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MOTIVATION, ATTRIBUTION AND PERCEPTION OF STREET LIFE AMONG CHILDREN FROM AGE 8 TO 18 YEARS IN CALABAR, CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA.

By

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Abstract

Purpose: This study was aimed at examining the influence of motivation, attribution in terms of peer relation and parental socio-economic status on perception of street life among children from age 8 to 18 years in Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria..

Methodology: The study was based on two main objectives meant to determine the extent to which peer relationship, parental socio-economic influence status age 8 to 18 years in Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. Survey design was used in the study. Two hundred (200) undergraduate students were selected for this study. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire in form of interview constructed by the researcher. The reliability estimate of the instrument was established through Cronbach Alpha reliability which give .75 and .77. Independent t-test was used as a statistical tool for data analysis. Each of the hypotheses was tested at .05 level off significance using SPSS Version 22.

Findings: The findings revealed that peer relationship and parental social-economic status significantly influence perception off street life among children from age 8 to 18 years in Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria.

Unique Contribution to theory and practice: The study was recommended amongst others that parents of low social-economic status should be empowered to enable them provide basic needs for their children. Thus, reduces the number of street children in the society.

Keywords: *Motivation, Attribution, Perception, Street Life, Children, From Age 8 To 18 Years, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Children living on street figure prominently among the most marginalized sections of the society. The number of such children is in millions across the globe. Nigeria boast of a significant number of the vulnerable children. In fact, a handful of research and documents claim that Nigerian has about 20 million street children which also happens to be the largest population of street children across all developed and developing countries of the world. A street child is any child who works and or lives in the street. The germ street children refer to millions of destitute boys and girls who have adopted the street as their abode or source of livelihood, or both. Their survival or sustenance depends on their own activities in the street (Ibok, 2015). Street children spend much of their time on the streets but are unable to access their basic rights like education, hygiene, nutrition and security. There are many reasons for the pathetic phenomena of the street children namely abuse, neglect, violence, exploitation, household poverty, natural or man made calamities, lost contact with family, kidnapped, orphaned, etc. They also endure augmented risks to their protection and well-being. Many of them work, often in perilous and low-wage jobs, to sustain themselves and their families. In spite of the resilience developed by street children to make up for, virtually, all the inadequacies in their lives, they still find themselves, on daily basis, battling marginalization from the urban society in which they find themselves (Koller and Hutz, 2011). Street children are often abused or oppressed by policemen who frequently beat them, ask for bribes, take away their plunders and incriminate them in false charges. These negative perceptions and attitudes consequently lead to poorly designed and inefficient intervention programmes aimed at grappling with the street children phenomenon in Calabar (Boakye-Boaten, 2016). It appears in their daily economic lives, street children face much hostility at the hands of the adult population (Koller and Hutz, 2011). They are also harassed by patrons who insult, reproach and ridicule them. Quarshie (2011) show that the environment is very hostile to street children as they are considered to be drug users, and involved in other socially undesirable activities like petty theft and even robbery. This contributed to the view that street children are a threat to society and not as people who are in need of help from society (Quarshie, 2011). The findings of Thomas (2015) who indicate that the abuse, exploitation, neglect, discrimination, harassment negatively affect the overall development of the individual. The further report added those who are suffering from the mental health issues are likely to face human right violation. As children living on street like without responsible adult supervision and face above-mentioned problems they are more likely to face psycho-social distress. According to United Nation's (UN) Estimation (2016), there remain about 150 million street children worldwide. More than half

of them are exposed to the worst forms of child labor such as slavery, physical torture, trafficking and prostitution. Extensive criminal networks make substantial profits by engaging children in commercial sex work, smuggling, stealing and the distribution of drugs and weapons. The existence of street children can be found in almost every part of the world and majority of them resides in the urban areas of the developing countries. In recent years, the problem has been made worse due to economic problems, political changes, social unrest and degradation of values, family separations and conflicts, natural disasters and the epidemic spread of diseases (Koller and Hutz, 2011).

Nonetheless, according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 2012), it is identified that every child is authorized to a standard of living adequately for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. It is evident from the example of developed welfare societies in the world that to build a prosperous future, the most important thing is to ensure appropriate nurturing of younger generation. The future of every nation depends on how children prepare themselves to enter into the working age period. Children who are well-fed, healthy and educated grow up to be productive, innovative workers and responsible adults. Based on this, the research is aimed at examining the extent to which peer relationship and social-economic status-distress influence perception of street life among children from aged 8 to 18 in Calabar, Cross River State.

