

CORRELATES AND SURVIVAL STRATEGIES OF STREET CHILDREN IN AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the correlates and survival strategies of street children in Akwa Ibom State. Six research question and 3 hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The study adopted a survey research design. The population of the study consisted of all street children aged 5-18 years in Akwa Ibom State. A sample size of 150 street children was selected for the study from the target population using convenience sampling technique. The instrument titled "Correlates and Survival Strategies of Street Children Questionnaire (CSSCQ)" was used to gather data for the study and the overall reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained which indicated that the instruments was deemed adequate for the study. Various statistical methods were used for data analysis. The research questions one, two, three, four and six were answered using simple percentage while Mean and Standard Deviation was used to answer research question five and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) were employed to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The result obtained from the analysis revealed that the demographic characteristics of street children such as sex, age and level of education relate to streetism among children in Akwa Ibom State. Personal characteristics of parents/guardians the respondents used to live with such as parents sex, area of residence, parents' age, education level and occupation relate with streetism among children. The respondent left their home to live in the street in Akwa Ibom State due to many reasons such as father's death, mother's death, poverty, verbal abuse, lack of house, divorce, stigmatization of being a witch/wizard, stealing accusation, physical abuse and running away to evade punishment. The result showed that different categories of street children common in Akwa Ibom State are those that live permanently in the street, those who live between street and home, children of the street family who live and work in the street and poor working children returning to their home at night. The results shows that the various factors that contribute to children living in the street in Akwa Ibom State are poverty which made the greatest contribution to streetism among children (mean =4.20, sd= 0.15) followed by physical abuse (mean=3.40, sd=0.12), parents neglect (mean=3.27, sd=0.12), friends (mean=3.21, sd= 0.10), driving away by parents (mean=3.20, sd=0.13) among others. The analysis further revealed that majority of the street children were survive through begging 30 (20%) out of 150 and scavenging 30(20%) out of 150. The finding indicated that 20(13.3%) out 150 of the street children were survive through hawking and 20(13.3%) out 150 of the street children were survive through picking pocket. 10(6.6%) were survive through male/female partner while 10(6.6%) were survive

through scrap picking. The researcher recommend that more study on the correlates and survival strategies of street children in Akwa Ibom State should be conducted to establish more reasons contributing to streetism among children.

Keywords: Survival Strategies, Street Children, Demographic Characteristics, Social Issues, Akwa Ibom State.

Introduction

One of the major social problems encountered globally is that of the street children, and Akwa Ibom State is not left out with increase in the number of street children. This problem of street children has been a topical issue in the entirety of the sphere of life and has been regarded as an illicit and risky activity to those children who involved in it. The presence of street children has transcended the level where it was viewed as strictly uncommon occurrence worrisome to a global problem, especially as it concerns the involvement of some of these children into phone snatching, thuggery, prostitution, picking pocket and exposure to arm robbery which of course leaves the resident of Akwa Ibom as victims. Street children phenomenon is an everyday social vice reality. The situation demonstrates the paradox of horrible poverty in the midst of modern urban development and affluence. Many of street children have been stigmatized as witches.

A street child is any child that works and lives on the street. They are highly mobile like a modern day nomad and they can alternate between living on the streets and living with family members. Through the world, there are children who are drifted away from homes or families of orientation for reasons which are vast and enormous. These children are commonly referred to as street children. According to Adewale and Afolabi (2015), street children include the increasing number of school children that spend most of the day on the streets. They also constitute a sizeable position of child labourers in one form or the other. Studies found that children who usually reside in the streets are involved in begging, hawking, prostitution and theft. These activities provide them with money for their daily needs. The reality is that millions of children around the world live on the street and only few people and organizations are doing something about it. This lukewarm or rather, passive response to the problem of street children is a trend that needs attention. This implies that although poverty remains a constant issue to solve, specific type of poverty such as homelessness is yet capture attention. There have been varying statistics about the global number of street children, because there is no clear definition street children. For example, majority of street children work on the streets but leave at home and are working to earn money for their families (Ennew, 2018).

Lives in the family have been disrupted with the rapid social change that came with the globalization. In Nigeria, high rates of divorce, separation, birth by unmarried couples, death of a parent, war, abandonment, poverty, economic instability, parental education and income level, religious affiliations, physical abuse by family members, family size and social movement are some of the contributing factors which adversely affect the child to stay away from home and lives in the street. The socialization of children is very important for the community of any culture; basically, child rearing is one of the challenging social roles in Nigeria today. Children in most communities raised in a highly structured and disciplined manner, parents helped to instill and inculcate strong basic moral, spiritual, social, physical cognitive principles in their children (Santrock, 2017). Where these are lacking, the child

becomes vulnerable to abusers and peer pressures which drive them out into the streets to make their living, thus, becoming street based children.

