

## **Accidental Injuries among Juvenile Hawkers: Clog in the Wheel of Sustainable Socio-Economic Development of a Nation**

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

A hawker in Ghana quoted by Kwankye, Nyarko and Tagoe (2007) lamented:

“Sometimes, the drivers of tro tro and other vehicles threaten to hit us with their vehicles or run the wheels on our feet. For first timers, it is difficult for them because, they don’t know how to stand by the road and move between vehicles in the traffic. As a result, one was knocked down last month and this gave him infection on the leg”

Apart from vehicular accidents, many other situations resulting in injuries during hawking do occur not only in Ghana, but in many other countries including Nigeria. Both Davis (2008) and Ranger (2010) attested to the fact that the main risk of hawking is accidental injuries. As cited by Okafor (2010), street hawking is a very common form of child labour in most cities in Nigeria including Lagos, Ibadan, Sokoto, Port Harcourt, Enugu, Jos and Benin, especially, where incomes are low and inadequate to cater for a whole family. This researcher has observed that hawkers’ population is dominated by under-aged children who are neither conscious of their safety nor have the opportunity to decline their parents/guardians/masters’ directives to hawk. The risk of accidental injuries among these children is increased by the fact that they usually hawk in company of their mates and are never guided by adults as it was with the traditional hawking system (Adeyemi, 2007). For these reasons Akpan and Oluwabamide (2010) revealed that accidents involving street hawkers especially children occur almost on a daily basis. The socio-economic, socio-medical and socio-legal implications of such accidents are enormous. The child, his family members, community, State and Nation stand to share the brunt of the child’s involvement in accidents.

The Government’s enforcement strategy to eradicate street hawking especially by children has not yielded much effect. While the number of juvenile hawkers keeps increasing by day with daily injury occurrence ranging from bruises to life loss, related researches on child labour are concentrated on street children generally while issues specifically on hawking are treated as passing fancy in the available ones. The Nigerian policy makers are caught up with deciding whether street hawking should be totally eradicated or given a legal status. Those that advocated continuance of hawking have looked at it from the immediate economic stand point whereas, Okafor (2010) opined that when children work as wage earners to supplement the family income, it may solve some family economic problems but create new ones both for the children and the society at large. There is the need to identify these new problems as they relate to injury and socio-economic development of a nation such as Nigeria, hence, this study

## **2. OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this study were to conduct a non-empirical study focusing on the nature, etiology, and widespread of street hawking especially in Nigeria. It reviewed related literature on the injury risk behaviours of juvenile hawkers, sources and types of accidental injuries among them, the effects of such injuries on socio-economic development of the nation and solution to hawking and hawking related-problems in Nigeria.

## **3. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE**

### **3.1. Nature of Street Hawking**

#### **3.1.1 Definition of Hawking**

By definition, hawking by children is a form of child labour which entails the act of moving round the streets and other areas not designated as markets to sell essential products (Oyinye, Soronnadi & Udemezue, 2002). As stated by Edu (1999), hawking is the selling of things (usually goods) along the roads or from one place to another, while Abisoye (2013) defined it as the act of canvassing for sale of items by hawkers along the street, from house to house or in public places in town.

#### **3.1.2 Hawked Items**

According to Onuzulike (2002), hawkers sell wares including daily needs, electronics, food items (Oyinye, et. al., 2002; Akpan & Oluwabamide, 2010), fruits and beverages, mobile phone accessories and cards (Kwankye, Nyarko and Tagoe, 2007), cold soft drinks, every kinds of fruits, cold sachet water, clothing materials, footwear and other materials (Isamah & Okunola, (2002) cited by (Okafor, 2010). In addition, Winnie (2005) identified commodities such as cosmetics, flowers, traditional herbs, craft/artwork/pottery, plastic products, hardware, and general merchandise such as office stationary etc. as hawked items.

#### **3.1.3 Hawking Modes/Structures**

The Ministry of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation (2003) categorized hawkers into two based on their hawking systems. The first category comprised of street hawkers who carry out vending on a regular basis in a specific locations. According to Winnie (2005), traders use structures including tables, racks, wheelbarrows, handcarts and bicycle seats to display their goods, while others use mats and gummy bags. Other hawkers carry their commodities on their heads and shoulders while some of them hang theirs on walls, trees, fences and so on. The second category consists of those who hawk on irregular basis and without a specific location. Hawkens in this category include those who sell goods in weekly bazaars, during holidays, festivals and so on.

