

Economic Factors as Correlates of Streetism among Urban Children in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria

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Abstract

The children working, living and surviving on the street is a global problem, affecting developed and developing countries alike. However, the magnitude of the problem varies, with less developed countries facing more acute problems. The street children are marginalised children who require enormous assistance but they are often least assisted in a society. There are many factors responsible for the increase in the rate of street children and this has necessitated this type of research. This study, therefore, investigated the economic factors as correlates of streetism among urban children in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria.

The study adopted survey research design of the ex-post facto type. Five local governments were purposively selected in urban areas in Ibadan. The respondents selected randomly from each local government area were made up of 50 participants from five local governments, making a total of 250 participants. Questionnaire was the major instrument that was developed and used for the study. The questionnaire was divided into sections A and B. Section A was to elicit relevant general information from the respondents. While section B consisted of Twenty-Seven structured items. These include items on Streetism ($r=0.7380$) and Economic Factors ($r=0.8139$). Three research questions were answered. Data were analysed using Pearson Product Moment correlation and multiple regression statistics.

The four variables have a joint positive multiple correlation with streetism ($R=.396$). The four independent variables also accounted for 14.3% of the variance of street children engage in streetism (Adjusted $R^2=.143$). Self-financed made the most significant contribution to streetism among urban children ($\beta=.293$; $p<0.05$), followed by Economic Pulling Factor ($\beta=.155$; $p<0.05$) and Parental caring attitude ($\beta=.131$; $p<0.05$). Family poverty levels made the least contribution. Streetism among urban children was predicted by self-financed ($B=1.000$, $t=3.537$; $p<0.05$), economic pulling factor ($B=1.034$, $t=2.106$; $p<0.05$) and family poverty levels ($B=-.312$; $t=-2.451$; $p<0.05$).

The combination of economic factor variables (self-financed, economic pulling factor, parental caring attitude and family poverty levels) proved more effective at predicting streetism among urban children in Ibadan than when considered separately. Self-financed, economic pulling factor, parental caring attitude and family poverty levels are the most potent factors in explaining streetism among urban children. These factors should be taken into consideration in order to reduce the rate of street children in urban area in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria

Keywords: Streetism, self-financed, economic pulling factor, parental caring attitude and family poverty levels.

Introduction

In the past couple of decades, there has been growing concern towards the plight of the world's street children. This has particularly been the case in Sub-Saharan Africa, compared with other continents, which has been a significant rise in the numbers of street living and surviving, without any parental supervision, on the street of its major cities. According to Kopoka (2002), street children could be described as:

“Stroll through a market or past a hotel or along the roadside of any major street in the center of most African capitals, towns, or urban areas and you cannot fail to see them. They are stopping cars and people to beg or ask for work. You will see them shining shoes, selling sundry articles of

uncertain origin, or hurrying to wash windscreens of cars stopping at traffic signals. Yet others are roaming around or gathered in small groups waiting for something to do. Look at them closely; their faces show strain and sadness. Their clothes are tattered; their bodies are gaunt from ill health and malnutrition. There is something mature beyond their years in their haunted expressions. At night, you can see them huddled along street corners, in doorways, or in any dry and secluded corner. They are the representatives of a growing multitude of children who have become known as the street children”.

Street children are the casualties of economic growth, war, poverty, loss of traditional values, domestic violence, physical and mental abuse. Every street child has a reason for being on the streets. While some children are lured by the promise of excitement and freedom, the majority are pushed onto the street by desperation and a realisation that they have nowhere else to go. What is obvious is that street children are poverty-stricken and their needs and problems are a result of wanting to meet basic needs for survival. Street children go through the struggle of providing themselves with basic things such as food, shelter, health and clothing. Providing targeted interventions that meet the needs of street children requires an understanding of who they are, what they need, what they do and how they can be identified.

Street children constitute a marginalised group in most societies. They do not have what society considers appropriate relationships with major institutions of childhood such as family, education and health. The continuous exposure to harsh environments and the nature of their lifestyle make them vulnerable to substance use and this threatens their mental, physical, social and spiritual wellbeing. In many regions, most of these children use alcohol and other psychoactive substances. In addition, these children are confronted with discrimination and view health and social services with suspicion. Street children live a transitory life style and are vulnerable to inadequate nutrition, physical injuries, substance use, and health problems including sexual and reproductive health problems. These factors reduce the effectiveness of interventions that target street children.