The street children phenomenon has become a worldwide social and environmental problem which is linked to the faulty upbringing, neglect and poor welfare for certain group of children all around the world (UNCEF, 2018). In Nigeria, such children either live on the flyovers or uncompleted structures among others. Street children are a common type of eye sore in major cities across the world but the problem is more prominent and rampant in developing and under developed nations. This group of children subsists by living and earning their living. The problem of street children has been growing steadily in the last two decades. An estimated 10 million children in Africa live without homes, mostly in towns as street children. While the aforesaid estimates tend to be realistically low, it must also be noted that in the last two decades or so, Africa has experienced unprecedented level of crisis ranging from such natural disaster as famine resulting from drought to ethno-religious wars, wars of attrition and the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS. All these put together have added a quantum leap in the number of street children in Africa estimated currently to be in the range of 40 million (UNCEF, 2019).

Street children are confronted by a large number of problems. For street children to grow up in an environment generally regarded as dangerous, they incur considerable risks. As a consequence, some of their rights are very often compromised such as right to food, right to health, right to education and right to non-discrimination (Umoh, 2021). Street children often do not have access to a healthy and sufficient diet. They eat what they can find. Sometimes, when they have the choice, they even favour unhealthy foods such as ice cream, cakes, etc. and so run the risk of malnutrition. Growth problems are also common with these children. The health of children growing up on the streets is strongly compromised (Shauibu, 2019). This is because they do not have access to sanitary facilities and as such they are often dirty and infested with fleas. Also, because of their lack of hygiene, street children are exposed to different diseases.

Street Children are obviously not educated. Because of this, they do not have the same opportunities as other children for survival. These children do not see a future for themselves, and because they have no professional training, they are hindered from finding a job and from finally leaving the streets. Street children are often victims of discrimination. They are often associated with the dangers of the streets. It is often difficult for these children to be reintegrate into society. According to Ebigbo (2020), apart from sexual abuse and child abandonment, street children are the commonly form of child abuse and neglect. Street children are socially excluded mostly because they do not have good relationships with people. Most people stigmatize street children and do not want to have a positive affiliation with them (Eko, 2018). Even if there is a connection between people and street children, there is status gap which puts street children at the lower level of the ladder which enable them to devise means for survival on the streets. This calls for significant steps to be taken to ameliorate this social anomaly, one of which is to investigate the correlates and survival measures of street children so that appropriates recommendation can be made; although, the survival strategies of street children are a controversial issue.

Survival strategies are methods that street children use to survive in the streets. Survival measures of street children are mechanism design by street children to enable them survive in the street. Survival strategies of street children according to Brown (2018) are strategies taken by street children to earned a living on the street. It has to do with they can do using their hands, ideas and knowledge to earned a living. It is a means of livelihood. Street children managed their daily livelihood by multiple social activities such as begging from door to door; selling of pure water, scrap picking. Most of the street children engaged in occupations like hawking small goods, small business, welding assistant, mechanic assistance and even in prostitution. Almost a quarter they are also engage of the female children engaged with different types of sex related activities in prostitution. They also engage in petty and violent theft to earned a living on the streets. Some street children engage in some type of labour to survive. A large number of young boys are parking boys who wait on crowded parking streets for cars to approach. The child children will assist the driver in pulling into a parking place and then will clean and guard the car while the driver is away. Street children hope that the driver will pay them for their efforts. Although some girls participate in this activity, the overwhelming majority of such children are boys.

Street children sell a variety of small items in the informal sector, including paper from trash containers, peanuts, candy, cigarettes, and other products. In addition, because of desperate economic conditions, some children increasingly steal watches, phones, purses and other items especially in Uyo-Akwa Ibom State. Street children represent a large pool of easily exploited workers in various types of labour (Salisu, 2018). Young boys are recruited for manual labour positions such as dishwashers and cleaners, especially in small informal sector eating establishments known as kiosks or cookery selling places. The boys wake up early to clean and work in the kitchen (peel potatoes) and after working through the day and evening they clean again after closing hours. In exchange for this labour, these boys are paid a nominal wage, given food and allowed to sleep on the floor of the kiosk or cookery place. In addition, these boys do not have the opportunity to attend school. Young girls often are recruited as house girls (maids) where they work very long hours doing housework and caring for young children. House girls seldom have an opportunity to attend school and receive very little payment or nothing for their labour.

According to Aduse (2018), street children engage in odd job in order to earn some money to ease their hunger. In most cases, these children suffer health problem, malnutrition, extreme hunger and commercial sex exploration. Prostitution constituting street children in Akwa Ibom State is also a major problem. The majority of girls are from poor families, abandoned, neglected or orphaned children who are exposed to this life style during their problematic young lives. Although good estimates concerning the number of children engaged in streetism are not available, there is a consensus that the numbers are growing for several reasons. Deepening hardship face by street children is a breeding ground for sexual and other types of exploitation. More girls become involved in prostitution to survive and generate additional income for themselves and their families. Street children are children that make streets their home with survival strategies for their daily living. Although many variables have received consistent attention among researchers as it relates to an increase in street children (Salisu, 2018), this study focuses on demographic characteristics, personal characteristics of parents/guardians the respondents used to live with, reasons why the street

children left their home to the street, survival mechanism used by street children and socio-economic factors associated with streetism.

