

## **Cultural Dynamics of Child Labour in Yobe State Nigeria**

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this paper is to provide a qualitative explanation of the cultural dynamics of the causes of child labour in Yobe state which is regarded as one of Nigeria's educationally less developed states. The study is limited to the reasons for girls involvement in child labour (with specific attention to street hawking largely seen and regarded as another form of child labour). This will add to the growing literature on child labour in developing countries and also provides the policy makers with inclusive policies and programmes for girls development. The study described the socio-cultural setting of the State, the nature of street hawking prevalent among girls and the reasons for their engagement. The research design, methodology, and approach involved qualitative approach using case study which specifically focused on the girl hawkers in Yobe State, Nigeria. The state has 17 LGAs; however, this study focuses on Potiskum town the headquarters of the Potiskum Local Government Area. The selection criteria of Potiskum are informed not only by its heterogeneous nature, but because of its strategic location and being the economic nerve centre of the State. Data collection technique also involves participant observations, interviews, and focus group discussions using semi-structured open-ended questions. For data analysis, the observational data were converted to field notes and analysed, as well as interviews. The raw data were analysed using transcriptions, sorting, and repeated readings that identified major themes. Major findings were presented as themes under cultural, social, and economic motives for girls involvement in street hawking. The causes included means to girls socialization, exposing girls to suitors as future husbands, for family honour, to accrue income to maintain their bodily aesthetic needs, to finance wedding expenses, poverty level of most families, and to augment family income. Challenges facing the girls includes, exposure to all forms of abuse, being left behind in basic literacy, and lack of safety. Conclusively, this paper is of significant value due to its novelty because in Yobe State, as there has not been a detailed or comprehensive study on the motives for girls involvement in street hawking. As almost all existing study focused more on regional basis and the results are mainly from survey data. Also, previous researches tended to link the problem with poverty, but this study is suggesting that poverty alone cannot explain their presence on the streets. Therefore, it will serve as source of additional literature for those who have interest on human development and enhancing the status of the most vulnerable groups in our society. It will also be a good source of information to policy makers and other stakeholders about the situation in Yobe State where women voices are seldom heard.*

**Keywords:** *Nigeria, Yobe State, Cultural Values, Family structure, Child Labour/Street hawking, Girls, and Religion.*

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### **I. Introduction**

It is an established fact that Nigeria is Africa's most populous country, with a population of over 170 million people and more than 250 ethnic groups (CBN, 2012; & Action aid, 2013). The Nigerian National Population Commission (2012) acknowledged that about 80.2 million of its population are girls' and women. This no doubt suggests that they are Nigeria's hidden resource. Of specific importance are the young girls' who will no doubt transform to be women and mothers. Any discussion about Nigeria's future, therefore, must necessarily entail consideration of girls', the role they play, and the barriers they face in developing the future.

In consideration of the spate of development or civilization the world over, one would expect that children of school age will be accorded with all the necessary support to utilize the opportunities of free education at the basic levels. It is however disheartening that significant number of them are seen in almost everywhere on the streets as hawkers. According to UNICEF (2011) the ugly situation may not be unconnected with the general inefficient implementations of government policies on human development. This situation that has necessitated the increase on proliferation of children labourers across Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. However, the situation in Northern Nigeria with specific emphasis to Yobe State is much more complex than researchers have presented it. For instance, girls like their counterparts in other societies have

been subjected to street hawking, a practice that violates their rights. In this regard, Mahdi & Usman (2010) confirmed that men have considered certain socio-cultural values as accommodated “norms” expected of the girls as part of the gender division of labour. At present, some of existing literature pointed that the children were on the streets because they are poor (Sultana, (2010); Usman, 2010; Umar, (2012); Umukoro, (2013). Even though the children in this study are from poor quintiles, but we argued that poverty alone could not explain their presence on the streets.

