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MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSES OF STREETISM BASED ON RECENT EVIDENCE FROM URBAN CITIES IN SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA: KEY INDICATORS, CAUSES AND PERCEIVED AGE-LONG INTERVENTIONS

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Abstract

Streetism is a phenomenon where children, typically under the age of 18, live and, or work on the streets, often without adult supervision or guardianship. This study, through multidimensional approach (QUAN, qual and document analysis). streetism based on recent evidence from urban cities in southwestern Nigeria. The study assessed key indicators, causes and perceived age-long interventions to streetism. Document analysis examined were from veritable sources such as Google scholar, Scopus, and African Journals Online (AJOL). The population comprised all stakeholders across various divides such as religion, occupation, community, law enforcement agencies, marketplaces, basic schools, and families. Purposive technique was used to select 530 participants from six capital cities in southwestern Nigeria. Data were collected and analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. Findings revealed top three indicators of streetism to include negative past experiences, abandonment/neglect and rural-urban migration were rated as critical causes of streetism. Also, top three rated perceived age-long intervention were allocation of specific funds, social worker roles and adoption of vulnerable children. Qualitative result showed that several street children in the region have limited or no access to formal schooling, with barriers such as lack of documentation, school fees, and transportation costs hindering their enrollment and attendance. The implications of the findings were also discussed. It is recommended that concerted efforts must be made to improve access to education, social services, family support, and economic opportunities, as well as initiatives to combat poverty, promote child welfare, and strengthen child protection systems.

Keywords: *Streetism, Children, Key Indicators, Age-long interventions.*

Introduction

Streetism depicts children who live and work on the streets due to a lack of family ties or worse still, stuck in manipulative relationships, where their guardians (or in certain cases parents) use them to support the household financially, through various activities on the streets. Streetism is a significant social issue in Nigeria. The global

phenomena of street children are alarming with a concomitant effect of a large scale (Abate, et al., 2022). According to Cavazzoni, Fiorini and Veronese (2023), streetism is a concept that explains children who live and work on the streets due to broken family ties and being stuck in manipulative relationships whereby their guardians use them to support the household financially through various activities on the street. It also refers to the phenomenon where children, typically under the age of 18, live and/or work on the streets, often without adult supervision or guardianship (Bayissa, 2021). By implication, it explains the life situations of street children who usually live in the streets and engage in menial income (Mulu, et al., 2022). Streetism is also colloquially referred to street-involved children, street children, children on the street, vulnerable children with continuous migration to or on the streets.

They are homeless, abandoned, or runaways, and they survive by engaging in various activities such as begging, scavenging, selling goods, or performing menial tasks. Studies like Sofiya and Galata (2019), Verma, et al., (2020) and UNICEF (2020) have explained that these children in developed and developing countries face difficulties on the streets due to the absence of several facilities and children supporting programmes. By implication, most of these children experience homelessness and they live on the streets of towns, cities, villages. To contextualise, street children in African setting is categorised into two namely street children of the streets have no contact with their families and street children on the streets those that sleep at home but are based on the streets during the day. There are children who work on the street and the other group which is referred to as *children of the street* because they do not only work on the street but live, sleep and have food on it (Cavazzoni, et al., 2023).

African street children have been characterised as predominantly male and disproportionately from Sub-Saharan Africa (UNICEF, 2020). According to Afek, et al., (2021), the world population of various categories of street children can be estimated to around 200 million. It is estimated that 100 million children between the ages of 5 and 18 are homeless in less developed world countries. It is discovered that millions of children worldwide are subjected to poverty, abuse, and neglect, yet only a minority choose to abandon their homes in search of a supposedly better life on the street (Berhanu, et al., 2019). This is also traced to the fact that several of these children do not have steadfast support system, and they must deal with their problems on their own. The reliance on estimation of the population of street children has been due to fluidity and unpredictable lifestyle of the street children that make it difficult to have accurate figures (Maepa, 2021).

The population of these street children in Africa was estimated by Sofiya and Galata (2019) to be 16 million. This is because in Africa, street children's phenomena, is associated with the advent of market economy. Specifically, in Nigeria, Verma, et al., (2020) remarked that Nigeria has 7 million of children on the street. It is also ranked third after India and Russia (Kaiser and Sinanan, 2019). Unlike Africa, the western world too has its fair share of streetism. For instance, several decades ago, the state of New York used to send orphans out on railway and cars to various towns to be contracted out as long-term day labourers to strangers

(Ugwuadu, 2017). This was a savage way to solve this problem of preventing street children in the early civilisation. People, including street children, considered mentally infirm were kept, warehoused in large institutions indefinitely, so that they would not be out on the streets (Taiwo, et al., 2021). This approach suddenly changed about the era of President J.F. Kennedy.

