INSIGHTS INTO AN ENTRENCHED VALUE ELEMENT AND ITS SOCIO-ECONOMIC EFFECTS ON GIRL-CHILD EDUCATION IN RURAL YOBE STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to provide a qualitative explanation of research results on the socio-economic effects of street hawking on girl-child education in Yobe State, Nigeria. The paper provided additional information, understanding, and policy suggestions which will serve as a source of literature and document in formulating inclusive policies on the girl-child. The research methodology and design involved qualitative approach using case study that specifically explored the socio-economic effects of girl-child's street hawking experiences. The study sites included three Local Government Areas of Yobe State. Purposive sampling strategy was used to select thirteen (13) sets of informants. A total of three (3) street hawking girls between the ages of eight (8) to fourteen (14) years and three (3) female parents featured as informants. Three (3) traditional rulers in each of the LGAs served as the gate-keepers and one (1) government official as minor participant. Snowball samples of three (3) male parents who have daughters involved in street hawking in each of the selected Local Government Areas were used for data credibility. Data collection technique involved interviews, focus group, participant observations, using semi-structured open-ended questions as well as the use of available documents. Video and audio recording of the girls at home, at streets, at the market square and major intersections was conducted. Ethical issues of consent and confidentiality were addressed by obtaining both written and oral consent of informants using their native language (Hausa) for clarity and understanding of their roles. Data analysis of interviews involved transcriptions, coding, and the repeated readings of the transcripts that identified major themes. Observational data were also converted to field notes, coded, and analysed for patterns of ideas that support major themes of the analysed interview data for validity. Major findings are presented as themes on major issues as exposure to all forms of abuse, inadequate safety and being left behind in basic literacy. This paper is of significant value due to its novelty because it explores how Amartya Sen's capability approach can be applied to conceptualize and assess gender inequality in a developing country like Nigeria, as there has not being a detailed or comprehensive research on the socio-economic effects of street hawking in Yobe State, Nigeria.

KEYWORDS: Education, Girl-Child, Street Hawking, Yobe State

INTRODUCTION

In every human civilization and culture there are fundamental values which the people cherished and admired. Such values are worth chosen thoughtfully from alternatives and performed on repeatedly. At the individual's level, values

are those elements which a person is proud of and willing to publicly affirm in his/her attitudes and beliefs. Related but different from the preceding view, a third strand of the debate shifts the argument from individual conviction to one of general behaviours in the sense that values could be seen as a set of fundamental convictions, acceptable principles in standard, or life stances normally act as general guides to behaviour (Halstead & Taylor, 2005). Thus, values could be seen as points of reference and action that are closely connected to personal identity and living virtuous life in society. In Nigeria, certain values have been fundamental even though societal values are made by people; but the same values guide the behaviour of the people within a particular society. In any case, the positive or dominant values that served different societies across the county includes respect and honour accorded to parents, elders, men and women of honour. Hospitality has been part of societal life, while others have to do with friendliness, truthfulness, trustworthiness, love and renewable virtues as they are used and add flavour to life (Pratto, Sidanius, & Levin, 2006). However, the adoption of some negative values has "poised" the society and dented the image of some particular groups of people making them vulnerable to all sorts of societal vices. In Yobe State, there is a particular value element as street hawking which has become an accommodated norm mainly undertaking by supposed to be school age girls. It is against this backdrop that this paper has come into effect to contribute to the current debate. The paper is unique coming at a time when the girl-child involvement in street hawking has become a deep-rooted value among the people of state. The writing of this paper is equally timely when the effect of street hawking is beginning to attract some attention as the issue of girl-child education is still beset with persistent challenges in Yobe State (UNDP, 2013).

THE CURRENT TRENDS

Even though most of the street hawkers live within the realm of the third world nations, developed countries have their portion of street hawkers. Currently, the estimated global population of street hawkers from the International Labour Organisation (2013); Embalch (2013); Ali, Shahab, Ushijima, de Muynck, (2004); Ensign & Gittelsohn (1998); Forster, Tannhauser, & Barros, (1996); Scanlon, Tomkins, & Lynch, (1998); & Whyte, (1992) stood at one hundred and fifteen million: Fifteen million in the United States, Europe, Australia, and Canada, twenty million in Latin America, fourty million in Asia, and the remaining fourty million in Africa number rising daily. Some social critics perceived the practice differently. In most industrialized nations, the majority of street hawkers left home to the street to escape physical battery often due to broken families, sexual abuse or neglect. For some, being on the street may not be unconnected with the desire for freedom, but also because of socio-economic problems (Ali et al., 2004). In Latin America, the majority of street hawkers in some part of Brazil and Colombia distinguished themselves as ''workers'' (Noto, Nappo, Galduróz, Mattei, & Carlini, 1997). In some southeast Asian countries, studies from India, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Los, and Cambodia by Hosen, Khandoker & Islam, (2010); Tiwari, Gulati, Sethi, & Mehra, (2002); Lalor (1999); Scanlon et al. (1998); have indicated that the reasons for children's hawking is due to their desire for economic independence. Research from India in particular, reports physical abuse at home as a major cause for home leaving (Ali, et al 2004).

