

## Cultural Factors Promoting 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 cultural factors promoting 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, Nigeria. 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-Eight structured items. These include items on Streetism ( $r=0.7380$ ) and Cultural Factors ( $r=0.7702$ ). Three research questions were answered. Data were analysed using Pearson Product Moment correlation and multiple regression statistics.

The three variables have a joint positive multiple correlation with streetism ( $R=.318$ ). The three independent variables also accounted for 9% of the variance of street children engage in streetism (Adjusted  $R^2 =.090$ ). Family structures made the greatest contribution to streetism among urban children ( $\beta=.248$ ;  $p<.05$ ). The second contribution is made by societal customs ( $\beta=.102$ ;  $p<.05$ ) while the lowest contribution is made by modernisation ( $\beta=.055$ ;  $p<.05$ ). Streetism among urban children was predicted by family structures ( $B=.611$ ;  $t=3.804$ ;  $p<.05$ ) because it made a significant contribution. While societal customs ( $B=.126$ ;  $t=1.523$ ;  $p<.05$ ) and modernisation ( $B=.144$ ;  $t=.864$ ;  $p<.05$ ) could not predict streetism among urban children because their contributions were not significant.

The combination of cultural factors variables (family structures, societal customs and modernisation) proved more effective at predicting streetism among urban children in Ibadan than when considered separately. Family structure is the most potent factor in explaining streetism among urban children. This factor should be taken into consideration in order to reduce the rate of street children in urban area in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Streetism, family structures, societal customs and modernisation

### 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.

What accounts for the phenomenon of street children in a particular culture is difficult to ascertain. Kenya, in which some children on the streets are said to have been born from parents who themselves were street children (Clark, 1982), is bordered by Ethiopia, in which almost all of the working children on the streets return to their families at night (Lalor, Taylor, Veale, Ali, & Bushra, 1992). Both Kenya and Ethiopia have a mixture of Christian and Moslem populations, and both have been equally undemocratic. Kenya is wealthier than Ethiopia yet has more street children. Both countries border the Sudan, also a country of Muslim, Christian, and animist faiths that did not have street children until the recent ethnic violence in the southern part of the country (Veale & Taylor, 1991; Veale, 1992).

Within one country, Ecuador, the numbers of street children vary by region. In Guayaquil, which has a large African influence, there are many street children; in Quito, which is largely influenced by indigenous culture, there are few street children. It might be that street children are a modern phenomenon, that is, they are not found in places with strong indigenous cultures. Thus, Connolly (1990), in a comparative study of street children in Bogota and Guatemala City, found it very difficult to locate street children in Guatemala City, which has a far higher influence of indigenous culture than has Bogota, which has many street children. This would help to explain the situation in Bolivia but not in Peru, which has many street children.

Veale (1992), in a comparative study of street children in mid-19th-century Ireland and the current Sudanese street children, wrote that civil unrest was the reason for the origins of street children in both countries. Civil unrest dating from the Mau Mau struggle for independence has been connected to the origins of Kenyan street children (Nowrojee, 1990). There are also many street children in South Africa, where their high numbers have been related to the country's violent political problems (Swart, 1988). In all of Latin America, Colombia has had one of the most violent popular uprisings. Indeed, its current violence has been connected to the period of la violencia and to the high incidence of street children (Aptekar, 1989a). A worldwide study of street children, perhaps conducted by using the Human Relations Area Files (a collection of indexed ethnographic data on more than 350 societies), would be helpful to learn more about why certain cultures have an over- or underrepresented amount of street children.

Tracing cultural differences is also possible in East Africa, where different tribes of widely divergent cultural traditions live so closely together. A study of the tribal origins of street children might provide a good deal of information about which type of family structure is conducive to producing or not producing street children. What the United States and the developed world have is a large delinquent and violent population, most commonly found in the poor urban slums. Street children are less delinquent or, as I have described elsewhere, they are more like thieves than thugs (Aptekar, 1989b).

For all practical purposes, there are no guns in the slums of Latin American or East African cities, a situation that is considerably different from that in the United States. There are other differences, one of which is that there are far more females among street children in the developed world than there are in the developing world. Also, many homeless children in the developed world are from middle-class families, unlike the case in the developing world. In addition, North American runaway children are more likely to be on the streets because of family discord than because

of poverty. Nearly 80% of American runaways have been physically or sexually abused (Reppond, 1983). Only 20% of the Latin American street children are on the streets because of physical or sexual abuse (Lusk, Peralta, & Vest, 1989).

In line with various research studies in the past, this study investigated Cultural Factors promoting Streetism among Urban Children in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria.

### **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 the situations reflected above, this study aimed at investigating Cultural Factors that are promoting Streetism among Urban Children in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions were answered in the study:

1. What is the composite effect of the cultural factor variables on streetism among urban children?
2. What are the relative effects of the cultural factor variables on streetism among urban children?
3. Which of the cultural 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 cultural 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-Eight (28) 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 cultural factors and streetism.