Reasons why children left their home and move to the street according to Idungafa (2021) includes poverty, lack of parents/guardians, witchcraft stigmatization, physical abuse, molestation, environment and children's age. The factors contributing to children leaving their home to the street is discuss under the following subheadings: socio-economic factor, parental education attainment, Parental occupation, peer influence, demographic characteristics and parents/guardian personal characteristics (Wanu, 2018). Demographic characteristics are characteristic that deals with age, sex, place of residence, religion, educational level and marital status. It looks at life around individuals. Demographic characteristics also includes such characteristics as peer influence, race, religion, income level, marital status, birth rate, death rate, family structure, heritage, education and medical history among others (Santrock, 2017). These characteristics are likely to play a significant role on streetism among children especially in Akwa Ibom State. Others demographic characteristics include individual children's characteristics, family background, age, motivation, social culture, finance, community characteristics, institutional characteristics, level of education and environment can significantly influence streetism among children.

Personal characteristics are attributes that can be used to identify a person. Personal characteristics of parents/guardians of street children are traits possess by the personal characteristics of parents of street children (Umoh, 2021). The personal characteristics of parents/guardians of children may be the major determinant of streetism among children. Personal characteristics of parents/guardians are related to the parenting style of the parents. Children raised with permissive parent, neglected parent and authoritarian parents are likely to engage in streetism. Personal characteristics of parents have the potential to cause children migration to streets. Other reasons for children movement to the street may be family disintegration, violence at home and hardship. Hardship such as unpredictable climatic conditions and unsuitable methods of farming persuade rural communities to migrate to the cities. Therefore, the urban areas cannot satisfy their needs and accommodate their expectations leading to streetism. The socio-economic status of parents can promote streetism among children.

Socio-economic status is an economic status of the parents that can give children the sense of leaving their families and dwell on the streets. Socio-economic status provides a social and economic profile of children and their families, and exploring the needs and aspirations of these children living in especially at difficult circumstances. Poor socio-economic status of parents trapped in poverty and parents often neglect the children or even abandon them. which enable the children venture on the streets. According to Idah (2018), when the socio-economic status of the parents is poor, the children become vulnerable and engage in streetism. Poor socio-economic status of the parents' entails inability of the parents to provides the basic economic needs of their children which leads to children's involvement in streetism (Idah, 2018).

It has been observed by the researcher that, hundreds of thousands of children run away from their home to live on the streets of Akwa Ibom State. That is because the reasons for this phenomenon is not just economical, it is a rather complex issues that urges to become a

problematic for governments, parents and the entire society. A number of variables have received consistent attention among researchers as it relates to increase in street children. These variables which includes but not limited to survival measures, gender, age, family socio-economic status, family education background and parental marital status among other plays important role on streetism. It is true that consistent, credible data about children's situation are critical to the improvement of their lives and indispensable to realizing the right of every child. The problem of survival strategies of street children in Akwa Ibom State has been a controversial issue and adequate literature is lacking. This forms the gap which the present study intends to fill up. The theoretical framework of this study is based on Attachment Theory By John Bowlby (1958), person-Centered Theory By Carl Rogers (1959), Heider's Attribution Theory by McLeod Heiders (2010), Family Ecology Theory of Development Bronfenbrenner (1977) and Social Development Theory by Erick Erickson (1962). The theories are relevant to the present study because it would help to unravel the reasons children are able to detach easily from parents and leave their homes to live in the street.

Various empirical studies have been conducted on street children. Sampson (2018) conducted a study on the impact of demographic factors of street children in Ibadan Metropolis and found that demographic factors significantly affect streetism among children. Ukap (2018) investigated the difference between the educational background of parents and students' tendencies to become street children in Delta State, Nigeria and found that educational background of parents have significant impact on streetism among children. Taeker (2018) conducted a study to investigate the survival strategies of street children in Niger State and found that street children used different strategies to survive on the street the streets. Okon (2018) conducted a study on the effects of demographic factors on street children in Niger State, Nigeria and the result obtained from the finding revealed that the demographic factors such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, and educational levels have significant effects on street children in Niger State. Umilara (2019) conducted a study on the relationship between demographic factors and streetism among children in Edo State, Nigeria and the result obtained from the data analysis reveals that demographic factors relate significantly with children involvement in the street. Falabi (2017) conducted a study on the influence of parental personal characteristics on children streetism in Gombe State and the result obtained from the data analysis revealed that parental personal characteristics significantly influence children movement to the street in Gombe State. Based on this background, the present study seeks to investigate the correlates factors of survival strategies of street children in Akwa Ibom State Nigeria.