Globally, street hawkers are both victims of extreme socio-economic stress. Recent report UNICEF (2014); UNDP, (2013); Ali et al (2004); & Aderinto (2000) widely acknowledged their vulnerability to societal vices. A report from Brazil Noto et al (1997) acknowledged suicide attempts by street hawkers due to their persistent infuriating living conditions. Accounts from Ethiopia for instance, discovered older boys to have frequently mugged girl hawkers of their income (Lalor, 1999). According to the contributory classic of starvation UNICEF (2014) caring ability plays a central role

in the dietetic status of most street hawkers. In Kenya, Ayaya & Esamai (2001) Pakistan, and India Ali et al (2004) also found malnourishment to be rampant among street children. However, report from South Africa suggests that street boys were found to be comparatively more underfed than girl hawkers (Nzimakwe & Brookes, 1994). In the Philippines both females and males have been found to be seriously malnourished and under-height due to lack of proper diet and hygiene. In additional report, half of the sampled Canadian street hawkers experienced food deprivation or hunger (Antoniades & Tarasuk, 1998). In contrast, studies in Indonesia have found the nutrition status and health of street hawkers to be much better than their socio-economic peers (Ali, et al., 2004). However, this may not be unconnected with the various types of diets they must have been testing while on their own n the street.

Almost eighty five percent of street hawkers cited poverty as the leading factor in their presence on the street; this included those whose fathers were not working. Most of such hawkers hawked to supplement the family income for sustainability. The majority of the street hawkers had never been to school, and about two-thirds of them were also uneducated. In most of the African countries, studies from Nigeria, Ethiopia, Ghana, and South Africa have shown that street hawkers range in age from 9 to 12 years (Umar, 2012; Estacio & Marks, 2005; Aderinto 2000; Lalor, 1999). In Ghana for example, most of the street hawkers had no ties with their parents. They often subjected to poverty, and neglect. Specifically, poverty has been found to be a typical prerequisite of a child's early entry into the informal employment sector. However, the Ghanaian scenario is totally different from what is found in Nigeria generally. The street hawkers in this part of the country maintained regular ties or links with their families. It is an established fact that, although they spent quiet a longer time on the street, but their focus is home which they returned at the end of the daily sales (Umar, 2012). In other words, majority of street children are on the street but they have regular ties with their parents as they live with them. Most researchers have argued that street hawking in Nigeria is seen as a projection of poverty (Usman, 2010). However, in Yobe State specifically, the motives for street hawking are much more than that. Street hawking may also, not be unconnected with the inadequacies and limitations of weak social policies on youth welfare system and educational development. It is a "trend that has taken a toll for the worse" and thus, the ineffectiveness of such social policies have increased the proliferation of street hawkers especially the girl-child in Yobe State. This and other similar negative values have taken the place of positive values needed for development human civilization in the society. Specifically, the girl-child dominated the 'trade' due to lack of equal opportunities in Yobe state. Most of these hawkers are between the ages of seven to fourteen years, with very few of them falling above fifteen years. The hawking scenario could be overwhelming to a stranger, but the people including the researcher team have generally accepted it as part of their 'socio-economic' culture (Ali et al., 2004). Therefore, the factors that enhanced the emergence of such negative value in Yobe state need to be properly explained as the basis of negativity in the value system. The paper attempts to addresses the question:

- What are the socio-economic effects of street hawking on girl-child education?

- How does girl-child involvement in street hawking engendered exploitation and marginalization?

- How does street hawking contour the educational opportunity for the marginalized?