Various studies have tried to unravel indicators of child streetism so that necessary measures can be put in place to correct the anomaly. It is believed that recognising these indicators is crucial for identifying and addressing the needs of street-involved children, providing them with the necessary support, protection, and opportunities for rehabilitation and reintegration into society (Daba, et al., 2020). In the same vein, identifying these indicators early on can help in providing appropriate interventions and support to address the root causes of child streetism and improve the well-being of affected children (UN-CRC 2019). Streetism is a complex issue influenced by factors such as poverty, family dysfunction, urbanisation, conflict, and lack of access to education and social services. They are highly vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, violence, substance abuse, and involvement in criminal activities (Daba, et al., 2020).

In the same vein, scholars like Mulu, et al., (2022) have attributed this socio-economic challenge to personal and contextual reasons which must be abolished. The exact number of street children in Nigeria is challenging to determine due to the transient nature of their lives and the lack of comprehensive data collection. Estimates vary widely, with figures ranging from hundreds of thousands to several million (Cavazzoni, et al., 2023). Specifically, some reports suggest that there are between 7 million to 15 million street children in Nigeria, although these numbers can be challenging to verify due to the transient nature of street life. Street children are more prevalent in urban areas, particularly in major cities like Lagos, Kano, Osogbo, Port Harcourt, Akure, Ibadan and Abuja (UNICEF. 2020). By implication, over 70% of street children are found in urban areas, with cities like Lagos, Kano, Port Harcourt, Abuja, and other capital cities having significant populations of street children (Taiwo, et al., 2021). Street children in Nigeria can range in age from as young as 5 years old to late teens, with a significant portion falling between the ages of 10 and 14.

Street children in Nigeria face significant risks, including exploitation, abuse, malnutrition, exposure to violence, and limited access to education and healthcare (UNICEF, 2020). While both boys and girls are affected by streetism, boys are often overrepresented among street children. However, girls may be less visible due to engaging in activities like domestic work or commercial sex work, which may occur indoors (Aransiola, 2013). In the same vein, while boys are more visible among street children, girls face unique vulnerabilities, including sexual exploitation, early marriage, and domestic servitude. Falore and Asamu (2010) stated that approximately 60% of street children in Nigeria have never attended school, while the remaining 40% may have dropped out due to various factors such as poverty, family issues, or lack of access to quality education. Thus, they are left with various forms of economic activities to survive, including begging, street vending,

scavenging, petty trading, and sometimes involvement in criminal activities (Fawole, et al., 2004).

These statistics highlight the complex and challenging circumstances faced by street children in Nigeria and underscore the importance of comprehensive interventions to address their needs and protect their rights. No doubt, major urban centres in southwestern Nigeria, such as Lagos, Ibadan, Abeokuta, and Osogbo, have significant populations of street children due to factors such as rural-urban migration, economic opportunities, and family displacement (UNICEF, 2020). As Nigeria's largest city and economic hub, Lagos has a particularly high concentration of street children (Ikechebelu, et al., 2008). Thus, reports suggest that tens of thousands of children live and work on the streets of Lagos, engaging in activities such as begging, scavenging, and informal labour (FMOH, 2015). In southwestern Nigeria, access to education for street children remains a significant challenge.

In southwestern Nigeria, several street children in the region have limited or no access to formal schooling, with barriers such as lack of documentation, school fees, and transportation costs hindering their enrollment and attendance. In terms of gender dynamics, while boys are more visible, girls also face significant challenges as they are involved in activities such as domestic work, street vending, or commercial sex work, often facing heightened risks of exploitation and abuse. These children, like their counterparts in other regions, often lack access to essential healthcare services. Malnutrition, untreated illnesses, and exposure to infectious diseases are common among street children in the region. In the same vein, they often face significant barriers to accessing daily necessities such as food, shelter, healthcare, and education. No doubt, streetism has a variety of effects on both children in the street and the society in which they find themselves. These effects can be detrimental to their families, communities, and the nation at large.