## **II. Research procedures**

The content of the paper is supported by findings of a pilot study we conducted in Yobe State. The state has 17 LGAs; however this study focuses on Potiskum town the headquarters of Potiskum Local Government Area. The selection criteria of Potiskum are informed not only by its heterogeneous nature, but because of its strategic location and being the economic nerve centre of the State. The study focused supposed to be school age girls who found themselves with no option but get involved in street hawking due to the deep-rooted societal recognition of cultural values. Study sites covered major streets and central market of Potiskum town in an attempt to better capture the street hawking dynamics of girls. Both maps of Nigeria (Figure 1) and Yobe State (Figure 2) were shown with (Figure 2) illustrating the location of Potiskum town. The research methodology was based on qualitative approach using case study, which specifically focused on the participant’s viewpoints which provided them with a voice to narrate their experiences (Newmann, 2008; Yin, 2009; and Creswell, 2012).

Purposive sampling procedure was used to select fifteen (15) sets of key informants (Creswell, 2012). A total of five (5) street hawking girls between the ages of eight (8) to fourteen (14) years featured as minor participants (Yin, 2009). Six (6) parents’ males and females drawn from both poor and relatively rich families, and two (2) policy makers from Ministries of Education and Women Affairs were selected for this study. In addition, two (2) traditional rulers served as the gate-keepers who provided entrance to the site, assisted in the identification of the places, and also helped in locating the participants. Apart from the one-on-one interviews, focus group discussions were conducted separately with both male and female parents for clarity. Semi-structured open-ended questions lasted for and within an hour time duration with the parents. The girl hawkers were also given the opportunities to narrate their ordeals, the essence of which is to make them feel they are heard and their stories are told (Creswell, 2012). Thirty minutes (30) focus group discussions were conducted with the girls’ in consideration of their ‘work’ demand, timing and preparations to the streets and markets. Ethical issues of consents and confidentiality were addressed by obtaining oral and written consents of all participants in their local language (*Hausa*).

The respect of cultural norms of the ethnic groups and religious beliefs as Muslims has been put into consideration during the interviews. Participants were grouped according to their gender and age. This process allowed a free and more engaging conversation among the participants thereby eliminating any form of personality intimidation. Participant observations of the girls’ street hawking dynamics and interviews were used to collect data which were later converted to field notes. This process was carried out with the aid of video recording of their activities. The raw data were analysed using transcriptions, sorting, and repeated readings that identified major themes.

In addition, the strategy adopted provided a better understanding of the girls’ social realities, their “natural” experiences, a practice commended in reporting a case study qualitative research (Yin, 2009; 2012; & Creswell, 2012). To cap it all, the research strategy enabled us to enter the world of the individuals and understood their viewpoints.

### **Overview of Child Labour**

Child labour has been an integral part of Western experience until the industrial revolution changed the nature of both work and workplace. Following the industrial revolution in Europe, there was a clear distinction between adult and child labourers until the gradual withdrawal of the latter from the labour force (Bussu, Baba Baba, & Kawu, 2009). At present, the concept of child labour has become an issue of repeated controversy due to its magnitudes and exploit. Child labour is mostly exploitative in semi-formal and informal arrangements which affect the development and growth of a child. It is the subset of children’s labour that is injurious and undesirable targeted for elimination. The International Labour Organization Convention No. 138 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) had together set the legal boundaries for child labour and have provided legal basis for national and international actions against it (International Labour Organizations, 2012).

The intensity of child labour differs among the countries of the world. The Sub-Saharan African region has twenty one percent (21%) of children between the ages of 5-17 in child labour, when compared to Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific with a total of nine percent (9%). While Middle East and North Africa has eight percent (8%) of child labourers (HDI, 2012; & ILO, 2013). From the above statistical figures,

the biggest concern remained in the Sub-Saharan African region with more than one in five children are employed in this sector. In Nigeria, the country witnessed one of its first empirical studies on child labour between 1987-1989 in Lagos under the auspices of Ford Foundation (Oloko, 1979). In order to control or eliminate the ugly practice in the society, government agencies entered into partnership with non-governmental organization. In recent times, report has shown that one hundred thousand (100,000) boys and girls are working as a child labourers in Lagos alone (Ajiboye & Oladiti, (2008); Hosen, Khandoker, & Islam, 2010; & Umukoro, (2013). The situation has necessitated UNICEF to get involved in addressing the problem in the country. However, it places greater attention to Lagos, Kaduna and Calabar (National Survey on Child Labour, 2000).