Peer groups according to Ibok (2015) are social groups that influence the behaviour of their members. It is the association of people within the same age grade. The peer group of the child is own friends which often have common characteristics or interest. The child's personal group is often regarded as a very powerful factor that tends to bring a lot of people who naturally might not have belonged to the same social class or economic group. They usually share similar social experiences and values (Webster, 2010). Nwachukwu (2017) in his study on factors that contributed to street life and child labour and found that there is a significant influence of peer relationship on perception of street life among youths. Thompson (2016) is of the opinion that it is better for a child to get involved and share the values of others since such reciprocal sharing provides needs basis for the majority of enduring friendship. Okoro and Akan (2013) showed in their study that majority of street children are as a result of peer group influence. Peer relationship, environment and expectations are powerful forces in helping people manage their lives, particularly important children, teenagers and young adults. The problem of balancing discipline and control of children with nurturing support to encourage their exploration, understanding of the world and self-realization may be complicated by street problems (Adan, 2015). As children on street work and stay without a responsible adult, they are easily influenced by their peer; and they are more prone to the vulnerability. Street children possess a number of desires and aspirations, for a better, more meaningful existence which does not get fulfilled due to the restricted opportunities for growth. Their close relationships with peer, family member influence the ways in which they experience and cope with feelings of grief (Quarshie, 2011).

The socio-economic status (SES) of a child is most commonly determined by combining parents' educational level, occupational status, and income level (Jeynes, 2012). Children whose parents have a low social-economic status are more likely to drop out of school,

feel rejected and this significant influence number of the vulnerable children. Child neglect due to social-economic status can both stimulate street life and abuse when parents don't care whether or not the children drink and there is no concern about the child warfare. Low socio-economic status of parents experience a lot of family's pressure and they are unable to cater for the financial needs of the children. Thus affect their child behaviours since they be easily influence by their peer (Nyama, 2006). It is believed that low socio-economic status negatively affects children because it prevents access to vital resources and creates additional stress at home (Eamon, 2016). The economic hardships that are caused by low socio-economic status lead to disruptions in parenting, an increasing amount of family conflicts, and an increased likelihood of depression in parents and single-parent households. For these reasons socio-economic status is closely tied to home environment and one could argue that socio-economic status (dictates the quality of home life for children). Once the child lands up on the streets as a result of seeking possible means of survival, they encounter problems like occupational hazards, substance dependence, violence, sexual exploitation, other forms of abuse, and psycho social distress like, depression, aggressive behaviour and self-harm/injury. Furthermore, they encounter crises like, barbarity, maltreatment, abandonment, torment (Quarshile, 2011). According to Nwachukwu and Ekanem (2007), the following are risk factors in that contributed to street children; (a) positive family history of alcohol (b) parental loss of control (c) poor family moral values and (d) tolerance of alcohol and cigarettes use in the family. This is attributed to parental socio-economic status, parental socio-economic status basic source of strength, providing nurturance, and support for its members as well as ensuring stability.

Theoretical framework

This study was guided by Attribution theory by Weiner Bernard (1974)

Bernard Weiner (1974) is an American social psychologist known for developing a form of attribution theory which seeks to explain the emotional and motivational attainment of academic success and failure. Bernard Weiner (1974) proposed that individuals have initial affected responses to the potential consequences of the intrinsic or extrinsic motives of the actor, which in turn influence future behaviour. That is, a person's own perceptions or attributions as to why the succeeded or failed at an activity determine the amount of effort the person will engage in activities in the future. Weiner suggests that individuals export their attribution search and cognitively evaluate casual properties on the behaviours they experience. When attributions should result in greater willingness to approach to similar achievement tasks in the future than those attributions that produce negative effect and low expectancy of future success. Eventually, such affective and cognitive assessment influences future behaviour when individuals encounter situations.

Attribution theory deals with the rules that most people use when they attempt to infer the causes of behaviour they observe. In general, people tend to attribute their own behaviour to the situation or circumstances (social environment) in which they find themselves, while they attribute other people's behaviour to personality factors such as perception of street life. This mean that people try to determine why people do what they do, that is, interpret causes of an event or behaviour. The outcome off their expectations or behaviour (success or failure) and what they attribute their outcome to will influence their future disposition of street life. Those

who attribute their success or failure to effort that is within their control will be motivated to work harder. On the other hand, those who attribute their success or failure to task difficulty, luck or lack of ability that is not within their control may experience helplessness. Thus, leads to street children as influence by peer relation and socio-economic status of their parent.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to examine the influence of motivation, attribution on perception of street life among children from age 8 to 18 years in Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. The following objectives are outlined to guide the study:

1. To determine the extent to which peer relationship influence perception of street life among children from age 8 to 18 years in Calabar, Cross River State.
2. To establish the extent to which parental socio-economic status influence perception of street life among children from age 8 to 18 years in Calabar, Cross River State.