Various government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community-based initiatives operate in southwestern Nigeria to address the needs of street children. These interventions include shelter programmes, education and skills training initiatives, healthcare services, and efforts to reunify children with their families where possible (Olaleye and Oladeji, 2011). However, the absence of support and secure conditions contradict the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Murray, 2019). The aim of this study is to arrive at an accurate and thoughtful insight of the experiences of participants on the assessment of key indicators, perceived age-long interventions, and plausible solutions to streetism in Nigeria. By implication, this study, sought to trace the pathways of streetism within the Nigeria space. Globally, the street children's phenomena have grown disproportionately in Africa, Caribbean, and Pacific countries.

Various studies such as Setiawatia and Syafarib (2020) have examined the factors that drive children to the streets, rehabilitation; however, little attention has been accorded to multidimensional analysis of streetism based on recent evidence from urban cities in southwestern Nigeria. It is discovered that no study has adopted a multidimensional approach of quantitative, qualitative and document analysis to examine the critical problem, policies and programmes associated with streetism.

Thus, addressing child streetism requires a multi-faceted approach that involves tackling underlying issues such as poverty, improving access to education and social services, addressing family dynamics, and providing alternative support structures for at-risk children. Addressing child streetism requires comprehensive strategies that address the root causes of the issue, provide support and protection to street-involved children, and work towards their rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

It is said that this may involve efforts to improve access to education, social services, family support, and economic opportunities, as well as initiatives to combat poverty, promote child welfare, and strengthen child protection systems. Sofiya and Galata (2019) remarked that while interventions to combat child streetism have shown promise in addressing the immediate and underlying factors contributing to the issue, sustained efforts and investments are needed to achieve lasting impact and ensure the well-being and rights of street-involved children. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are essential for assessing the effectiveness of interventions, identifying areas for improvement, and scaling up successful approaches. While interventions to combat child streetism face numerous challenges and limitations, ongoing efforts guided by evidence-based approaches, community participation, and a commitment to children's rights have the potential to make a meaningful difference in the lives of street-involved children and their communities (Yusuf and Tsagem, 2022).

Trading blame for streetism cannot be attributed to a single entity or individual, as it is a complex issue influenced by various factors and systemic failures. However, there are several stakeholders who bear responsibility for addressing the root causes and consequences of child streetism. This is because while assigning blame may be tempting, it is more constructive to focus on collaboration, accountability, and collective action to address the systemic issues that contribute to child streetism and ensure the well-being and rights of all children (Aransiola, 2013). By working together, stakeholders can implement comprehensive strategies that prevent children from ending up on the streets and provide support and opportunities for those already affected by streetism.

The Nigerian government has made several past efforts to address the issue of child streetism and improve the welfare of vulnerable children. In 2003, Nigeria adopted the Child Rights Act, which is aimed at protecting the rights of children and promoting their welfare. The Act provides for measures to prevent child abuse, exploitation, and neglect, as well as provisions for the rehabilitation and reintegration of vulnerable children, including street children (Faloore and Asamu 2010). The Nigerian government has established agencies and departments responsible for the welfare of children, such as the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) and the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants, and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI). These agencies work to address issues such as child trafficking, exploitation, and displacement, which contribute to child streetism. The Nigerian government has implemented various education initiatives aimed at increasing access to education for vulnerable

children, including street children (Abubakar-Abdullateef, et al., 2017).

These initiatives may include the provision of free or subsidised education, school feeding programmes, and efforts to eliminate barriers to education such as school fees and uniform costs. The government has implemented social welfare programmes targeting vulnerable populations, including street children and their families. These programmes may provide cash transfers, food assistance, healthcare services, and other forms of support to alleviate poverty and improve the well-being of vulnerable children (Obimakinde, 2023). The government has supported the establishment of rehabilitation centres and shelters for street children, where they can access necessities, education, vocational training, counseling, and other support services. These centers aim to reintegrate street children into society and prevent them from returning to the streets (UN-CRC 2019). Despite these efforts, challenges persist in effectively addressing child streetism in Nigeria, including limited resources, gaps in implementation, and the complex nature of the issue.