In the study area of this research Yobe State, the issue of child labour is much more complex than earlier highlighted at the National and regional levels (Ningi, 2012). One third of the total population of school age children are involved in child labour (hence street hawking). Specifically, school age girls' dominated the 'trade' due to lack of equal opportunities. Most of these hawkers are between the ages of eight to fourteen years, with very few of them falling above fifteen years (Ningi, 2012). The hawking scenario could be overwhelming to a foreigner, but the people including us have generally accepted it as part of their 'economic' culture.

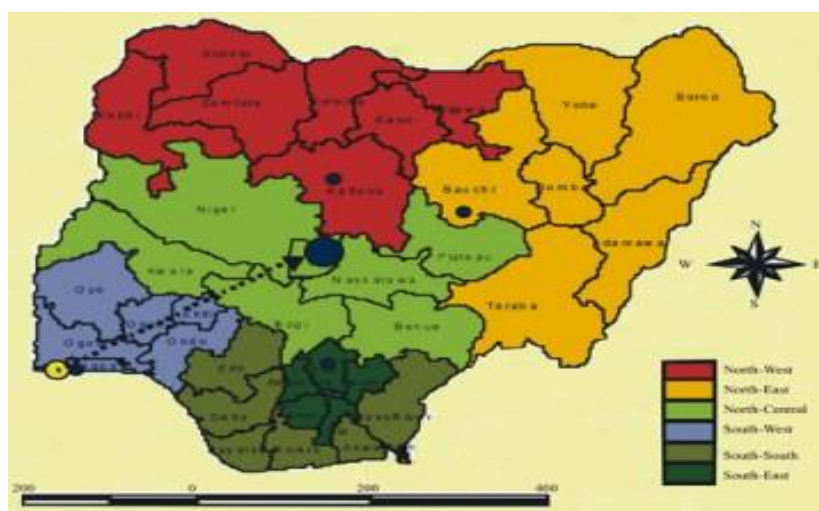


Figure 1 Map of Nigeria

### Brief History of Yobe State

Yobe State has a pluralistic population with rich and diverse historical and cultural heritage. The major ethnic groups in the state include the Kanuri/Manga, Fulani, Ngizim, Bolewa, Bade, Kare-Kare, Hausa, Ngamo, Babur/Maga and several other ethnic groups from different parts of the country. Most of the people are peasant farmers which the main reason why guinea corn, ground nuts, beans; maize, millet, wheat, and rice are produced in commercial quantities. A significant number of the inhabitants also engaged in trading, fishing, livestock and animal rearing. The state has the largest cattle market located at Potiskum town which makes it the supplier of livestock in the country. Traditionally, the people are known for the world famous *durbar* usually organized on important occasions like turbanding ceremonies of traditional rulers as well as honouring august visitors (Fartua, & Palmer, 1970). It is important to point out that, nature has endowed Yobe State with diverse economic potentials such as Diatomite, Limestone, Kaolin, Quartz, Gypsum, Gum-Arabic, and Potash.

The capital of the Yobe State is positioned at Damaturu. The name Yobe was derived from River Yobe an important geographical feature in the state. The State is strategically located in the far north eastern part of Nigeria carved out of the old Borno State in 27<sup>th</sup> August, 1991 by the then Military administration of General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida. It has seventeen (17) Local Government Areas which all together covers an estimated area of 47,153 square kilometres. The state shares international boundary with the Republic of Niger to the North (YSG Diary, 2010; & YBS Gazette, 2013). Within the country, it shares borders with Jigawa and Bauchi States to the West, Borno State to the East as well as Gombe and Borno to the South. Based on the national head count, the population of the state stood at 2.5 million (CENSUS, 2006; & NPC, 2012).

In the area of education, the state remained one of the educationally less developed in the federation (Unesco, 2012; 2013; Actionaid, 2013; & HDI, 2013). Specifically, girls' enrolment net stood at 15%. Government's efforts towards consolidating the educational system with a view to making it more adaptable to the realities and needs of the modern times leave much to be desired. Though, the situation may not be unconnected with the deep-rooted cultural values held by people. The questions that arise are: what are the existing cultural values in the society? Do the values held by the people go in line with the Islamic doctrine? Details of these would further be elaborated in the discussion.