#### **3.1.4 Hawking Sites**

As revealed by Ombudsman (2008), hawking activities are particularly rampant where pedestrian traffic is heavy and along main roads and streets near shopping centers and at corners where they can be seen by pedestrians and motorists. Monique, Mihir and Horn (2000) and Nan (2008) identified market places, bus stops, major thoroughfares, streets where pedestrian traffic is high and where sidewalks are wide, residential areas ... newly paved roads that quickly attract new cars and foot traffic as hawking locations. Ogundele and Ojo (2003) said that school-age boys and girls run after vehicles to sell their wares, while Shailong, Onuk and Beshi (2011) added that some hawk in commercial buses and at long traffic hold-up.

### **2.1.5 Hawking Time and Duration**

It is not doubted that some hawkers are in-school children and did not intend to do street hawking as permanent vocation (Kwankye, et. al. 2007), yet, a good number are either school drop-out or in Never-Attended-School category. No wonder why Oyinye, et. al. (2002) said that while some hawk throughout the day (an indication that such children don't attend school at all or that they play truancy), some hawk only in the early mornings, evenings and weekends. Onuzulike (2007) added that they did not only hawk during early morning hours but at night and during inclement weather. Fawole (2003) further observed that children are sometimes forced to hawk about commodities like soft drinks, water, groundnuts and bread till very late night.

Specifically, Ebigbo (2003) found that in Ibadan, 20 percent of children hawked after school, a pattern which Adegoke (2009) said is not prohibited by Nigerian law. This implied that hawking during school hours thereby deterring the child of attending school is what the constitution frowns at. While interpreting the Nigerian Child Abuse Law, Adegoke (2009) emphasized that in traditional Nigeria, children are expected to lend helping hands to their parents and that hawking is permitted provided it is done outside school hours and that goods given to a child to hawk commensurate with his or her age and size. In line with this interpretation, as many as 40% of Ebigbo's subjects opined that children are sent by God to help their parents economically.

### **3.2 Etiology of Street Hawking**

Throughout the world, researchers like Munyakho (1992), Anarfi (1997), Feldman (2001), Fawole (2003), Olufayo (2006), Onuzulike (2007), Alebiosu (2007), Akpan and Oluwabamide (2010), Asare (2010), Ekpenyong and Sibiri (2011) and Abisoye (2013) and many others concurred that poverty is the principal cause of child labour cum street hawking. In fact, Abisoye (2013) found that in Ibadan, as many as 93.3% of juvenile hawkers in his study attributed their involvement in hawking to poor economy with parents having no job. Corroborating this fact, Oloko (2006) submitted that the Nigerian child is the direct victim of the poverty level of his or her parents. Feldman (2001) reiterated that necessity most times pushed parents to insist that their own children work. Such families survive on the meager income derived from hawking. Obiri (1996) also shared this view and Aliyu found out that as many as 83% of children worked for parents. Olufayo (2006) buttressed this view by saying that children with poor socio-economic background were left with no option than to abandon their right to education, withdraw from school and take to odd jobs including hawking.

Atuguba (2006) observed that foster children who are not properly treated, educated or settled moved out to towns and cities to engage in various forms of child labour including street hawking. Munyakho (1992) concluded that the most conspicuous symbol of poverty is the growing pressure of children in the street who are making a living by scavenging, hawking etc. Bishkek (2001) summed the role of poverty in hawking and concluded that the higher the poverty, the higher the number of street children. Other predisposing factors to child street hawking are; high cost of living, lack of sponsorship, poor school performance, poor parenthood, large family size, peer group pressure, poor home conditions, lack of parental care... poor scholastic achievements (Fawole, 2003); Godfrey, 1996) cited by Onuzulike, 2007). In addition, unemployment, loss of parents (Akpan & Oluwabamide, 2010), cultural and religious factors coupled with lack of enforcement of labour restrictions and

inconsistencies in the anti-labour legislation (Okafor, 2010) were indicated as causes of hawking.