Street children exist in every part of the world and large groups of children unsupervised by adult have appeared in almost every counting during some part of history. Most of them are found in large urban areas of developing countries. The problem has worsened across the globe in recent years because of economic problems, political changes, civil unrest, increasing family separations and conflicts, the epidemic spread of diseases and natural disasters. Street children are resilient, creative individuals who have a great capacity to contribute to their communities and to the future development of Africa. However, street children’s potentials are often not fully realised.

An increased global awareness of the concept of childhood and the needs and rights of children has been exhibited in the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRS) and the many other declarations of child rights. In spite of this, the situation of many children is becoming worse and the violation of their rights is constantly increasing. Indicative of this is the increasing phenomenon of “street children” which sometimes has catastrophic manifestations that include child neglect, exclusion, homelessness, and regular loitering. “Street children” are found primarily in urban centres (though the children may originate from rural areas) and many depend on themselves for meeting their daily life needs. In order to survive, many are forced to search for work or beg for money or handouts. These children have formed groups that have their own specific culture, values and structure. They have special relations with adult brokers, who provide them with protection and assist them in solving their problems with the policemen.

In Nigeria, especially, there exists a wide variety of push and pull factors for children ending up on the streets, including poverty, war, abuse, urban migration, accusations of witchcrafts and family breakdown. In harsh situations in Nigeria, life on the streets may offer more opportunities for youth than life at home. Consequently, many children in Nigeria make a conscious choice to leave home and live on the streets, drawn by the increased economic incentives and independence it affords. Outside the constructs of the society, however, youth on the street severely compromise their opportunities for healthy, physical, social, mental, emotional and spiritual development.

The number of children on urban streets in Nigeria is often indicative of the strains a society is experiencing, including conflicts poverty and disease. Perhaps, more importantly, the situation speaks of a society’s inability to care for and absorb all of its children, often resulting in the ostracism of the child from the most important social context in Nigerian Society – the family. In the case of youth on the streets, many have chosen or been forced to disassociate from community life and exist independently or dislocated from family and communal structures. In attempts to adapt and survive within the context of the street, children actively seek to create or associate with other environments of belonging, such as street gangs or brothels that exhibit their own social hierarchies and behaviour codes.

Economic policies matter for child wellbeing. Though, on the surface, economic policies seem far removed from children's everyday lives, they are the root cause of much of the poverty that children face' (Marcus & Marshall, 2004). Nevertheless, academic economic research has rarely focused on children and less still on children in poverty (Schmidt, 2003). No academic economic studies were found for this review which directly targeted street children, although some included street children as part of larger populations. A lack of focus on street children is not surprising given the lack of consensus on definition and the difficulties posed in collecting economic data about a group of children whose position is ambiguous and often unknown with respect to 'the household' – the base unit of most economic research. There is also concern that a specific focus on street children at economic policy level can detract attention from deep-rooted, systemic problems affecting much larger numbers of children (Marcus & Marshall, 2004: on children in poverty). This section explores the findings of economic research relevant to street children from the perspectives of poverty and inequality, before turning to the issues of public budgets and other funding for street children.

Economic researchers who have explored the social effects of economic policies on children in poverty have found that early investments in children produced a very high rate of return in terms of economic income possibilities in adult life, and are cost-effective (Comision Economic para America Latina y el Carib (CEPAL), 1995; Heckman, 1996; Karoly, Greenwood, Everungham, Hoube, Kilburn, Rydell, Sanders & Chiesa, 1998; Harper & Marcus, 2003). Economic researches have also found that to reduce childhood poverty significantly, a combination is required of: General development policy to promote the livelihoods and wellbeing of the poorest groups; and specific services and support programmes to promote the social development and wellbeing of children and young people (Mehrotra & Jolly, 1998; Harper & Marcus, 2000).

In line with various research studies in the past, this study investigated Economic Factors as Correlates of Streetism among Urban Children in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria. These factors are indeed indispensable to the psychosocial well-being of the individual.

Statement of the Problem

There can be no certainty as to the exact number of children living in the streets of the world today. Estimated range from several million to over one hundred million (Lugalla & Kibassa 2003) but are inevitably imprecise due to 'definitional problems, the mobility of the population, the lack of reliable data, widespread use of purposive sampling techniques, and the fact that many street children elude detection or give inaccurate information when interviewed' (Montgomery, Sren, Cohen, & Reed, 2004 and Lugalla et al., 2003, Mvungi 2002). It is estimated that around forty million children live or work on the street of Latin America (including 500,000 in Sao Paulo alone), some twenty five to thirty million in Asia, and ten million in Africa (Montgomery et al. 2004 and also Lugalla & Kibassa 2002).