**Figure 2 Map Nigeria showing Yobe State and Potiskum town**

### **Socio-cultural Values**

In order to understand the behaviour of any group of people in their dealings with one another within the society, it is important to first know their dominant or mainstream culture which is passed down from one generation to another. In this regard, culture being a multi-dimensional concept offered different meanings to different people. For instance, culture is like an iceberg which could be fragmented into external and internal (Weaver, 1999). As the iceberg is submerged what ordinarily remained is the tip of the iceberg which is the external and smallest part. It is within this smallest part of culture that the behaviour of the people could be seen easily (Weaver, 1999). Under such situation for example, people might be overly concerned about matters related to wearing the correct or wrong clothes, and greeting people correctly or incorrectly.

On the other hand, internal culture is the greatest part of culture mostly regarded as beneath the water level of awareness. In other words, the largest part of a person's culture is within it. In this case, the culture is inside people's heads and most importantly contained the values and views unconsciously learned while growing up in a particular culture (Weaver, 1999; & Halstead, 2005). Such value includes people's way of thinking and perceiving which determine most behaviour within the individual society. More importantly, individuals' understanding of the internal culture especially the significant values helped them to have a system for interpreting and analysing behaviour (Halstead, 2005).

Raths, Harmin and Simon (1966) described values as attitudes and beliefs that an individual is proud of and willing to publicly affirm. Similarly, values are worth chosen thoughtfully from alternatives and acted on repeatedly (Sule, 2010; & Ladan, 2011). In the words of Halstead,

“values could be referred to as a set of fundamental convictions, principles in decision-making, standard, ideals, or life stances which act as general guides to behaviour or as points of reference or the evaluation of beliefs or action and which are closely connected to personal identity” (Halstead, 2005: 4).

The effects of cultural values are believed to be differing than beliefs which judged the importance of persons. In essence, values identified the factors that must be considered when taking a decision in order for the decision to be perceived as just (Beck, 1990; & Aslam, 2008). Therefore, the idea of street hawking is an indication of deep-rooted cultural values which has eaten deep into the fabrics of the society. The likes of such values are what the people have cherished, admired, and incorporated into their day-to-day dealings in the society. In Yobe State for instance, street hawking is seen as a consequence of family dynamics. In most cases, the people uphold family ties in high esteem by allowing their children to live with another family. In most cases, the social arrangement of that second family usually determines the faith of the innocent children most especially girls.

### **Family Structure and Gender Roles**

Traditionally, the family constitutes the basic unit of social control which sets the norms and values for male and female. Within this set up males are heads of households as well as custodians of all decisions regarding the socio-economic organization of the family. Specifically, the father (or in his absence the eldest son) heads the household thereby enabling patriarchy as the leadership norm (Ladan 2009; Hashim, 2010; Mahdi, 2010; & Usman, 2010). Male parents have been recognized as being the most powerful models, guides and designers of children's social and cultural experiences (Sultana, Erlina, & Mohd, 2012). However, the roles, rights, and opportunities for girls' in this social set up have been misplaced. This condition has created discrimination within the family structure. High priority is often accorded to sons as heir apparent and future 'protectors of the family name'. Even the birth of a son is very much welcomed because he is expected to support the parents in terms of need. This being the case, a girl right from childhood becomes fully aware of the fact that her brother is an important asset to the family. The consequences of such actions warrants her treatment

as a non-permanent family members of her natal home (Sultana, 2010). Yet, under such condition of abuse and neglect these girls' are an important resource in their families even in the face of these disadvantages.

### **Nature of Street Hawking in Potiskum Town**

Specific to Potiskum town, girls' involvement in street hawking popularly referred to as '*yan tallah*, is part of 'child work' expected of them amongst the various ethnic groups (Hashim, 2011; & Usman, 2010). The practice has since been seen as an accommodated "norms" that should not be regarded as child labour. At this juncture therefore, it is pertinent to give a clear distinction between tasks and job that constitute child labour and those that are not or rather child work. Obviously, street hawking could be referred to as *child labour* (Bello, 2004; & Ladan, (2009). The work the child does is exploitative and distressing to the moral, social, and physical development of the child. Besides, a situation children are meant to supplement the family income through street hawking, some serving as beggar's assistants, and hundreds more used as domestic servants working mainly for comfortable urban households referred to as nannies no doubt be child labour which is detrimental to human development.