### **3.3. Widespread of Street Hawking**

In Argentina (Feldman, 2001), Arab Cities (Unicef, 2001), Ghana (Anarfi, 1997) and in Africa generally, a good number of children under fourteen years engage in street vending. For instance, Anarfi estimated that more than a third (36%) of street children in Ghana involved in street hawking. International Labour Organisation cited by Oyinye, et. al. (2002) also estimated that 25% of children between 10 and 14 years work in Africa and most of the children trade on the streets. This situation became worse in year 2004 as ILO cited by Okafor (2010) estimated that 218 million children aged between 5 – 17 were involved in child labour. In Nigeria, Akinbola (2007) observed that hawking is common sight in the streets of major cities like Lagos, Ibadan, Kano, Kaduna and PortHarcourt till date. Ogbе (2007) affirmed that street trading is the most commonly seen child abuse in Nigeria. According to Alebiosu (2007), street hawkers in urban cities are mostly children. These findings contradicted what operated in the traditional society where Adeyemi (2007) revealed that trading and hawking of goods were strictly meant for women while small children were not allowed to hawk without an adult guide. In Nigeria, Akpan & Oluwabamide (2010) revealed that both boys and girls whose ages ranged between 12 and 17 years hawk. On comparative basis, Bose (1992) cited by Wagenge (2004) said that most street children are boys. Aliyu (2006) also corroborated this fact by saying that males between 11 and 13 years constituted the largest group of children in child labour in Nigeria. In his finding, Oloko (2006) reported female dominance in child labour. This was supported by Winnie (2005) who found that in Africa countries investigated, women dominated street vending because of limited economic opportunities, gender bias in education and augmentation of husbands' income. However, Ebigbo (2003) saw no difference between female and male representation in child labour.

### **2.4. Injury Risk Behaviours of Juvenile Hawkers**

Accidents involving hawkers is inevitable when one looks at their various risk behaviours and especially juveniles. Onuzulike (2007) remarked that it is a frightening scene seeing children weaving in and out of traffic on the highway as they hawk their wares. In Nigeria, the following injury risk behaviours are well observable during hawking:

(a) Hanging on moving buses to gain entry in order to sell goods; (b) alighting buses carelessly after selling wares; (c) running/chasing moving vehicles to sell wares and collect money; (d) shuttling or weaving in and out of traffic and crossing the roads in careless manner; (e) hawking in deserted areas like quarters where they feel they will have high bidders; (f) hawking without the guide of adults; (g) imitating touts; (h) street fighting/watching people fight; (i) hawking in crisis areas like robbery scenes, warring areas etc.; (j) hawking at night and following supposed customers to unknown destinations

### **3.5. Juvenile Hawkers and Accidental Injuries**

Few researches like those conducted by Eke (1993), Ebigbo (2003), Akpan and Oluwabamide (2010), Ekpeyong and Sibiri (2011) and Shailong, et. al. (2011) have looked at children hawking and accidental injuries and death and came to the conclusion that hawking has great contra-effects on the health and safety of children. Eke (1993) cited by Onuzulike (2007) categorized the effects of street hawking into: physical, psychological and social effects. In this section, the injury-related problems which hawkers encounter are discussed.

### **3.5.1 Hawkers and Vehicular Accidents**

On top of the list of problems hawkers face as they move along the streets is vehicular accident. In fact, Ranger (2010) affirmed that the main risk of hawking is bus running over hawkers. Feldman (2001), Nwadinigwe, et. al. (2006), Kwankye, et. al. (2007), Asiedu (2007), Onuzulike (2007), Akpan and Olubamide (2010) and Ekpenyong and Sibiri (2011) attested to this fact. For instance, as many as 40% respondents in Ekpenyong and Sibiri (2011) agreed that accident is the main danger in street hawking, while 84% hawkers in the study of Shailong, et. al. (2011) had actually been injured by motorists. In line with this findings, 47 (51%) respondents in the study of Nwadinigwe, et. al. (2006) indicated that children' injuries were from road accidents and that 70% of road traffic accidents were pedestrians who were either crossing the major roads unguarded ... or were hawking along the road. According to Akpan and Oluwabamide (2010), hawkers involved in accidents usually sustain serious injuries, some get deformed or paralysed and some end up dead. One of the respondents in the study of Kwankye, et. al. (2007) stated her feelings on hawking and accidents in these words

“At times, I just feel sorry for myself because you can be pressed between two vehicles if you are not lucky, you could be knocked down”