What is accepted, however, and of increasing concern, is that the phenomenon of children living, working and surviving on the street is a global problem, affecting developed and developing countries alike, although the magnitude of the problem varies with less developed countries facing more acute problems (Kilbride, Suda & Njeru, E, 2000, Lugalla & Kibassa 2003). Similarly, it is generally acknowledged that such children represent some of the most vulnerable social groups in the world today (Lugalla et al., 2002). They are 'a disadvantaged group who suffer a double jeopardy, first as children, and secondly as street children' (Mbunda 2000). While street children are 'marginalised children who require enormous assistance' (Lugalla et al., 2003), they are often the least assisted in a society. Based on this, this study investigated Economic Factors as Correlates of Streetism among Urban Children in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria.

Research Questions

In an attempt to examine the issue of economic factors promoting streetism among urban children in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria, the following questions were developed to guide the researchers:

1. What is the composite effect of the economic factor variables on streetism among urban children?
2. What are the relative effects of the economic factor variables on streetism among urban children?
3. Which of the economic factor variables will predict streetism among urban children?

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted survey research design of the ex-post facto type. The study aimed at the composite and relative effects of economic factors on streetism among urban children in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria.

Population

The target population for this study is all street children in the five (5) urban local governments in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The selected areas for the study are Ibadan North, Ibadan North–East, Ibadan North–West, Ibadan South–West and Ibadan South–East. These local governments were purposively selected to capture street children in urban area in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria. Fifty (50) street children were selected randomly in urban areas where the street children could be located in each of the five (5) local government areas. These areas include Iwo-Road, Bodija Market, Alesinloye Market, Beere and Dugbe. This gave a total of two hundred and fifty (250) street children that participated in the study.

Research Instrument

The instrument used for the research was a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of Twenty-Seven (27) items on a four (4) point Likert Scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SD) and Disagree (D). The street children (respondent) were required to tick (✓) the items that best described their opinion and/or situation on economic factors and streetism.

Administration of the Instrument

The researchers trained some people as the research assistants. The questionnaire was later administered by both researcher and research assistants on the street children (respondents).

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, involving frequency counts and percentages were used to present the characteristics and responses of the respondents descriptively. Also, inferential statistics, involving Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient and Multiple Regression Analysis were used to determine the relationships among the independent variables and the depending variable. All tests were carried out at $\alpha = .05$

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What is the composite effect of the economic factor variables on streetism among urban children?

Table 1: Correlation of Economic Factor Variables and Streetism among Urban Children

VARIABLES	Streetism	Economic pulling factor	Family poverty level	Self-financed	Parental caring attitude
Streetism	1.000	.258*	-.160*	.356*	-.154*
Economic pulling factor	.280*	1.000	.206	.484	.030
Family poverty levels	-.160*	.206	1.000	-.258	.696
Self-financed	.356*	.484	-.258	1.000	-.499
Parental caring attitude	-.154*	.030	.696	-.499	1.000
Mean	52.4800	3.8280	21.9280	3.4080	6.1960
Standard Deviation	3.1562	0.4726	2.1006	.9236	.9846

* Significant at $P < .05$ level

Table 1 shows that the economic pulling factor has positive and significant relationship with streetism among urban children ($r = .280$; $p < .05$). This implies that the kind of work the children engage in the street has contributory effect on streetism. Self-financed factor has positive and significant relationship with streetism among urban children ($r = .356$; $p < .05$). This implies that street children engage in streetism in order to meet their financial needs. Family poverty levels have negative and significant relationship with streetism among urban children ($r = -.160$; $p < .05$). In addition, parental caring attitude factor has negative and significant relationship with streetism among urban children ($r = -.154$; $p < .05$).

Table 2: Summary of Regression Analysis on Economic Factor Variables and Streetism

R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
.396	.157	.143	2.9219

*Significant at $P < .05$ level

Table 2 shows that there is a positive multiple relationships among the economic factor variables and streetism among urban children. This implies that the four variables are relevant and could influence streetism among urban children. Also, 14.3% of the total variance in streetism is due to the four economic variables (adjusted $R^2 = .143$). This means that the remaining 85.7% is due to other factors and residuals.