#### **Administration of the Instrument**

The researchers trained some people as the research assistants. The questionnaires were 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

#### Question 1: What is the composite effect of the cultural variables on streetism among urban children?

**Table 1: Correlation of cultural factor variables and streetism among urban children**

VARIABLES	Streetism	Family structure	Society customs	Modernisation
Streetism	1.000	.295*	.207*	.131*
Family structures	.295*	1.000	.362	-.190
Societal customs	.207*	.362	1.000	-.290
Modernisation	.131*	.190	.290	1.000
Mean	52.4800	10.1960	20.5240	6.5720
Standard Deviation	3.1562	1.2791	2.5557	1.2044

\* Significant at  $P < .05$  level

From table 1, family structures have positive and significant relationship with streetism among urban children ( $r = .295$ ;  $p < .05$ ). This reveals that the family structure from which the children come from determine streetism among urban children. Societal customs have positive and significant relationship with streetism among urban children ( $r = .207$ ;  $p < .05$ ). This explains that some of society customs encourage streetism in urban areas. Again, modernisation has positive and significant effect on streetism among urban children ( $r = .131$ ;  $p < .05$ ). It also indicates that the different changes in the society due to modernisation have contributory effect on streetism among urban children.

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

R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
.318	.101	.090	3.0102

\*Significant at  $P < 0.05$  level

Table 2 shows that there is positive relationship among the cultural factor variables and streetism among urban children. This implies that the three variables are relevant and could influence streetism among urban children. Also, 09% of the total variance in streetism among urban children is due to the three cultural factor variables (adjusted  $R^2 = .090$ ). This means that the remaining 91% is due to other factors and residuals.

From table 3, the R value of .318 obtained tested significant ( $F_{(3,246)} = 9.247$ ;  $p < .05$ ). This shows that the R value is not due to chance.

**Table 3: ANOVA of Regression on the Cultural Factor variables**

Source of variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F-ratio	Sig.
Regression	251.361	3	83.787	9.247	.000*
Residual	2229.039	246	9.061		
Total	2480.00	249			

\*Significant at  $P < .05$  level

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

**Table 4: Relative Effects of Cultural Factor Variables on Streetism among Urban Children**

Sources of variance	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Standard Error	Beta values		
			Rank		

(Constant)	42.726	1.933			22.105	.000
Family structures	.611	.161	.248	1st	3.804	.000*
Societal customs	.126	.082	.102	2nd	1.523	.129
Modernisation	.144	.166	.055	3rd	.864	.389

\*Significant at P<.05 level

From the table 4, family structures made the greatest contribution to streetism among urban children ( $\beta=.248$ ;  $p<.05$ ). The second contribution is made by societal customs ( $\beta=.102$ ;  $p<.05$ ) while the lowest contribution is made by modernisation ( $\beta=.055$ ;  $p<.05$ ).

### Question 3: Which of the cultural variables will predict streetism among urban children?

From table 4, only the family structures ( $B=.611$ ;  $t=3.804$ ;  $p<.05$ ) could predict streetism among urban children because it made a significant contributions. While societal customs ( $B=.126$ ;  $t=1.523$ ;  $p<.05$ ) and modernization ( $B=.144$ ;  $t=.864$ ;  $p<.05$ ) could not predict streetism among urban children because their contributions were not significant.

### Discussion

The findings with respect to cultural factors show that the family structures of the children contribute to streetism among urban children. The number of children in the family contributes to streetism. This implies that some parents give birth to more children than they can cater for. Many of the parents cannot afford to send their children to school and if the children have nothing to do at home the next thing for them to do is to go on the street in order to find the means of survival.

Societal customs also affect the level of streetism among urban children. This study also revealed that some societal customs are not favourable to children welfare. Some traditions make children to support their family at a tender age which is against the fundamental right of the children. The aspect of culture which assumes fathers to be solely responsible for families up keep encourages streetism. This is so because communities where wives do not engage in any economic activity to support their families with total dependence on husband would eventually drive the children to the street when the husbands fail in their duties to their families.

The findings also revealed that modernisation in society promote streetism among urban children. The issues of modernisation bring about improvement and advancement in cities and villages. The development in the cities attracts many children from villages to cities to find a means of livelihood. Kopoka (2002) and Lugalla & Kibassa (2003) observed that the advent of modernisation is one of the evident factors promoting streetism. The street children travel down to cities where they know no one and the best place they take abode is the street. The advent of media communication does not reach remote areas for the parents to realise the challenges street children face. Some previous studies also supported cultural factors as the one of the reasons why children are on the street (Reppond, 1983; Swart, 1988; Lusk, 1989; Aptekar, 1989a; Aptekar, 1989b; Nowrojee, 1990; Veale & Taylor, 1991; Veale, 1992; Lalor, Taylor, Veale, Ali, & Bushra, 1992).

### Summary of Findings

The study found that:

- Family structures have positive and significant relationship with streetism among urban children.
- Societal customs have positive and significant relationship with streetism among urban children.
- Modernisation factor has positive and significant relationship with streetism among urban children.
- The variables (family structures, societal customs and modernisation) have multiple relationships with streetism among urban children.
- The composite effect of the independent variables (family structures, societal customs and modernisation) on streetism among urban children is positive and significant.
- Family structures made the greatest contribution to streetism among urban children. Societal customs made the second contribution while modernisation made the least contribution.
- The contribution of family structure factor is significant.

- Family structure could predict streetism among urban children.

### Conclusions

The study has shown that the three independent variables jointly contribute to the prediction of the variance of streetism among urban children in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria. The study shows that the family structures 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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