It is said that continued collaboration between government agencies, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders is essential to tackle the root causes of child streetism and improve the lives of vulnerable children in Nigeria (Ugwuadu 2017). added that various stakeholders play crucial roles in curbing child streetism. Thus, by engaging these additional stakeholders and fostering multi-sectoral collaboration, it is possible to develop comprehensive and sustainable strategies to curb child streetism and ensure the well-being and rights of street-involved children (UNICEF, 2013). Firstly, it is said that governments are responsible for formulating and implementing policies and programmes aimed at addressing child streetism (Ayenew, Kabeta & Woldemichael, 2020). This includes developing child protection laws, allocating resources for social welfare programmes, providing access to education and healthcare, and enforcing regulations to prevent child exploitation and abuse. Hence, the body saddled with the responsibility of formulating policies and programme that will change the narrative (Taiwo, et al., 2021).

In the same vein, Ugwuadu (2017) explained that government may not solely be responsible for addressing this issue. However, non-government agencies (NGOs) play a vital role in providing direct services to street-involved children, including outreach, shelter, education, healthcare, and rehabilitation (Taiwo, et al., 2021). This is because they can advocate for policy reforms, raise awareness, mobilize resources, and collaborate with other stakeholders to address the root causes of child streetism. Cavazzoni, et al., (2023) added that the society to which the children found themselves is also a factor. By implication, community leaders and local authorities can play a critical role in mobilising communities to support street-involved children, raising awareness about their rights and needs, and providing a supportive environment for their reintegration. They can also facilitate collaboration among stakeholders and ensure the effective implementation of interventions at the grassroots level (Olaleye an Oladeji, 2011).

It is given that families and caregivers are the primary protectors of children and play a crucial role in preventing child streetism (Owoo, 2018). Thus, providing support to vulnerable families, strengthening parenting skills, promoting family

reunification, and addressing issues such as poverty, substance abuse, and domestic violence can help prevent family breakdown and child abandonment (UN-CRC 2019). In addition, Obimakinde (2023) explained that schools and educational institutions play a vital role in providing access to education and opportunities for street-involved children to learn and develop essential skills. They can also identify at-risk children, provide support services, and create inclusive environments that cater to the diverse needs of all children, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Hence, there is need for more study on a multidimensional approach to assessing streetism in Nigeria. This could provide a more comprehensive picture and deep insights into investigating this complex issue which is anchored in real-life situations. The multidimensional analysis of streetism based on recent evidence from urban cities in southwestern Nigeria will help to galvanise the engagement while also assessing key indicators, risk factors and perceived age-long interventions.

Objectives of the study

Generally, the study assessed street from three key dimensions namely qualitative, quantitative as well as document analysis from reputable sources. Specifically, the study seeks to address critically the following five objectives;

- i. To ascertain key indicators of child streetism.
- ii. To find out critical causes of child streetism in southwestern Nigeria.
- iii. To assess interventions, policies and programmes deployed to mitigate streetism in recent time.
- iv. To ascertain the level of interventions, policies, and programmes effectiveness.
- v. To find plausible solutions to ameliorate this challenge.

Research questions

From the stated objectives, the five research questions were raised for the study

- i. What are the key indicators of child streetism?
- ii. What are the causes of child streetism?
- iii. What is the perceived age-long interventions of streetism?
- iv. How effective are the age-long interventions for addressing streetism?
- v. What are plausible solutions to streetism?

Method and Materials

The study adopted the multidimensional approach, which is a mixture of the mixed methods design (QUAN + qual), and secondary data were retrieved from journal articles, news items and other electronic materials written on the complexities of streetism with a view to teasing out the key indicators, causes and interventions through analysis of veritable sources such as Google scholar, Scopus, and African Journals Online (AJOL). The quantitative data were collected from 530 stakeholders in six capital cities of southwestern Nigeria. The selection of stakeholders was initially purposive as guided by the street shop owners who were familiar with the parental figure and thereafter by snowball technique in each of the

capital city. A semi-structured in-depth interview were conducted with twelve key leaders representing the divide.

Result and Discussion

Research Question 1: What are the Key Indicators of Child Streetism?