Statement of the Research Problem

Over the years, the problem of street children has been one of the major social problems globally and especially Akwa Ibom State in particular. Many children in Akwa Ibom State make a conscious choice to leave home and migrates to the streets which have significant effects in their life. Street children face complex and interwoven socio-economic problems and thereby became the most vulnerable groups of the population. Street children encounter hunger, disease and violence. Mostly, girls are exposed to exploitation and sexual abuse. The researcher wonders what could be the causes of this increasing rate of street children in Akwa Ibom State. Could it be due to demographic or personal characteristics of the parents and street children? The researcher also suggest that could this increase in the rate of street

children in Akwa Ibom State be attributed to family type, family size, parenting style, poor parental socio-economic status such as parental income level, Parental educational qualification and inability of parents to provide for the specific needs of their children. Therefore, for this reason, the problem of this study set as a question is; what then are the factors responsible for street children in Akwa Ibom State? Based on this background the present study tends to investigate the correlates and survival strategies of street children in Akwa Ibom State.

Objectives of the Research

The general objective of the study is to investigate the correlate and survival strategies of street children in Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. examine the demographic characteristics of street children in Akwa Ibom State
2. describe the personal characteristics of parents/guardians the respondents used to live with.
3. determine the reasons the respondent left their home to live in the street in Akwa Ibom State.
4. To identify the categories of street children common in Akwa Ibom State.
5. identify the factors contributing to children living in the streets in Akwa Ibom State.
6. Identify the survival strategies used by street children in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Questions

The study tends to answer the following questions:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of street children in Akwa Ibom State?
2. What are the personal characteristics of parents/guardians the respondents used to live with?
3. What are the reasons the respondent left their home to live in the street in Akwa Ibom State?
4. What are the categories of street children common in Akwa Ibom State?
5. What are the factors that contribute to children living in the street in Akwa Ibom State?
6. What are the survival strategies adopted by street children in Akwa Ibom State?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study at 0.05 alpha level of significance;

1. there is no significant relationship between demographic characteristics and involvement in streetism among children in Akwa Ibom State
2. there is no significant relationship between personal characteristics of parents/guardians and involvement in streetism among the respondents.
3. there is no significant relationship between demographic characteristics and survival strategies adopted by street children.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design. The population of the study consisted of all street children aged 5-18 years in Akwa Ibom State. A sample size of 150 street children was selected for the study from the target population using convenience sampling technique from Akwa Ibom. The instrument titled “Correlates and Survival Strategies of Street Children Questionnaire(CSSCQ)” was used to gather data for the study. It was structured to cover all

variables under study. To ensure the validity of the research instrument, the draft of the instruments were validated by expert in the Department of Home Economics and Department of Psychology, both in the University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. To establish the reliability of the instrument and determine its internal consistency, a test retest method of reliability was conducted on a sample of 20 respondents from the population that were not part of the main study. The researcher personally administered the questionnaire to the respondents at respective locations twice with a time gap of one month. Correlation analysis was used to test the scores from the two administrations and the overall reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained which indicated that the instruments was deem adequate for the study. The data collected from the instruments were analysed using various statistical method were used for data analysis. Research questions one, two, three, four and six were answered using simple percentage while research question six was answered using mean and Standard Deviation. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) were employed to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion

The result of the study is presented based on research questions and hypotheses.

Research Question 1: What are the demographic characteristics of street children in Akwa Ibom State?

Table I: Frequency and percentage distribution on the demographic characteristics of street children in Akwa Ibom State.

Demographic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
5-10 years	40	26.7
11-15years	60	40
16years and above	50	33.3
Sex		
Male	90	60
Female	60	40
Levels of education		
Nursery school	20	13.3
Primary school	35	23.3
Secondary school	45	30
No education	50	33.4
Area of residence		
Urban	90	60
Rural	60	40

N=150

The result presented in Table 1 above shows the distribution on the demographic characteristics of street children in Akwa Ibom State. From the Table, it was revealed that majority of the street children were within the age range of 11-15 years accounting for (60) 40% follow by street children with the age range of 16years and above 50(60%), while 26.7% of street children were within the age ranges of (5-10 years). From the analysis, 90 (60%) of the respondents were male and 60 (40%) were female. Majority of the children were without

education 50 (33.4%). 30% (45) of the street children attended secondary education to a certain level, 23.3%(35) of the street attended primary education while 13.3%(20) attended nursery education. Majority of the children 90(60%) were urban dwellers, while 60(40%) were rural dwellers.

Research Question 2: What are the personal characteristics of parents/guardians the respondents used to live with?