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

The main theoretical base is centred on Sen's capabilities approach using human development paradigm (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2000). The choice of this approach emerged because of the need to involve the individuals in the

developmental problems that affect them and their immediate society because; no society can rise beyond the level of its educational opportunities. Thus, the paper interprets street hawking, as exploitation that engendered inequality in education, as marginalisation that stalled equal opportunities in relation to the capability approach to human development, as suggested by (Nussbaum, 2000). It assesses equal opportunity in education in the space of capabilities i.e. the range of effective educational opportunities and choices available to the girl-child in relation to their vulnerability in the given context. The paper uses capabilities as 'entitlements, 'opportunities', and 'functioning' processes, all of which if given or made available to the individual girl-child may have reasons to value their lives. Therefore, the greater the capabilities and entitlements of an individual in a society the higher is the level of development of that society. The positive usage of these facilitates valued capabilities, while its absence results to capability deprivation (Sen, 1999).

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The content of the paper is supported by findings of a field work conducted in Yobe State. Although, the state has 17 local government areas (hence LGAs); this paper focuses on only three LGAs of Damaturu, Bade, and Potiskum. The selection criterion of Damaturu was informed by its position as the state capital and yet with large number of street hawkers. Bade LGA was chosen because its location deep into the interior. The selection of Potiskum LGA was not only because of its heterogeneous nature, but as a result of its strategic location and being the economic nerve centre of the state. The study focused on key informants mainly supposed to be school age girls who found themselves with no option but get involved in street hawking due to the deep-rooted societal recognition of socio-cultural values. Study sites covered major streets, central markets, and intersections in an attempt to better capture the street hawking dynamics of girls. The map of Yobe State is shown in figure: 1 illustrating the location of Damaturu, Bade, and Potiskum LGAs. The research methodology was based on qualitative approach using case study, which specifically focused on informants' viewpoints which provided them with a voice to narrate their experiences (Merriam, 2014).

Purposive sampling strategy was used to select thirteen (13) sets of informants (Creswell, 2013). A total of three (3) street hawking girls between the ages of eight (8) to fourteen (14) years and three (3) female parents featured as key informants. Three (3) traditional rulers served as the gate-keepers who provided entrance to the site, assisted in the identification of the places of study, and also helped the research team in locating the participants a good practice commended when embarking on qualitative approach (Merriam, 2014). Snowball samples of three male parents who have daughters involved in street hawking in each of the Local Governments were used for data credibility. In addition, one (1) policymaker from the State Primary Education Board (hence SUPEB) was selected for this study. The data collection techniques involved participants observations, one-on-one interviews, focus group discussions, as well as the used of available data. An in-depth type of interview that attempts to capture the viewpoints of various participants as the case being studied were conducted using semi-structured open-ended questions which lasted for an hour time duration with the female parents. Thirty minutes (30) focus group discussions was conducted separately with the girls in consideration of their 'work' demand, timing and preparations to the streets, markets, and major intersections. The girls were also given the opportunities to narrate their ordeals, the essence of which is to make them feel they are heard and their stories are told. In addition, the strategy adopted provided a better understanding of the girl's social realities, their "natural" experiences. Ethical issues of consents and confidentialities were addressed by obtaining oral and written consents of all participants in their local language (*Hausa*) for clarity and understanding of their roles. The respect of cultural norms of the ethnic groups

and religious beliefs as Muslims has been put into consideration during the interviews. Participants were grouped according to their gender and age. This process allowed a free and more engaging conversation among the participants thereby eliminating any form of personality intimidation. Participant observations of the girl's street hawking dynamics and interviews were used to collect data which were later converted to field notes. This process was carried out with the aid of recorder and video recording of their activities. The raw data were analysed using transcriptions, sorting, and repeated readings that identified major themes. Direct quotes are provided from the interviewees as well as the use of existing literature (Umar, 2012; Ali et al., 2004). Thus, the strategy enabled the research team to enter into the world of the individuals and understood their viewpoints.
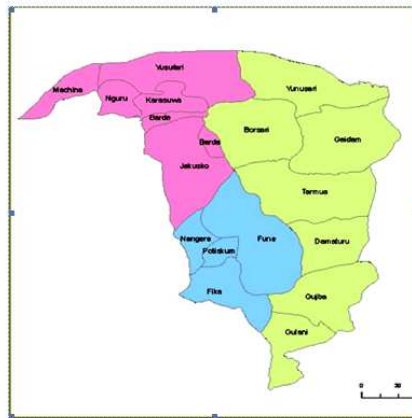
Figure 1: 11Map of the Study Areas