Table 3: ANOVA of Regression on the Economic Factor Variables

Source of variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F-ratio	Sig.
Regression	388.733	4	97.183	11.383	.000*
Residual	2091.667	245	8.537		
Total	2480.400	249			

*Significant at $P < .05$ level

From table 3, the R value of .396 obtained tested significant ($F_{(4,245)} = 11.383$; $p < .05$). This shows that the R value is not due to chance.

Research Question 2: What are the relative effects of the economic factor variables on streetism among urban children?

Table 4: Relative Effects of Economic Factor Variables on Streetism among Urban Children.

Sources of variance	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Standard Error	Beta values			
(Constant)	49.335	2.371		20.806	.000	
Economic pulling factor	1.034	.491	.155	2nd	2.106	.036*
Family poverty levels	-.312	.127	-.207	4th	-2.451	.015*
Self-financed	1.000	.283	.293	1st	3.537	.000*
Parental caring attitude	.421	.298	.131	3 rd	1.414	.159

*Significant at $P < .05$ level

From table 4, family poverty levels made the greatest contribution to streetism among urban children ($\beta = .293$; $p < .05$), followed by economic pulling factor ($\beta = .155$; $p < .05$). Third contribution is also made by parental caring attitude ($\beta = .131$; $p < .05$) and family poverty levels made the least contribution to streetism among urban children ($\beta = -.207$; $p < .05$).

Research Question 3: Which of the economic factor variables will predict streetism among urban children?

From table 4, only three out of the four variables of the economic factor variables could predict streetism among urban. These are economic pulling factor ($B = 1.034$; $t = 2.106$; $p < .05$), self-financed ($B = 1.000$; $t = 3.537$; $p < .05$), and family poverty levels ($B = -.312$; $t = -2.451$; $p < .05$). While parental caring attitude ($B = .421$; $t = 1.414$; $p < .05$) could not predict streetism among urban children because the contribution is not significant.

Discussion

The findings with respect to economic factor revealed that economic pulling factor promotes streetism among urban children. This implies that the work the children do on the street makes their life on the street comfortable. This is so because the work brings money. Again, if their family cannot support them financially they believe that when they are on the street they will satisfy their needs. By this fact, the children will prefer to be on the street.

The findings also revealed that the level of family poverty contributes to streetism. The level of parents' poverty determines how life will be for the children at home. If the family fails to provide the basic economic needs for the children, the children may go out to the street to find the means of survival. In reality poverty exists. The findings added that self-financed factor contributes to streetism among urban children. This implies that some of the children on the street stay alone and they need to find a means to survive on the street.

Finally, parental caring attitude also contribute to streetism among urban children. This further explains that some parents do not make the effort of providing the economic needs of their children. Unavailability of basic needs for children often drive children to the street. The studies of Mutuku & Mutiso (1994), CEPAL (1995), Heckman (1996), Karoly, Greenwood, Everungham, Hoube, Kilburn, Rydell, Sanders & Chiesa (1998), Wakira (2002), Marcus & Marshall (2003),; Harper & Marcus, (2003) and Lugalla & Kibassa (2003) supported that economic factors are one of the reasons why many children are on the street.

Summary of the Findings

The study found that:

- Economic pulling factor has positive and significant relationship with streetism among urban children.
- Self-financed factor has positive and significant relationship with streetism among urban children.
- Parental caring attitude factor has negative and significant relationship with streetism among urban children.
- Family poverty levels have negative and significant relationship with streetism among urban children.
- The variables (economic pulling factor, self-financed factor, parental caring attitude and family poverty levels) have positive correlations with streetism among urban children.
- The composite effect of the economic factor variables (economic pulling factor, self-financed factor, parental caring attitude and family poverty levels) is positive and significant.
- Self-financed factor made the greatest contribution, followed by economic pulling factor and parental caring attitude made the third contribution. Poverty levels of the family made least contribution to streetism among urban children.
- Self-financed, economic pulling factor and poverty level of the family made significant contributions to streetism among urban children.
- Self-financed, economic pulling factor and poverty level of the family could predict streetism among urban children.

Conclusions

The study has shown that the four independent variables jointly contribute to the prediction of the variance of streetism among urban children in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria. The study shows that Self-financed, economic pulling factor and poverty level of the family are really promoting streetism among urban children in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria. Therefore, appropriate measures should be taken to ensure that the variables are adequately and appropriately managed so that their contributions to streetism will be minimised or totally eliminated.

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