Child labour simply referred to any form of activity or task that denies children their childhood, potentials and dignity (ILO, 2012). In other words, child labour constitutes any task that is detrimental to both mental and physical development of the child. Street hawking also exposes children into long hours of exertion in a dangerous environment and at the expense of their schooling. However, *child work* refers to domestic chores aimed at training the child. The work schedule is flexible and responsive to the ability of the child (Ladan, 2009). The work the child does is meant to encourage his/her participation and learning.

Hawkers have been identified as one of the three categories of informal labour and branded as 'children on the street' (International Labour Organizations, 2012). They remained on the street and still maintained more or less regular ties with their families. In essence, their focus is home to which they return at the end of the day and have a sense of belonging to the local community. They are more appropriately known as community children as they are the offspring of the communal world. Report has also shown that the estimated global population of street children stood at 150 million with the number rising daily (United Nations, 2012). Thus, street hawking in its simplest form is an informal economic activity which involved selling of items along the roadside or from one place to the other (Ladan, 2009; & Umar, 2011). The experience could be both threatening and unpleasant.

The second category are "children of the street", they maintained tenuous relations with their families, visiting them only occasionally. They "appreciate" the streets as their homes where they seek shelter, food and companionship. The third categories are the "abandoned children", who are completely on their own. They are also referred to as children of the street but are differentiated from that category by the fact that they have cut off all ties with their biological families (International Labour Organizations, 2012).

In most villages and homes therefore, girls are increasingly recognised as independent actors who make valuable (albeit often overlooked) contributions to households and community levels. These hawkers are between the ages of eight (8) to fourteen (14) who constantly roamed the streets and markets places with either trays or dishes selling items depending on the availability of the product. They are highly mobile and play vital economic roles supporting married women who spent much time in their walled residences (*gida*). According to Hashim (2011) married women most often devised a means when it became obvious that their husbands could not sustain the family. So due to the socio-religious practice of Muslim women seclusion such married women are left with no with no better option than to involve their daughters in hawking. Indeed, the only sphere men acknowledged women to be significant decision-makers within the family structure is the control of their children through hawking which is detrimental.

In my interview with Mariya, a thirteen years old street hawker, she doesn't seem to have any catalogue of grievances about her constant life on the street. According to her the overall life is "okay" but her sole enemy is the beggar she said. In her words: "My only enemy is the beggar". I tried to inquire in-depth and she recapped that:

"Any time I'm trying to sell my coconut flakes - *kwakumeti*, beggars approach the same vehicle to compete for their share of business. Sometimes with the help of my friends we tried to forcibly drive them away from the intersection".

In the course of our conversations, we observed Mariya, had some nasty experiences with those she claimed to be "rich" people. We made a probing and she explained her encounter with a lady who threatened to slap her because there was no change to settle their transaction. "The lady referred to me as the daughter of a bitch". Mariya exclaimed. We further asked Mariya, why she thinks that some people are rich whilst others are poor. After chewing her lip for a little while, she simply said: "The rich and the poor are all the same and we should behave the same way".

From the above interview, hawking practice is attractive to both parties because of its suppleness. The girls occupy the public space and often spent the largest amounts of their time hawking wares on behalf of their mothers. In some circumstances, such girls' are independent entrepreneurs in their own rights. Thus, the children are important sources of information about prices, and quantities for secluded women traders.

### **Cultural Characteristics of Street Hawkers**

In a comparative study undertaken on street hawking in Ghana, Uganda and Kenya, most of those involved are semi illiterates (Ajiboye & Oladiti, 2008). Similarly, the South African most street hawkers can read in their mother tongue, while more male traders can communicate in English which enables them to do better in business. In Kenya, the new breed of street hawkers sale expensive electrical equipment and leather products. Most of these new breed of hawkers are agents of formal firms and sell on commission. However, the situation is not similar with those hawkers in Nigeria especially in places like Yobe State. In Potiskum town for instance, school age girls' dominated street hawking and mostly found along major intersections. Majority of them are illiterates between the ages of eight to fourteen years, with very few of them falling above fifteen years. Due to the problem of male child preference prevalent in the society, parents would rather send boys to school than girls' (Ebigbo, 1996).