FINDINGS

This section presents the data obtained from the informants descriptively, and the discussions are based on the informant's assertions. A reflection of the data gathered during the fieldwork revealed some negative effects of girl-child involvement in street hawking in Yobe State. First and foremost, participant observations at most of the major intersections revealed there was a tendency for "customer" or some reckless men to be brazen to open hostilities towards the street hawkers who did not appear in the *Hijab* (The usual attire wore by most Muslim ladies in the Yobe State). In addition, from the researcher's interview data most of street hawkers interviewed had no any future ambitions about education. Therefore, the socio-economic effects of street hawking (*talleh*) on girl-child education, from the informants' viewpoints include exposure to all forms of abuses, inadequate safety, and lack of education. Even though, most parents see it as a positive enterprise but, with a price because the street hawkers as individuals and in group get exposed to social vices. This is in line with the views of one of the gate-keepers who acknowledged that:

"Street hawkers are exposed to societal vices because they mixed up with bad elements of the society and they encounter all forms of harassments that range from verbal, psychological, and emotional types" (Aged 53. Face to face interview, 6th August, 2015 at Bade Emirate Council).

Similarly, participant observations and interviews in many instances have further revealed those girls experience harassment from their regular customers. In the course of the fieldwork, it has been observed by the research team that even though there is no documented evidence on such maltreatments, however, from the researcher's interview data with

their parents, they reluctantly narrates how some of the "buyers" misbehaved. This indeed confirmed some past incidences of slight harassments. Also, a mother of one of the street hawkers during a face to face interview lamented that:

"Girl-child involvement in street hawking is a cultural value which we have inherited, not because we all like it but because it is being cherish by the majority of our people here" (Aged 60. Focus group discussions, 18th February, 2015 at Potiskum).

It is important to expatiate that even though street hawking has its challenges and disadvantages, still the people cherished it as a 'protected value' which the people hold dear and near. In addition, street hawking prevent the girls from performing obligatory prayers regularly which is one of the fundamental pillars of Islam as well as central to their lives as Muslim. They are also confronted with lack of safety in the course of street hawking activities. As observed by the researcher, this lack of safety ignites an inquiry of whether it is worth the labour of the girls. One of the street hawkers was a victim who had experienced road accidents while hawking and recalled her ordeal in one focus group discussions where she explained:

"A lorry almost broke my shoulder when I tried to rush and advertised my wares to the passengers inside. Alhamdulillah!! [Giving glory to Allah for spearing her life] I have now recovered and fully back to business as usual" (Aged 13. Focus group discussion, Focus group discussions, 20th August, 2015 at Potiskum).

The above summation explained some of the major negative effects the girls encounter in the course of their involvement in street hawking. Aside being exposed to moral and environmental dangers, street hawking had affected their ability to pursue basic education. Again one of the gate-keepers viewed that:

"Street hawking has terrible effects on girl-child education because it discourages them from going to school because of the little money they realise from hawking. Due to the time taking on street hawking, there is no or little time to engage in both Islamic and Western education. The small amount of money derived from hawking takes away the interest of education on girls" (Aged 53. Face to face interviews, 9th February, 2015).

Based on what above excerpts, the primary negative social implication of the girl-child involvement in street hawking is their lack of access to basic education. Even if they got enrolled, it stalled in the process as street hawking has led to either dropout rate, or non-completion of their education. Recently, report from Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, 2015) in conjuncture with the Yobe State Ministry of Education (hence MoE) and SUPEB under the Monitoring and Evaluation Department also revealed statistical data of 15% for girls and 85% for boys. As one of the informant puts it:

"The figure indicated that boy's enrolment rate far out weight that of the girl-child. So, they are significantly far left behind, the non-school enrolment effect on them is enormous as enrolment rate is 15% for girls and 85% for boys. Hawking is not only excluding them to access their basic right to education, but exposes them to danger" (Anonymous).

The figure signified the gender disparity between girls and boys but it should be made clear that the girl's basic educational opportunities are being denied, or fluctuates due the informal economic engagement. It is apparent that the Yobe State Primary Education Board charged with the responsibility of girl-child education programme needs to strategize its policies and to provide them some programmes that will minimize the challenges as street hawkers.