The qualitative analysis carried out among participants revealed the following as critical indicators of child streetism; engagement in criminal activities, health issues, emotional and psychological distress, drug or substance abuse, social isolation, lack of education, visible presence on the streets, lack of stable housing, begging or hawking, dirty or unkempt appearance, lack of access to basic needs, exploitative relationships, limited or absent parental supervision, presence of siblings or peers, disengagement from formal systems, aimless migration, visible signs of abuse or neglect. The excerpts from the interview conducted are; *“when you see a society with number of hawkers or wandering kids. You can easily identify that these people are street children. They beg for food and money on the street. Here in Osogbo, not only the Hausas that are begging, even, indigenes are also begging and sleeping on the street” (Participant A_64_F)*. *“These children are easy to identify. They are beggars with turn dresses aimlessly walking about. Some of them pretend to be scavengers to steal from innocent people. Some help in carry load to get paid. Some are seated begging with bowls in their hands (Participant B_51_M)*. *“What order indicators do you expect. They are loitering around the streets and corners. They are jobless. When you see an underage who is supposed to be in school during the schooling hour and he or she is outside doing nothing is street children”*. *“Many of them are homeless. They lack meaningful trace and record” (Participant C_63_M)*. *“Without doubt, lack of stable housing, begging or hawking” (Participant D_57_M)*. *“They are limited to or absent from parental supervision, there is no presence of siblings or peers, also they are usually and previously disengaged from formal activities like schooling etc” (Participant F_59_F)*.

Research Question 2: What are the Causes of Child Streetism?

Table 1: Mean Responses and Rank Order of the Causes of Child Streetism

Sn	Items	Very Major	Major	Minor	Very Minor	Not At All	\bar{x}	Std	Remark
1	Economic issues/ Abject poverty	36 6.8	155 29.2	218 41.1	86 16.2	35 6.6	3.1340	.98715	14 th
2	Abandonment/neglect	73 13.8	180 34.0	175 33.0	51 9.6	51 9.6	3.3264	1.12585	2 nd
3	Rural-urban migration	62 11.7	202 38.1	143 27.0	92 17.4	31 5.8	3.3245	1.07399	3 rd
4	Products of street living/parenting	56 10.6	188 35.5	179 33.8	78 14.7	29 5.5	3.3094	1.02451	4 th
5	Truancy/personality traits	62 11.7	193 36.4	135 25.5	88 16.6	52 9.8	3.2358	1.15649	10 th
6	Discrimination within family	27 5.1	128 24.2	228 43.0	75 14.2	72 13.6	2.9302	1.06181	21 st
7	Polygamous homes/ relationship	37 7.0	205 38.7	193 36.4	67 12.6	28 5.3	3.2943	.95858	6 th
8	Parents/ guardian's death	40 7.5	156 29.4	160 30.2	85 16.0	89 16.8	2.9491	1.19516	20 th
9	Parent/guardian alcoholic behaviour	48 9.1	208 39.2	167 31.5	70 13.2	37 7.0	3.3019	1.03775	5 th
10	Domestic violence, others)	22 4.2	251 47.4	133 25.1	62 11.7	62 11.7	3.2057	1.08833	12 th
11	Parental/ guardian's divorce/separation	23 4.3	177 33.4	246 46.4	66 12.5	18 3.4	3.2283	.84685	11 th
12	Escaping abusive (Physical, Sexual and Emotional).	22 4.2	158 29.8	247 46.6	62 11.7	41 7.7	3.1094	.93822	16 th
13	Children psychological predisposition	37 7.0	158 29.8	204 38.5	95 17.9	36 6.8	3.1226	1.00756	15 th
14	Vulnerability of children	69 13.0	144 27.2	213 40.2	54 10.2	50 9.4	3.2415	1.10257	9 th
15	Resilience to achieve	60 11.3	170 32.1	124 23.4	139 26.2	37 7.0	3.1453	1.13861	13 th
16	Parental/ guardian discipline/punishment mechanism	54 10.2	172 32.5	194 36.6	90 17.0	20 3.8	3.2830	.98720	7 th
17	Academic/Skill performance pressure	59 11.1	170 32.1	123 23.2	92 17.4	86 16.2	3.0453	1.26080	17 th
18	Attention Issues/Listening gap	27 5.1	143 27.0	218 41.1	61 11.5	81 15.3	.9509	1.09538	19 th
19	Gap in resource provision	34 6.4	188 35.5	221 41.7	62 11.7	25 4.7	3.2717	.91911	8 th
20	Parents/ guardian's job crises	38 7.2	125 23.6	199 37.5	86 16.2	82 15.5	2.9075	1.13916	22 nd
21	Negative past experiences	47 8.9	203 38.3	199 37.5	53 10.0	28 5.3	3.3547	.96176	1 st
22	Inability to connect to	19	214	125	72	100	2.9623	1.19959	18 th
Weighted average: 3.165 Threshold: 3.0									

The key causes of streetism in Nigeria. “Negative past experiences”, “Abandonment/neglect” and “rural-urban migration” were ranked top three prominent causes of streetism in Nigeria.