Table 2: Frequency and percentage distribution on the personal characteristics of parents/guardians the respondents used to live with

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Parents sex		
Male	65	43.3%
Female	85	56.7%
Parents' age		
20-30years	30	20%
31-40years	50	33.3%
41years and above	70	46.7%
Parental education levels		
No formal education	65	43.3%
FSLC	41	27.3%
NCE	25	16.6%
DEGREE	15	10%
MASTERS	3	2%
Ph.D	1	0.6%
Parental occupation		
Farming	40	26.6%
Civil servant	10	6.6%
Trader	60	40%
Pastor	2	1.3%
Carpenter	20	13.3%
Mechanic	18	12%

The result presented in Table 2 shows the distribution on the personal characteristics of parents/guardians the respondents in the study used to live with. From the analysis, 85(56.7%) were female and 65(43.3) were male. It was revealed from the analysis that majority of parents/ guardians of the street children were within the age range of 41 years and above 70(46.7%), followed by the age range of 31-40years 50(33.3), and 20-30years 30(20%). Majority of the parents were without formal education 65(43.3), 41(27.3%) have first school leaving certificate, 25(16.6%) have National Certificate of education (NCE), 15(10%) have first degree, 3(2%) have masters degree and 1(0.6%) has Ph.D. The analysis also shows that majority of the parents are traders 60(40%) and farmers 40(26.6%), carpenter 20(13.3%), mechanic 18(12%),

civil servant 10(6.6%) and pastors 2(1.3%) were the major occupation of the parents/guardians the respondents used to live with.

Research Question 3: What are the reasons the respondent left their home to live in the street in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 3: Frequency and percentage distribution on the reasons the respondent left their home to live in the street in Akwa Ibom State

S/N	Reasons	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	My fathers' death	10	6.6
2.	My mothers' death	10	6.6
3.	Poverty	20	13.3
4.	Parental abuse	20	13.3
5.	Lack of house	10	6.6
6.	Divorce	20	13.3
7.	Stigmatization of witchcraft	20	13.3
8.	Stealing accusation	10	6.6
9.	Physical abuse	10	6.6
10.	Driving away by parents	10	6.6
11.	To evade punishment	10	6.6

The result presented in Table 3 shows that 20(13.3%) left their home to the street because of poverty, parental abuse, divorce and stigmatization of witchcraft. 10(6.6%) of the street children left their home to the street due to father's death, mothers' death, physical abuse, stealing accusation, parental abuse, divorce, driving away by parents, lack of house and to evade punishment respectively.

Research Question 4: What are the categories of street children common in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 4: Frequency and percentage distribution on the categories of street children common in Akwa Ibom State

S/N	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Those who live permanently on street	70	46.6%
2.	Those who shuttle between home and street	20	13.3%
3.	Children of street family	20	13.3%
4.	Poor working children returning to home at night	40	26.6%
Total		150	

Table 4 shows the categories of street children common in Akwa Ibom State. The result shows that majority of children 70 (46.6%) live permanently on the street, 20(13.3%) were children who live between home and street. Again 20(13.3%) were children of the street family, while 40(26.6%) were poor working children returning to home at night. This implies that there are different categories of street children in Akwa Ibom State.

4.1.1.5 Research Question 6: What are the factors that contribute to children living in the street in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation of the factors that contribute to children living in the street in Akwa Ibom State

S/ N	Factors contributing to streetism among children	Mean	SD
1	Physical abuse	3.40	0.12
2	Stigmatization of being witch/wizard	3.10	0.10
3	Death of my parents	2.19	1.00
4	Sexual abuse	3.18	0.11
5	Poverty	4.20	0.15
6	Fathers' death	3.10	0.10
7	Mothers' death	3.12	0.11
8	Lack of house	2.29	1.10
9	Verbal abuse	3.15	0.11
10	Friends	3.21	0.10
11	Driven away by my parents	3.20	0.13
12	Running away to evade punishment	3.00	0.21
13	Parents are alcoholic addicts	2.70	0.01
14	Parents neglect	3.27	0.12
15	Parents are authoritative	2.01	1.02
16	Parents are authoritarian	3.11	0.10
17	Family disintegration	2.88	1.21
18	To make money	2.97	1.20
19	Unemployment	3.38	0.13
20	High cost of living	3.37	0.13

Cut off point =2.5, SD = Standard deviation.

The results presented in Table 5 shows the analysis of the factors that contribute to children living in the street in Akwa Ibom State. From analysis poverty made the greatest contribution to streetism among children in Akwa Ibom State (mean =4.20, sd= 0.15), followed in order of importance by physical abuse (mean=3.40,sd=0.12), unemployment (mean=3.38,sd=0.13), high cost of living (3.37), parents neglect(mean=3.27, sd=0.12), friends (mean=3.21, sd= 0.10), and driven away by parents(mean=3.20, sd=0.13). Other factors that contribute to streetism among children in Akwa Ibom State as shown on the table are sexual abuse (mean=3.18, sd=0.11), verbal abuse (mean=3.15, sd=0.11), mothers' death (mean=3.12, sd= 0.11), authoritarian parenting (mean=3.11, sd=0.10) and fathers' death (mean=3.10, sd=0.10) among others. The results indicated that all the items in the Table have their mean above the cutoff point of 2.5 except item number (17) authoritative parents (mean=2.01, sd = 0.01). This implies that authoritative parents made the least contribution to streetism among children in Akwa Ibom State. This may be due to the fact that authoritative parents always used positive discipline strategies like praise and reward systems to reinforce good behaviour on their children.