### **3.5.2. Hawkers and Injuries from Falls**

For the fact that street hawking is not given legal status in most countries, hawkers are always cautious to avoid being caught by members of the task force. Also, an average hawker always find means to evade paying trading permit levies which at times could be as meager as twenty naira. Davis (2008) attested to the fact that the relationship between hawkers and Local Government officials has never been cordial. The author reported that hawkers are subject to widespread harassment and intimidation by the government officials. For these reasons, hawkers are always on the run at the sight of the police, task force or Local Government officials. In the process of running, they fall and get injured. A respondent in the study of Kwankye, et. al. (2007) has this to say:

“When we see the men in red shirt (task force) we disperse immediately by running helter skelter ... we also run in all directions in a pandemonium and when you are not lucky, you will meet a vehicle head-on”

In addition, young hawkers often fall in the course of running after moving vehicles either to gain advantage over other hawkers or to collect money from passengers in moving vehicles. Many hawkers have fallen off buses with resultant death.

### **3.5.3. Hawkers, Street Fighting and Injuries**

The big issue (2002) cited by Wagne (2004) had a vivid picture of the fighting spirits of street children when he said ‘Life for the street children is a painful experience. They often get into fights, they stab each other, they get run over by cars. They get beaten up. They get burned. Corroborating these statements, Uduak and Ubong (2003) opined that street hawking has moral implications which include moral laxity, exploitation, and bad company ...disobedience. Street children are involved in other escapades as cheating and street fights among others. Hawkers most often are very aggressive to get customers especially when they have low sales. They use vulgar and very provocative language on customers whose bargaining strength is much and their co-hawkers. Many times, these customers don't spare them when angered. They easily initiate fights when one co-hawker gains advantage over the other. Children who hawk at bus stops and motor parks always get involved in fights against area boys and bus conductors over refusal to pay for goods bought. Akpan and Olubamide (2010) stressed that children who hawk around motor parks have the

tendency to imitate the negative attitude of touts who are very abusive and aggressive. Also, hawkers constitute majority of on-lookers in situation of fights on the streets. It is common sight too to see children hawking even in crisis areas and situations (e.g. robbery scenes, political fights and civil strife situations). In most cases, on-lookers bear the brunt of such fights.

#### **3.5.4. Hawkers, Police Harassment and Injuries**

By Nigerian standard, hawkers and the policemen are not friends especially where the laws prohibiting street vending are strictly enforced e.g. Lagos state and some tertiary institutions etc. There had been instances when hawkers were caught, their goods impounded or destroyed and are thoroughly beaten with injuries and detained until their parents show up. Such cases of hawkers' brutality are not limited to Nigeria, as such confiscation of hawkers' goods and money, beating and killing of hawkers by the China local Chengguan (an auxiliary police force tasked with keeping streets clean and orderly) were reported (Anderlini, 2013). A respondent in Monique, et. al. (2000) lamented:

“Police will beat us accusing us of selling stolen goods”

Such hostility to hawkers across Africa was confirmed by Skinner (2008). Winnie (2005) also reiterated that most vendors in Africa do not have authorized sites of operation which results in incidences of confrontation and brutality between street vendors and urban authorities and that hostility towards street hawkers are universal. Also, hawkers are most times the target of stray bullets. The Big Issue (2002) cited by Wangenge (2004) asserted that hawkers get shot by the police.

#### **3.5.5. Hawkers, Rape and Injuries**

According to Ekpenyong and Sibiri (2011), many child hawkers are involved in rape and are sexually molested. In agreement, Nzewi (1998) indicted street hawking as a major factor in all the three levels of sexual abuse which are: (a) exposure to overt genital seduction, (b) genital stimulation and (c) witnessing adults in the act of sex. Ebigbo (2003) and Kane (2005) opined that exposing young girls to hawking in Nigerian cities means that over half of them will either be raped or enticed into sexually compromising situations. Akpan and Olubamide (2010) held similar view when they said that female hawkers may be lured into sexual intercourse by adults. These acts of rape obviously might result in physical injuries which may range from bruises to tearing of the vagina and to cases of severe bleeding and death (Thomas, 2006). Most often, psychological injury may accompany rape. Additionally, Akpan and Oluwabamide (2010) said that young female hawkers are prone to sexual abuse with the consequence that they end up contracting sexually transmitted diseases.