DISCUSSIONS

The intention is to put forward the views and meanings of those value elements based on the informants' assertions. Regardless of differing opinions, girl-child involvement in street hawking is an indication of deep-rooted socio-cultural values which has eaten deep into the fabrics of the society. In the course of the fieldwork, the paper unveiled the ramifications of street hawking as most of the street hawkers did so under unsecured environments. While hawking, they also adopted some of the abusive words from "garage men". Such kind of behaviour suggests that they sometimes tended to be miserably impatient to those who might try to bully them. The consequence of such kind of behaviour brings about a twist to the usual norm of how girls should be raised in traditional way (Usman, 2010). A close observation further lightens the vulnerability of the street hawkers to verbal defilements. From the some of the narrations, it has been discovered that within the street hawkers and their parents, they knew or heard of someone who has been harassed by those who often disguised as "buyers". Though the victims are often less visible simply because the harassment took place privately (Alhassan, 2015). Perhaps, the interpretation here means that nobody even knows their circumstances. As such, they secretly deal with the inner shock. The researcher argued that the consequences of the adverse effect to their continued silence create emotional trauma and pain. The implication is that such kinds of situation may further degenerate which could lead to physical illness due its stressfulness. Therefore, no matter how one tries to ignore, it may result to adverse health effect as the emotional distress may threaten their lives. Of note is that the younger girls have found themselves under such situations because they are underprivileged. Another injurious implication is that such girls would in turn raise underprivileged families because they would lack solid future economic base. Under such circumstances, most of the girls as victims of harassments lived in a gradually more confusing realm. While, most maladjusted perpetrators of such offences could easily strike and escape with little or no risk of facing litigation.

Still the primary adverse consequence of the girl-child involvement in street hawking is their lack of access to education. Even for those who were initially enrolled, they got stalked in the middle of the process which led to their absenteeism, dropout rate, and eventual non-completion of schooling. In line with the claim by ILO (2013) exploitation of the girl-child can take many different forms the highest being street hawking often at the expense of their schooling. It is worth noting that street hawking is different from "house work" because the former is a kind of exertion that is worrying and unfair to the physical, social, and moral development of the girls as it exposes them into long hours of exertion in unsafe locations (NDHS, 2014; & ILO, 2013). While "house work" denotes to training or learning that is not damaging. The work schedule is always flexible and receptive to the capability of the individual child. The work the girls do is intended to encourage their contribution within the family and society at large. Besides, with reference to the age and their constant stay on the street, the hawkers do not in any way experience the liveliness of childhood culture often full of great exploration but are rather submerged to the "hawking culture" at most times (Ali et al., 2004). Consequently, everybody has become a suspect of misplaced value as immorality and lack of security of life have increased among the hawkers. The society is therefore, characterized by high level of suspicion, and apprehension pointing accusing fingers. In the researcher's opinion, the involvement of these innocent girls into street hawking could be related to the cultural beliefs and self-centredness of the men because they knew if a girl is educated, she would certainly know her rights. Thus, such men within their vicinity could not exercise their unholy patriarchal dominance on those educated girls and women. So, for any girl that is educated, it is a matter of knowing her rights and other civic responsibilities which the men often violate if she

is left uneducated. After all, the contributions of these girls on the psyche of the patriarchal society are much more than their limited number within the "public space" could suggest.

CONCLUSIONS

The finding of the study in addition to pertinent literature serves as the contextual base of the discussion with major themes that mainly provide direct quotes from the viewpoints of informants as evidence supporting the inclusion of the themes (Merriam, 2014). The paper largely placed its focus on the views and assertions of the informant's in the three LGAs of Yobe state. The paper proceeds by presenting an overview hawking trend around the globe. It then moves on to provide the conceptual framework of the study taking the analysis of the Amartya Sen's capabilities approach and human development paradigms as a starting point. The conjoining theme in the paper is that education is key in the fight against discrimination and some negative societal values. An increased level of education among the girl-child is crucial to social progress in Yobe State. In addition, direct quotes are provided from the informants as well as the use of existing literature (Merriam, 2014; Umar, 2012; & UNDP, 2014). The results revealed that the socio-economic effects of girl-child involvement in street hawking include inadequate safety, exposure to societal vices, and lack of access to education. In particular, this research has found that even though there have been previous studies on girl-child education, however, the researcher argued that there has been relatively few and sustained attempts to explore why school age girls do not have access into both Western and Islamic schools. The paper concludes that effective strategies as girl-child friendly policies, greater collaboration and advocacy with community stakeholders, frequencies of instructional supervision are vital to schooling inclusion of the girl-child which will minimize constant hawking. Thus, the paper provides workable data for future modification of government policies and other initiatives. More so, the paper is of significant value to its novelty by exploring the effects of street hawking on the girl-child education within the social structures of three local government areas of Yobe state, lying in the far north eastern region of Nigeria.

Figure 2: Error! No text of specified style in document.**-2 Cross-Section of Hawkers at the Major Intersections in One of the Study Area**

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