4.1.1.6 Research Question 5: What are the survival strategies adopted by street children in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 6: Frequency and percentage distribution on the survival strategies adopted by street children in Akwa Ibom State

S/N	Survival strategies	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Begging	30	20
2.	Hawking	20	13.3
3.	My male/female partner	10	6.6
4.	Scrap picking	30	20
5.	Labouring	10	6.6
6.	Picking pocket	20	13.3
7.	Scavenging	30	20

The result presented in Table 6 shows the analysis of the survival strategies adopted by street children in Akwa Ibom State. The analysis revealed that majority of the street children were survive through begging 30 (20%) out of 150 and scavenging 30(20%) out of 150. The analysis also indicated that 20 (13.3%) out 150 of the street children were surviving through hawking and 20 (13.3%) out 150 of the street children were survived through picking pocket. 10(6.6%) were survived through male/female partner while 10(6.6%) were surviving through scrap picking and selling.

Testing of the Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are tested in the study:

Research Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between demographic characteristics and involvement in streetism among children in Akwa Ibom State

Table 7: Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis between demographic characteristics and involvement in streetism among children in Akwa Ibom State

Demographic characteristics	Statistics	Sex	Age	Levels of education	Area of residence
Involvement in streetism	Pearson Correlation Sig(2-tailed)	.35*	.61*	.33*	.68*
		.00	.00	.00	.00
	N	150	150	150	150

**Correlation is Significant at p<0.05 alpha level, (2=tailed) and n = 150.*

The result presented in Table 7 shows that relationship between demographic characteristics of the street children and involvement in streetism at 0.05 probability level, the calculated r-

values are statistically significant, as the calculated probability values of all demographic characteristics of the street children are greater than 0.05 in which the decision is based. This reveals that a strong positive significant relationship exist between demographic characteristics (age, sex, levels of education and area of residence) and involvement in streetism among children in Akwa Ibom State

Research Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between personal characteristics of parents/guardians and involvement in streetism among the respondents.

Table 8: Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis between personal characteristics of parents/guardians and involvement in streetism among children in Akwa Ibom State

Demographic characteristics	Statistics	Parents sex	parents age	Parental education levels	Parental occupation
Involvement in streetism	Pearson Correlation Sig (2-tailed)	.47*	.521*	.53*	.38*
		.00	.00	.00	.00
	N	150	150	150	150

**Correlation is Significant at p<0.05 alpha level, (2=tailed) and n = 150.*

The result presented in Table 8 shows the relationship between personal characteristics of parents/guardians and involvement in streetism at 0.05 probability level, the calculated r-values are statistically significant, as the calculated probability values of all the personal characteristics of parents/guardians are greater than 0.05 in which the decision is based. Hence, revealing that a strong positive significant relationship between personal characteristics of parents/guardians (parents’ age, parents’ sex, parental levels of education and parental occupation) and involvement in streetism among children in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Hypothesis 3

There is no significant relationship between demographic characteristics of the respondents and survival strategies adopted by street children

Table 9: Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the relationship between demographic characteristics of the respondents and survival strategies adopted by street children in Akwa Ibom State

Demographic characteristics	Statistics	sex	Age	Levels of education	Area of residence
Survival strategies	Pearson	.43*	.49*	.23*	.38*
Begging	Correlati				
Hawking	on Sig(2-				
Male/female	tailed)				
partner					
Laboring					
Picking pocket					
scavenging					
		.00	.00	.00	.00
	N	150	150	150	150

**Correlation is Significant at $p < 0.05$ alpha level, (2=tailed) and n = 150.*

The result presented in Table 9 shows the relationship between demographic characteristics of the respondents and survival strategies adopted by street children at 0.05 probability level, the calculated r-values are statistically significant, as the calculated probability values of all demographic characteristics of the respondents and survival strategies adopted by street children are greater than 0.05 in which the decision is based, indicating that a strong positive significant relationship exist between demographic characteristics of the respondents (age, sex, levels of education and area of residence) and survival strategies (begging , hawking , male/female partner, laboring, picking pocket and scavenging) adopted by street children in Akwa Ibom State.

Discussion of findings

The findings of the study are discussed under the following subheadings:

Answering the research questions

Demographic Characteristics and Streetism among Children

The result presented in Table 1 showed that demographic characteristics can predict streetism among children. Table 1 indicates that majority of the street children were male within the age range of 11-15 years. From the analysis 90 (60%) were male and 60 (40%) were female of 150. Majority of the children were without formal education 50 (33.4%). Among the children, urban dwellers 90(60%) were more than rural dwellers 60(40%). Majority of the children were single while only few were in cohabiting relationships that they described as binding and lasting. Majority had completed their education up to between senior secondary school 1 and 3 while only 20(13.3%) out of 150 had no formal education. This finding is in line with the earlier finding of David (2020) who reported that demographic characteristics has an impact on determining the current position of the street children. Ukap (2018) found that demographic characteristics have significant effects on children to become street children. This implies that demographic characteristic have the potentiality to give the children ability to prefer going to the street rather than staying at home.