Research Question 3: What is the perceived age-long interventions of streetism?

Table 2: Mean Responses and Rank Order of the Perceived Age-Long Interventions of Streetism

Sn	Items	Very Major	Major	Very Minor	Minor	Not At All	\bar{x}	Std	Remark
1	Access to infrastructural facilities	0 0	136 25.7	95 17.9	144 27.2	155 29.2	2.4000	1.15786	10 th
2	Free and qualitative education	25 4.7	261 49.2	65 12.3	75 14.2	104 19.6	3.0528	1.26799	5 th
3	Family bond	25 4.7	101 19.1	149 28.1	124 23.4	131 24.7	2.5566	1.18657	8 th
4	Allocation of specific funds	86 16.2	268 50.6	127 24.0	29 5.5	20 3.8	3.7000	.93382	1 st
5	Creation of ministry of social welfare	34 6.4	160 30.2	159 30.0	78 14.7	99 18.7	2.9094	1.20306	6 th
6	NGOs' interventions	11 2.1	118 22.3	141 26.6	129 24.3	131 24.7	2.5264	1.14714	9 th
7	Media Education	12 2.3	155 29.2	140 26.4	91 17.2	132 24.9	2.6679	1.20141	7 th
8	Counselling services by concerned stakeholders	37 7.0	158 29.8	204 38.5	95 17.9	36 6.8	3.1226	1.00756	4 th
9	Social worker roles	69 13.0	144 27.2	213 40.2	54 10.2	50 9.4	3.2415	1.10257	2 nd
10	Adoption of vulnerable children	60 11.3	170 32.1	124 23.4	139 26.2	37 7.0	3.1453	1.13861	3 rd
Weighted average: 2.93 Threshold: 2.50									

From the table above, the table revealed the perceived age-long interventions of streetism. “Allocation of specific funds”, “Social worker roles”, “Adoption of vulnerable children”, were ranked top three interventions which have been deployed overtime.

Research Question 4: How effective are the age-Long Interventions for addressing streetism?

Thematic Analysis of the Effectiveness of the Age-long Interventions for addressing streetism

The qualitative analysis carried out revealed that the interventions are not effective. The excerpts from the interviews conducted are as follows; *“The approaches are faulty as some do not address a battered life while some do not reintegrate a child back into his or her family setting” (Participant F_59_F). “Streetism starts with the family and not the street. You cannot continue to send them away from the street and think that that will correct the anomalies” (Participant C_63_M). “I do not see any effectiveness in some of these policies and programme. For instance, school feeding programme was a mess. You remember during the covid era where no one was in school, the system still claims that they were feeding pupils. This is purely a charade” (Participant D_57_M). “For instance, after counselling, what next. Many of them are abandoned after taking pictures with them for financial gains from foreign donors. It is not effective. Go to the north and see how these children are roaming the street” (Participant A_64_F). It is questionable. Funds are allocated for ministries, departments, parastatals, and agencies in charge of some issues like this, they are used up or looted for personal gains (Participant B_51_M). It can be concluded that the strategies identified in addressing streetism in southwestern Nigeria are ineffective and needs to be rejigged.*

Research Question 5: What are plausible solutions to streetism?

Thematic Analysis of the Plausible Solutions

The following themes emerged from the data: families should be strengthened to prevent streetism, sound peer support can prevent streetism, schools can be used to prevent streetism, having access to social services can prevent streetism, churches can prevent streetism, a supportive community can prevent streetism and access to government services can prevent streetism. The excerpts of the interview conducted are as follow; *“taking them off the street, free education, encouraging them to learn skills and son (Participant A_64_F). “I remember in the past when catholic churches were building schools, hospital and workplaces to help people. The same can be replicated by government and non-governmental agencies to help proffer solution to the problem” (Participant B_51_M). (Participant C_63_M). “There is need for government to make legislations on how to reduce this nefarious act. There is need for prosecuting parent who cannot control their children” (Participant D_57_M). “Everybody has role to play to ensure that streetism is ameliorated. Build school, educate parents, provide basic amenities of life as government. Also, create technical schools to help reduce the problem by fixing the child for meaningful activities” (Participant F_59_F). It can be deduced from the finding that streetism can be reduced if schools are built, education are made free, technical centres are created, parents are educated on parenting and family planning as well as other concerns taken care of.*