Research questions

The following questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. To what extent does peer relationship influence perception of street life among children from age 8 to 18 years in Calabar, Cross River State?
2. To what extent does parental socio-economic status influence perception of street life among children from age 8 to 18 years in Calabar, Cross River State?

Research hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested for the study

1. Peer relationship does not significantly influence perception of street life among children from age 8 to 18 years in Calabar, Cross River State.
2. Parental socio-economic status does not significantly influence perception of street life among children from age 8 to 18 years in Calabar, Cross River State.

Research design and methodology

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study area was Calabar in Cross River State. The research designed adopted is survey research design. This design method was preferred because it is concerned with finding, describing and interpreting data collected from the samples of population based on peer group relationship, parental socio-economic status and child neglect as it influence perception of street life among children in Calabar, Cross River State. The sample size of 200 children from age 8 to 18 years were randomly selected in Calabar, Cross River State. This was done through multistage sampling approach which comprises of stratified and purposive and accidental random sampling technique. Stratified random sampling technique was done on the basis of local government area (Calabar South and Calabar Municipality). Purposive sampling technique was used to ensure that only street children from age 8 to 18 years was selected to constitute the sample for the study.

The researcher then adopted the accidental sampling technique in selecting the sample for the study. Through this method, the survey was conducted anonymously, and data were collected from the street children who agreed to participate. The data were kept strictly confidential and

promised not to use outside of this study. The participants were informed that their involvement in the study was entirely voluntary, and they may choose to withdraw at any time without hesitation or fear. An interview schedule was prepared to guide the researcher during interview. It was pre-tested among some street children. Almost all questions were structured in nature except a few open-ended questions. An attempt was also made to relate their lifestyles risk behaviour and health impact regarding the socio-demographic characteristics. The questionnaire included, peer influence, parental socio-economic status, source of income, occupation, stay and working place, source of drinking water, sanitation, types of illness, abuse and harassment. The information was collected through face-to-face interview. The interview not only consisted calling the children and asking them questions, the researcher also attempted to know the children in different territory and passed a considerable amount of time to establish enough rapport to make them comfortable so that they can openly express their condition. The researcher also repeatedly visited around the same area and sometimes passed time gossiping with the children to develop trust between the researcher and the respondents. After that, the respondents were requested to tell about their own life through asking one or two questions or by explaining what type of answer is expected from them. The respondent was allowed to continue freely and the researcher only asked some probing questions whenever necessary. Each interview required approximately 45 minutes on an average. In most off the cases the interviews were recorded with a tape recorder except when it was not allowed or when the respondent felt uneasy to talk in front of a tape recorder. After finishing an interview, the researcher finally filled up the data sheets with complete information. Additional information was written in an extra sheet and tagged with the questionnaire based on four point Likert scale namely Strongly Agreed, Agreed, Disagreed and Strongly Disagreed. The collected information was compiled, tabulated and analyzed by the researcher.

The instrument was face-validated by two experts in measurement and evaluation from the University of Calabar. Correction were pointed out by the experts and adjusted by the researchers and the document was considered valid. The reliability estimate of the instrument was established through Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate which gave .75 and .77. These estimates having met the criterion for stability thus warranted the use of the instrument for the study. The result was analyzed using independent t-test statistical tool.

4.0 RESULTS

The statistics package for social sciences (SPSS Version 22) computer programme was used to analyze the data collected. The data for the hypotheses were analyzed using independent t-test statistical tool. The result of the analysis is presented in the table 1 and 2. The hypotheses were tested at .05 significance level.

Hypothesis one

Peer relationship does not significantly influence perception of street life among children from age 8 to 18 years in Calabar, Cross River State. The independent variable in this hypothesis is peer relationship (categorized as High and Low), while the dependent variables is perception of street life. To test this hypothesis, peer relationship were classified into two groups (High and Low) based on pupils respond to research questionnaire. Those children who sum of their responses scored 12 and below in items on peer relationship research instrument is classified

as low while those that scored above 15 are classified as high, their means were compared using the independent t-test analysis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 1.

Independent t-test analysis of influence of peer relationship on perception of street life among children from age 8 to 18 years in Calabar (N = 200)

Table 1

Variable	N	X	SD	t-value	p-value
High relationship	118	13.52	5.32	3.126*	.000
Low relationship	82	11.21	5.01		

*Significant at .05 level

The result of the analysis ($t=3.126$; $p=0.000$) as presented in Table 1 revealed that peer relationship significantly influence perception of street life among children from age 8 to 18 years in Calabar, Cross River State. Hence, the null hypothesis which stated that peer relationship does not significantly influence perception of street life among children from age 8 to 18 years in Calabar, Cross River State was rejected while the alternative hypothesis was retained at the 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis two