Personal Characteristics of Parents/Guardians and Streetism among Children

The result in Table 2 showed that personal characteristics of parents/guardians the respondents used to live within Akwa Ibom State. From the analysis 85(56.7%) were female and 65(43.3) were male. Majority of parents/ guardians of the street children were within the age range of 41 years accounting for 70(46.7%) follow by the age range of 31-40years 50(33.3) and 20-30years 30(20%). Majority of the parents were without formal education 65(43.3) out of 150. The analysis also shows that majority of the parents were traders 60(40%) and farmers 40(26.6%) and very few were engage in civil service work 10(6.6%). The finding is in line with the earlier finding of Viral (2019) who reported that parental personal characteristics plays a pivotal role in children lives. Most parent especially older people used physical punishment, lack effective monitoring and other form of abuse on their children which allow them to end up in the street. Hally (2018) supported that parental personal characteristics are one of the reasons why many children are on the street. Punishment of children by the parents in their childhood days often determines streetism among children.

The Reasons the Respondents Left their Home to Live in the Street in Akwa Ibom State

The result in Table 3 showed majority of respondents 20(13.3%) left their home to the street because of poverty, parental abuse, divorce and stigmatization of witchcraft. The analysis also reveals that 10(6.6%) of the street children left their home to the street due to father's death, mothers' death, physical abuse, stealing accusation, parental abuse, divorce, driving away by parents, lack of house and to evade punishment respectively. This finding is in line with the earlier finding of Mahlangu (2018) who reported that, the street children phenomenon cannot be related to a single causal factor and a multiplicity of factors cause the problem of streetism among children. The result revealed that streetism could be predicted by socio-parental factors. This means that the level of parents poverty, parental abuse, divorce and stigmatization of being a witch or wizard, parental verbal abuse and stealing accusation among others are the major reasons leading children to the street in order to find the means of survival.

The categories of street children common in Akwa Ibom State

The result presented in Table 4 above showed that majority of street children found in Akwa Ibom State, 70(46.6%) live permanently on the streets, 20(13.3%) were between home and street and again 20(13.3%) were children of the street family while a good number of them 40(26.6%) were poor children working on the street and returning home at night. The result indicates that the categories of street children common in Akwa Ibom State ranges from children who live permanently on the street, children of the street family, Poor children working on the street returning home at night and children between home and the street. This finding corroborate the finding of Salisu (2018) who reported that different categories of children are attracted to the street because they make little by involving themselves in various activities which include begging, cleaning vehicles, petty thefts and violent robbery, collecting waste papers, plastics and old metals, gambling, loading and offloading vehicles. Brown (2018) also found that the reason behind different categories of children on the street is due their means of survival. Considering the relationship between friend circle and the children category, empirical result shows that the majority of the children working on the street have both street and non-street children friends (Lalor, 2019). However, children who belong to 'of the street' and abandoned groups were familiar with only street kids' friends.

Factors that Contribute to Children Living in the Street

Results presented in Table 5 showed the analysis of the factors that contribute to children living in the street in Akwa Ibom State. From the analysis, poverty made the greatest contribution to streetism among children in Akwa Ibom State (mean =4.20, sd= 0.15) followed by physical abuse(mean=3.40, sd=0.12), parents neglect (mean=3.27, sd=0.12), friends (mean=3.21, sd= 0.10), driving away by parents(mean=3.20, sd=0.13) among others. The level of parents' poverty and other factors such as peer influence, mothers' death, fathers' death, stigmatization and parenting style determines how life will be for the children at home. If the family fails to provide the basic economic needs for the children, the children may go out to the street to find the means of survival. In reality poverty exists. The finding is in line with the earlier findings of Saifi (2017) who found that factors such as poverty, peer influence, mothers' death, fathers' death, stigmatization and parenting style, parental socio economic status, parental education attainment, parental occupation and lack of house have significant effect on the behaviour of children that in turns links children to the streets. The result reveals that majority of the parents/guardians of the street children are alcoholic addict, physical abusers, verbal abuser and sexual abusers which push their children to the street. The result also reveals that majority of the parents/guardians of the street children are authoritative, authoritarian, neglect and do not make the effort of providing the economic needs of their children. Lack of good character by the parents is a contributing factor that often drives children to the street.