Discussion of Findings

Critical Indicators of Streetism

The findings of the study revealed that several indicators of streetism includes

tattered dressing, aimless migration, under-age begging for food, absence of parental guidance, among others. The findings of the study is in line with the works of Yusuf and Tsagem (2022), Setiawatia and Syfarib (2020) as well as that of Olaleye and Oladeji (2011), but at variance with the submission of Obimakinde and Shabir (2023) who affirmed that beyond physical appearance, streetism could be identified through mental and deficiency in healthcare issues of children on the street.

Critical Causes of Streetism

Table 2 revealed the key causes of streetism in Nigeria. “Negative past experiences”, “Abandonment/neglect” and “rural-urban migration” were ranked top three prominent causes of streetism in southwestern Nigeria. The finding of the study is in line with the works of Bah (2018); Corcoran (2016) and Derivois, et al., (2019) but at incongruence with the studies of Mekonen, Adhena, et al., (2020). It is said that streetism rife when there is parental disconnect in the life of a child. The study by Nasir and Siddiqui (2017) affirmed this assertion that child abandonment is one of the major indicators of streetism.

Effectiveness of the Age-long Interventions for Addressing Streetism

The weak effectiveness of the age-long interventions for addressing streetism was affirmed by the empirical findings from Berhanu, et al., (2019); Daba, et al., (2020); Evans, et al., (2018) and Kaiser and Sinanan (2019). While negotiating the reasons for non-effectiveness of the strategies. The submission of Bah (2018) added that the effectiveness of interventions to combat child streetism can vary depending on various factors such as the context, the implementation strategy, resources available, and the extent of collaboration among stakeholders. Some interventions have shown promising results, while others may face challenges or limitations. This study by Cavazzoni, et al., (2023) has bridged some critical gaps in literature as it is in line with the findings of this study. This is because the effectiveness of these strategies is in the ability to monitor the growth of the children after taking them off the street especially, for the intervention from government and non-governmental agencies and not the parents who could abandon or allow them to return to the street.

Plausible Solutions to Streetism

The findings of the study agree with the submission of Taiwo, et al., (2021) and Ugwuadu (2017). However, it is not in tandem with the submission of Bayissa (2021) whose study explained that modern mechanism should be put in place to address streetism in southwestern Nigeria. It is suggested that such should include a functional legal framework, quality education, non-governmental agencies' role, community outreach and awareness, family support programs, shelter, and rehabilitation centre, education and skills training among others and associated intervention. These and several others will help to address the issue at hand.

Conclusion

The global phenomenon of streetism is on the increase. This issue explains the

situations of street children who usually live on the streets and engage in menial income. African street children have been characterized as predominantly male and disproportionately from Sub-Saharan Africa. The population of these street children in Africa is alarmingly great. The socio-economic challenge has been attributed to personal and contextual reasons in which stakeholders have called for its amelioration. In Nigeria, street children face significant risks, including exploitation, abuse, malnutrition, exposure to violence, and limited access to education and healthcare. These statistics highlight the complex and challenging circumstances faced by street children in Nigeria and underscore the importance of comprehensive interventions to address their needs and protect their rights. In southwestern Nigeria, several street children in the region have limited or no access to formal schooling, with barriers such as lack of documentation, school fees, and transportation costs hindering their enrollment and attendance. Several factors have been identified as key indicators and causes of streetism in southwestern Nigeria. In the same vein, efforts must be made to improve access to education, social services, family support, and economic opportunities, as well as initiatives to combat poverty, promote child welfare, and strengthen child protection systems.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

1. There is need for policy engagement to drive higher enrolment rate in school at all levels of education.
2. Effective community outreach and awareness programmes can help mobilise support and resources for street-involved children.
3. The provision of support to at-risk families can help prevent children from ending up on the streets.
4. There is need for outreach programmes for providing immediate assistance and linking them to appropriate services.
5. There is need to empower street-involved children to participate in decision-making processes, and community initiatives can enhance their self-esteem, agency, and resilience.
6. Community-based rehabilitation programmes would also help to promote social inclusion and acceptance of street-involved children within their communities.
7. Collaborative partnerships among government agencies, NGOs, civil society organisations, and communities can leverage resources, expertise, and networks to maximize impact.

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