#### **3.5.6 Hawkers in Extreme Weathers and Injuries**

As observed by Akpan and Olubamide (2010), hawkers are always exposed to extreme weather like conditions of the sun and excessive heat, rain and cold resulting in ill health including pneumonia. Okafor (2010) estimated that over 4 million Nigerian children are engaged in labour activities and working long hours (average of 12 hours daily) in poor and unhealthy conditions while all (100%) of hawkers in Shailong, et. al. (2011) revealed that they worked under unfavourable weather without time for resting.

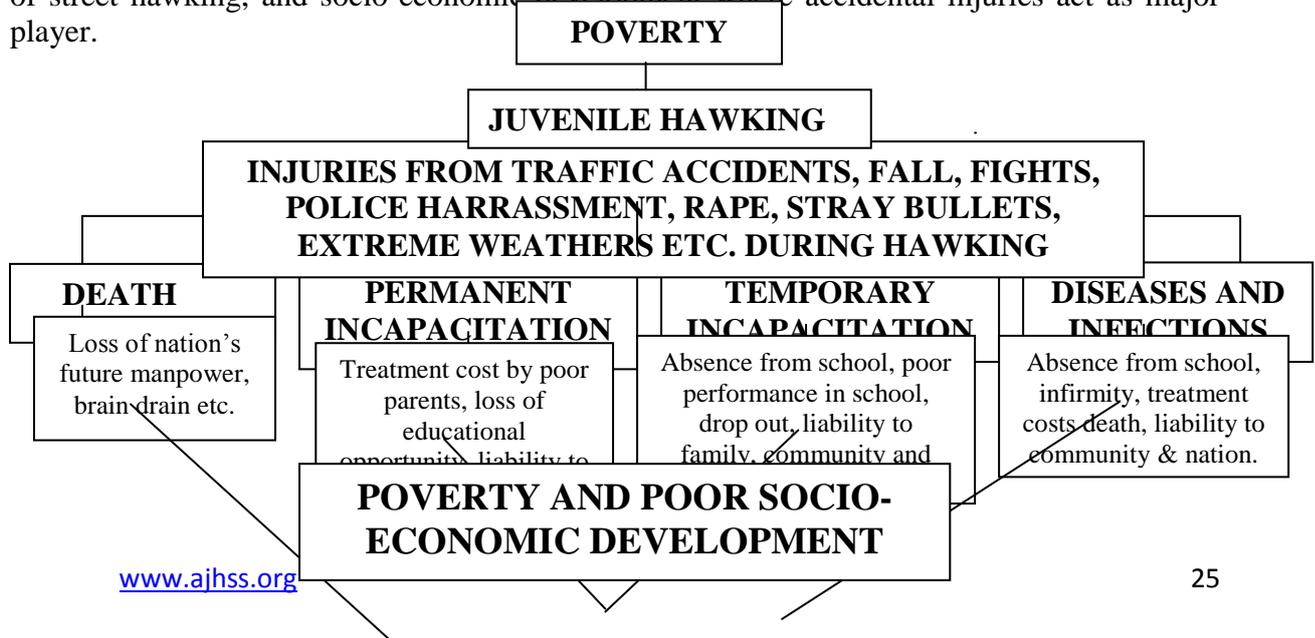
#### **3.5.7. Other Injury Sources During Hawking**

Shailong, et. al. (2011) noted that child hawkers are often targets of attack by insane people. As stated by Oloko (1989), street hawking exposes the hawker to dangers posed by fraudsters

and actual murderers, because of their vulnerability at odd working hours ... becoming easy target to occult predators (ritual killers).