Survival strategies adopted by street children in Akwa Ibom State

The result presented in Table 6 shows the analysis on the survival strategies adopted by street children in Akwa Ibom State. The result indicated that majority adopted different survival strategies such as begging, hawking, friends, scrap picking, labouring, picking pocket and scavenging. The analysis revealed that majority of the street children were survive through begging 30 (20%) out of 150 and scavenging 30(20%) out of 150. The analysis also indicated that 20(13.3%) out of 150 of the street children were survive through hawking and 20(13.3%) out of 150 of the street children were survive through picking pocket. 10(6.6%) were survive through male/female partner while 10(6.6%) were survive through scrap picking. This finding is in line with the earlier finding of Idungafa (2021) who found that street children have different means of survival in the street.

Testing the hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in the study:

Hypotheses 1

The result in Table 7 showed that the relationship between demographic characteristics of the street children and involvement in streetism at 0.05 probability level, the calculated r-values are statistically significant, as the calculated probability values of all demographic characteristics of the street children are greater than 0.05 in which the decision is based. This reveals that a strong positive significant relationship exist between demographic characteristics (age, sex, levels of education and area of residence) and involvement in streetism among children in Akwa Ibom State. This finding corroborate the earlier finding of Lalor (2019) who reported that the probability of being on the street category increases geometrically due to demographic characteristics. Idungafa (2021) also reported that demographic characteristics such as age, sex, levels of education and area of residence are

strong significant predictors of streetism among children. Mahlangu (2018) found that children that were abandoned by their parents at the early age irrespective of sex (whether male or female), often choose street life.

Hypotheses 2

The result in Table 8 showed that the relationship between personal characteristics of parents/guardians and involvement in streetism at 0.05 probability level, the calculated r-values are statistically significant, as the calculated probability values of all the personal characteristics of parents/guardians are greater than 0.05 in which the decision is based. Hence, revealing that a strong positive significant relationship between personal characteristics of parents/guardians (parents' age, parents' sex, parental levels of education and parental occupation) and involvement in streetism among children in Akwa Ibom State. The reason behind this result is due to the fact that personal characteristics of parents/guardians plays important role on children involvement in streetism. This finding is in line with the finding of Viral (2019) who stressed that the personal characteristics of parents/guardians the respondents use to live with particularly age, level of education, occupation, area of residence and sex relate significantly with students involvement in streetism. Idungafa (2020) found the personal characteristics of parents/guardians have positive significant relationship with streetism among children. The personal characteristics of parents/guardians the street children use to live with is found to be positive and statistically significant at 0.05 alpha level. The finding suggests that children mistreated by their parents have high probability of distancing themselves from their families, and thereby exposed to street life. In other situations, if punishments are given by other persons on the street, then they are likely to return back to their native home or join bad gang.

Hypotheses 3

The result presented in Table 9 showed that the relationship between demographic characteristics of the respondents and survival strategies adopted by street children at 0.05 probability level, the calculated r-values are statistically significant, as the calculated probability values of all demographic characteristics of the respondents and survival strategies adopted by street children are greater than 0.05 in which the decision is based, indicating that a strong positive significant relationship exist between demographic characteristics of the respondents (age, sex, levels of education and area of residence) and survival strategies (begging, hawking, male/female partner, laboring, picking pocket and scavenging) adopted by street children in Akwa Ibom State. The reason for this strong positive significant relationship may be due to the fact that demographic characteristics can determine the survival strategies adopted by street children. This findings is in line with the earlier finding of Taeker (2018) who found that demographic characteristics statically relates with the survival strategies adopted by street children. Abogan (2019) found that demographic characteristics have positive and significant relationship with survival strategies of street children. Hossain (2020), also reported that street children engage in different forms of violent and non-violent criminal behaviour to survive in the street due to their demographic characteristics. Gang formation and taking part in illegal activities allow for social acceptance in among street children, which is another crucial survival strategy. This is to say that demographic characteristics has a strong link with the survival strategies of street children.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the problem of street children in Akwa Ibom State is very pervasive and that children tend to leave home to the streets because of various reasons especially poverty, parental divorce and witchcraft stigmatization, it was concluded that demographic characteristics of children, personal characteristics of parents/guardians and other factors correlated positively with streetism among children in Uyo survived mostly by begging.

Recommendations

Based on the finding of the study, it is recommended that

1. The zeal for adult education should be encouraged through governments' initiative at equipping school curriculum to accommodate adult literacy programmes. This will help educate illiterate parents and help alleviate the incidence of street children in Akwa Ibom State.
2. Income generating activities should be undertaken by the government and NGOs in rural areas so that migration of the poor to the cities for survival could be slowed and influx of young jobseekers in the cities may be curbed effectively.
3. Massive awareness programs need to be launched so that parents from the poor households can learn to value the importance of education for their children.
4. Careful measures should be taken with regard to parents/ guardians of the children allowing separation or divorce because any of the two should not be allowed except making sure that one of the parents or institutional care would protect children.
5. Severe penalties should be reconsidered for parents who expose their children to risk and vulnerability through full application of the provisions of child law.

Suggestion for further studies

Based on the finding of the study, the following suggestions are made

1. Similar study should be conducted in other States of the federation
2. Effects of Street Children should be conducted in Akwa Ibom State

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