100 | 100.0 |  |

*Source: Field Survey.*

Table 7 (Table 7) summarizes respondents’ views regarding the statement that street hawking has no social, political, or economic effect in Nigeria. The table shows that 10% of respondents strongly agree and 15% agree with the statement, totaling 25% in support of the claim that street hawking is ineffective in impacting these sectors. Conversely, a majority of 70% of respondents (40% disagree and 30% strongly disagree) refute the statement, indicating that they perceive street hawking as having significant effects. An additional 5% of respondents remain undecided on the issue. This clear majority suggests that most respondents recognize the substantial socio-economic and political implications of street hawking in Nigeria.

**Table 8: There are Solutions to the Problems of Street Hawking in Nigeria**

|  | **Frequency** | **Percent** | **Cumulative Percent** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Valid** |  |  |  |
| Strongly agree | 60 | 60.0 | 60.0 |
| Agree | 25 | 25.0 | 85.0 |
| Undecided | 10 | 10.0 | 95.0 |
| Disagree | 5 | 5.0 | 100.0 |
| **Total** | 100 | 100.0 |  |

*Source: Field Survey.*

Table 8 displays respondents' views on the availability of solutions to address the problems associated with street hawking in Nigeria. According to the data, a significant majority of 60% of respondents strongly agree that viable solutions exist, while an additional 25% agree, making a combined 85% in support of this view. Only 10% remain undecided, and a mere 5% disagree with the assertion. These results indicate a strong consensus among respondents that there are effective solutions to mitigate the challenges posed by street hawking.

**Table 9: Street Hawking Has an Effect on the Psychological State of Girls**

|  | **Frequency** | **Percent** | **Cumulative Percent** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Valid** |  |  |  |
| Strongly agree | 25 | 25.0 | 25.0 |
| Agree | 32 | 32.0 | 57.0 |
| Undecided | 13 | 13.0 | 70.0 |
| Disagree | 15 | 15.0 | 85.0 |
| Strongly disagree | 15 | 15.0 | 100.0 |
| **Total** | 100 | 100.0 |  |

*Source: Field Survey.*

Table 9 shows respondents’ opinions on whether street hawking affects the psychological state of girls. According to the data, 25% of respondents strongly agree and 32% agree with the statement, meaning that a total of 57% perceive a negative psychological impact. In contrast, 13% remain undecided, while 15% disagree and another 15% strongly disagree, resulting in 30% opposing the view. These results indicate that although a majority acknowledge a detrimental psychological effect, there is notable variability in the respondents’ perceptions regarding the extent of this impact.

**Table 10: Most Girls Are Abused via Street Hawking in Nigeria**

|  | **Frequency** | **Percent** | **Cumulative Percent** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Valid** |  |  |  |
| Strongly agree | 65 | 65.0 | 65.0 |
| Agree | 30 | 30.0 | 95.0 |
| Disagree | 3 | 3.0 | 98.0 |
| Strongly disagree | 2 | 2.0 | 100.0 |
| **Total** | 100 | 100.0 |  |

*Source: Field Survey.*

Table 10 summarizes respondents’ views on whether most girls are abused through street hawking in Nigeria. The data reveal that 65% of respondents strongly agree and 30% agree with the statement, indicating that 95% support the view that abuse is prevalent. In contrast, only 3% disagree and 2% strongly disagree, demonstrating an overwhelming consensus on the issue.

**Discussion**

The comprehensive analysis of the data collected from 100 respondents reveals several critical insights regarding the phenomenon of street hawking and its broader societal implications. The demographic profile of the respondents is notably diverse, encompassing variations in age, educational background, marital status, and occupational categories. Although 65% of the respondents are male, the overall perceptions provide a broad societal context, indicating that experienced community members—particularly those over 60—play a significant role in shaping the understanding and attitudes toward street hawking. These findings are in consonant with Asare, 2010.

The study’s findings show that a substantial majority of respondents (72%) believe that street hawking in Nigeria is driven by underlying economic and social challenges. In addition, 70% acknowledge that the practice has significant social, political, and economic impacts, thereby refuting any notion that street hawking is a benign or neutral activity. This collective perspective reinforces the view that street hawking is intertwined with systemic issues that extend well beyond mere economic transactions. These findings are in consonant with Umar, 2009.

Equally compelling is the optimistic outlook expressed by 85% of the respondents, who agree that there are viable solutions to mitigate the negative effects of street hawking. This strong consensus suggests that stakeholders may be receptive to policy interventions and community-based initiatives, particularly those aimed at protecting vulnerable groups such as teenage girls. Although opinions regarding the psychological impact of street hawking on girls are somewhat divided, there is an overwhelming consensus (95%) that abuse is a pervasive issue, underscoring the urgent need for targeted measures to safeguard the well-being of these young individuals. These findings are in consonant with Asare, 2010 and Umar, 2009.

The analysis indicates that street hawking is not merely an economic activity but a complex social phenomenon with far-reaching implications. The interplay between demographic factors and psychographic perceptions demonstrates that the challenges associated with street hawking are deeply embedded in the socio-economic fabric of the community. These insights provide a robust foundation for future research and policy formulation, emphasizing the importance of adopting a holistic approach that addresses both the root causes and the adverse consequences of street hawking. Policymakers, educators, and community leaders must work together to develop interventions that not only alleviate the economic pressures driving street hawking but also protect the most vulnerable members of society from its detrimental effects.

**Conclusion**

The study’s findings lead to several significant conclusions. First, Junior Secondary School students who engage in street hawking on weekends or holidays outperform their peers who hawk every day in Social Studies within Udenu Local Government, Enugu State. Furthermore, gender does not influence the academic performance of these students in Social Studies, even though differences exist in their study habit scores between male and female students. In addition, variations in mean study habit scores are observed among students based on age groups and the time of day they engage in hawking. While academic performance in Social Studies does not differ significantly between male and female students involved in street hawking, differences are evident when comparing students’ performance across different age groups and hawking times.

**Recommendations**

Based on these findings, several recommendations are proposed. Students involved in street hawking should be regarded as having special educational needs. Teachers are encouraged to provide special attention to these students by actively engaging them in classroom discussions, fostering a positive academic self-concept, and creating a conducive learning environment. Regular meetings between school counselors and these students to review academic progress and offer study habit counseling are also essential. In addition, it is recommended that street hawking by students be restricted to weekends or holidays so that they have sufficient time to rest and study. The School-Based Management Committee (SBMC) and Parent Teachers Association (PTA) should advocate for parents to allow their children to hawk only during these designated periods, thereby ensuring adequate time for academic pursuits. If daytime hawking becomes necessary, parents should strictly monitor and limit the hours their children spend on this activity, preferably scheduling it after school hours, to support improved study habits and academic performance. Lastly, efforts should be made to dispel any erroneous perceptions that certain subjects are inherently difficult for one gender, encouraging both male and female students to develop a genuine interest in learning.

Consent

Not applicable.

Ethical approval

Not applicable.

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