Parental socio-economic status does not significantly influence perception of street life among children from age 8 to 18 years in Calabar, Cross River State. The independent variable in this hypothesis is parental socio-economic status while the dependent variable is perception of street life among children. To test this hypothesis, socio-economic status is categorized into two groups (High and Low) based on pupils respond to research questionnaire. Those children who sum of their responses scored 12 and below in items on peer relationship. Research instrument is classified as low while those that scored above 13 are classified as high. Their means were compared using the independent t-test analysis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Independent t-test analysis of influence of peer relationship on perception of street life among children from age 8 to 18 years in Calabar (N = 200)

Variable	N	X	SD	t-value	p-value
Large	125	13.26	5.62	2.877*	.001
Small	75	11.06	4.99		

*Significant at .05 level

The result of the analysis ($t=3.126$; $p=0.000$) as presented in Table 2 revealed that parental socio-economic status significantly influence perception of street life among children from age 8 to 18 years in Calabar, Cross River State. Hence, the null hypothesis which stated that parental socio-economic status does not significantly influence perception of street life among children from age 8 to 18 years in Calabar, Cross River State was rejected while the alternative hypothesis was retained at the 0.05 level of significance.

5.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of first hypothesis revealed that peer relationship influence perception of street life among children from age 8 to 18 years in Calabar, Cross River State. The findings agree with the findings of the study of Okoro and Akan (2015) who showed in his study that majority of the children living in the street are as result of peer influence.

According to Ibok (2015), peer groups are social groups that influence the behaviour of their members. They usually share similar social experiences and values (Webster, 2010). Nwachukwu (2017) in his study on factors that contributed to child abuse and found that there is a significant influence of peer relationship on child abuse which resulted to street life. Thompson (2016) stated that peer relationship, environment and expectations are powerful forces in helping manage their lives, particularly children, teenagers and young adults. The findings agree with Adan (2015) who stated that peer relationship have a significant influence of perception of street life among the youth. Their close relationships with peer, family member influences the ways in which they experience and cope with feelings of grief (Quarshie, 2011). The result of second hypothesis revealed that parental socio-economic status significantly influence perception of street life among children from age 8 to 18 years in Calabar, Cross River State. According to Webster (2010), children whose parents have a low socio-economic status earn are more likely to drop out of school, feel rejected since their parent cannot cater for their financial needs. This may have a significant influence on their behaviour which in turn affect future life. The findings agree with Quarshile (2011) who argue that socio-economic status (dictates the quality of home life for children). Once the child lands up on the streets seeking solution for survival they encounter problems like occupational hazards, substance dependence, violence, sexual exploitation, other forms of abuse, and psycho social distress like, depression, aggressive behaviour and self-harm/injury. Furthermore, the encounter crises like, barbarity, maltreatment, abandonment, torment (Quarshile, 2011).

Conclusion

Street children are considered as most marginalized and socially excluded section of the society. They possess a number of desires and aspirations, for a better, more meaningful existence, which does not get fulfilled due to the restricted opportunities for growth. Their close relationships with significant others, such as family, relatives and friends, is majorly in a state of disintegration and there is a lack of development of deep, affective bonds. All these factors influence the ways in which they experience and cope with feelings of grief. Most of them are vulnerable to face problems like substance dependence, abuse, neglect, sexual problems and violence. Based on the finding of this study, it was reveal that peer relationship, parental socio-economic status significantly influence perception of street life among children from age 8 to 18 years in Calabar, Cross River State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Parents of low socio-economic status should be empowered to enable them provide for basic needs for their children. Thus, reduced the number of street children in the society.

2. Welfare department of government bodies (GO), non-governmental organization (NGOs) and respective families should take the initiatives for resolving and preventing the increase of street children. This mean that GO, NGOs and international human activist bodies can evaluate the existing burden and plan for appropriate solutions. Government Welfare department can organize committees, hold conference and plan common program. Government should develop some strategies about educational accessibility, nutritional education, behavioral edification, and living amenities for street children.
3. Safeguards should be needed during working or living on the street to prevent risks like physical, moral, social and develop themselves as a self-protector. NGOs can establish education centers and awareness program. International bodies can hold workshop, provide financial and technical support to government.
4. To get better solutions macro, medium and micro level planning for long-term, mid-term and short-term projects need to be implemented. Education for the parents on attitude towards children, social and cultural problems and reinforcement off the child protection law can resolve the problems. This will help to reduce the number of children affected in Calabar, Cross River State.
5. The government and health agencies should advice parents on the need for family planning in order to curtail large family size so as to have a small family size that their income can comfortable cater for them.
6. The government should as a matter of fact take full responsibility of the welfare and education of these street children. This will help to address the problem and also relief the society of the menace of the activities of street children.

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