#### **4. HAWKING, INJURIES AND SUSTAINABLE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The Brundtland report (Barbier, 1987; Anderson, 2002 cited by Okafor (2010) defined sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. By implication, the children are the future of their societies and the more reason why every child must be given opportunity to live, survive, develop their full potentials for the future (Okafor, 2010). Looking critically at the hawking situation in Nigeria of which economic importance had been a controversial issue among many researchers, the question is, how well have child hawkers been given opportunity to develop their full potentials for the future through hawking? Although, Winnie (2005) said that street vending has significant contributions in the urban and national economy of African countries, as it provides employment and income to many. Infact, Nwadinigwe, Ihezue and Iyidiobi (2006) in their review indicated that child hawking has remained a very important aspect of family support and commerce in Nigeria. Adding to these strong points of hawking, Monique, et. al. (2000) stated that street vending is one of the few readily accessible avenues of employment... women are attracted to vending because of its low cost of entry into many types of hawking and its schedule is flexible. In his view, Oloko (1989) said that hawking is encouraged because of its convenience for those who purchase their needs while in traffic, motor parks, offices and business centres and that it keeps vulnerable youths from engaging in anti-social behaviours (Asare, 2010). Other researchers revealed that the importance of hawkers are felt the more when they are not in their usual selling points. Contrarily, a host of other researchers like Okafor (2010), Akpan and Olubamide (2010), Okpukpara and Odurukwe (2006), Shailong, et. al. (2011), Kaletapwa (2013) and Dada (2013) saw the situation of a working Nigerian child as a clog in the wheel of sustainable socio-economic development of Nigeria as a nation. Ekpenyong and Sibiri (2010) opined that street hawkers face health problems with detrimental effects on their school attendance, punctuality and performance. This was confirmed in the study of Shailong, et. al. (2011) which indicated that as many as 60% of hawkers go to school late. Besides, Dada (2013) attested that hawkers may be knocked down by irate motorists, and become physically handicapped. However, this researcher vividly presents in Figure 1, the relatedness of street hawking, and socio-economic development where accidental injuries act as major player.



Source: Self survey, 2011

Figure 1: Relatedness of Street hawking, accidental injuries, Poverty and sustainable development

Information presented in Figure 1 indicated that poverty informed juvenile hawking. Hawkers are exposed to series of accidental injuries springing from variety of sources including vehicular accidents, falls, fights, police harassment, and so on during hawking, with resultant effects of diseases and infections, temporary and permanent incapacitation and even premature death. Most of the affected hawkers are likely to lose educational opportunities and skills and poor parents who are forced to pay hospital bills will become poorer and eventually become liabilities to the society and nation instead of being assets. The nation's medical facilities may be over-stretched to a point where health care delivery becomes grossly inadequate; future man-power is lost with increasing non-producing population and uncontrollable population of beggars and street children. The after effect of all these are that the injured hawker, the parents, community and nation will remain at their original poverty level and socio-economic development could be very difficult to attain.

## 5. STREET HAWKING IN NIGERIA: ERADICATION OR MODIFICATION

According to Bishkek (2001), the higher the poverty, the higher the number of street children. If the words of Bishkek are well considered and applied to Nigerian situation, then street hawking with its numerous health ills has finally come to stay in the country because, there are very strong indications that hawking may not be easily eradicated in most Nigerian towns and villages, because, the existing low-level economic status of an average Nigerian whose main means of surviving is hawking and 'the get-rich-quick' and 'greed' orientation of today's children will continue to lure many to hawking. Many children make extra money from hawking by inflating prizes of items given to them to hawk. Also, most people do not know any other trade apart from hawking, even bonafide shop owners no more rely on the patronage in their shops because the buck of their daily sales is from hawking. In addition, total eradication of such activity as hawking means strict enforcement of certain laws and the question is: Is Nigeria equipped with honest law enforcement agents that will not find the eradication of hawking another means to corrupt the society the more? If hawking is to be eradicated, there has to be substantial alternative relieve measures. What relief measure is Nigeria providing if hawking is halted? All these are posers for advocates of hawking eradication to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Children hawking which was unpopular in the traditional Nigerian society have now reached the frightening magnitude because of the poor socio-economic status of many families in Nigeria. It is now a major problem that needs to be urgently addressed. A major associated risk of hawking is the vulnerability and actual involvement of children in various accidental injuries (from motor vehicle accidents, rape, falls, stray bullets, street fighting, police harassment, etc) which often result in incapacitations and life loss. These situations

have negative effects on the socio-economic development of the nation. Efforts to eradicate hawking without providing relieve measures to hawkers may not yield positive results.

On the basis of these conclusions, this researcher recommended the following in order to tackle the problem of street vending in Nigeria. Governments at all levels should take urgent steps to alleviate poverty by empowering its population. It should also provide relieve measures for hawkers whose main source of living is hawking. Proper education of parents against hawking is required. It is not enough to make children education compulsory, the governments should implement free education if only at the primary and secondary school level so that under-privileged children could have the grace to attend school. Where total eradication cannot be accomplished, the Government should give hawkers legal status and objectively moderate all their activities including the what, when, who and where of hawking.

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