There exist two groups of girls' involved. Those who usually positioned themselves at strategic intersection with heavy human traffic maintained a pool of customers ranging from pedestrians and motorists. While the other group go round from place to place, entering houses, walking through the streets, markets, and building sites advertising and selling their items which they hoped to sell at least each day. There major sites visited in Potiskum town included: Kampala, Layin Masko, Damboa, Kasuwar NPN, Tsohuwar Kasuwa, and Tasha (Gwanar Gadara)

At one of the main market, flurry of commerce flourished with both whole sale and retail stores displaying expensive goods like clothes, shoes, food stuffs, kitchen utensils and other electronic dealers. Whilst girls' selling early morning breakfast like millet gruel (*koko*) and bean cakes (*kosai*) positioned themselves on the other side of the intersection each day. The fact that girl hawkers constitutes a combinations of various ethnic groupings in the town, the nomadic Fulani girls' are distinguished from other hawkers due to the distinct nature of their unique dresses, colourful and well decorated calabashes containing their products (Hashim, 2009; Ladan, 2010; & Usman, 2010). In the course of my observation, I noticed they mostly collected less exorbitant prices on their items not because the items are sub-standard but because of the nature of the business.

These girls' liaised with each other and providing themselves with exchanges as they traded long hours. There is gender variation among children in the frequency and duration of hawking. Girls' are more than four times more likely than boys to be hawking as they hawk every day of the week. While boys hawked on average 1 or 2 days a week most especially Thursdays and Fridays because there are no classes for those attending the *Islamiyya* or Qur'anic schools. In an interview with one of the girls' she acknowledged that:

We hawk more because we have a greater need to earn money for our weddings [Paused], but most boys will marry later and so have a longer period in which to become economically active (a prerequisite for young men to marry) and can perform activities that are socially prescribed as masculine.

I also observed they are often invisible at night because tradition demands that they remain indoors at that time. I also observed older girls' and young unmarried men being engaged in underground 'moves' characterised by teasing, chatting during the day. By and large, they mingled with men and boys freely against the backdrop that moral conduct expects them to display shyness in all situations they find themselves (Bussu, Baba Baba, & Kawu, 2009). By tradition, the girls' are expected to exhibit good behaviour either outside or within their peer groups (Usman, 2010).

### **III. Discussion**

In spite of the various attempts by authorities concern to stem the growing number proliferation of street hawking, it is surprising to see how thriving it has become in most of developing countries. In the midst of all the pressures street hawking has proven to be the most visible means of sustenance. Hawkers trading on the streets are found in almost all major cities of the developing world. Places like Dhaka the capital of Bangladesh, Bangkok in Thailand, and Accra etc., have been home to many street hawker (Raynor & Wesson, 2006). The growing number of street hawkers may not be unconnected to the massive rural-urban migration, and unemployment (Bradley & Saigol, 2012). However, Umukoro (2013) attributed the problem to the difficult economic situation and increasing levels of pervasive poverty. In Nigeria, the large influx of children on the streets have been traced to the inefficient economic policies pursued by government since the days of the oil boom from 1970-77 in addition to lack of formal and informal education (Falola & Heaton, 2008).

This paper is a case study which contributes to the current debates. However findings of this study have revealed that the case for girls' involvement in street hawking in Yobe State is much more complex than researcher has presented it. The economic reason or rather poverty cannot explain their involvement in street hawking. The issues are centered on combinations of social, cultural and to some extent "economic" motives.

### **Findings**

The social motive for girls involvement in street hawking is seen as their fulfilment of the gender division of labour. Among other thing, it enables the facilitation of "girl bonding" which provides them with the personal "space" for peer socialization. During hawking, they provided themselves with checks and balances while on their own outside home. In others, they monitor each other's safety in case of violence or abuse by male customers. The practice has since been given greater acceptability from their female parents.

Culturally, there has been long-drawn-out clash of interest between the male and female parents. The cultural expectations of early marriage practice are prevalent within the society most especially among these hawkers. In most cases, the father favoured marrying off his daughter to members of his clan fold as well as his kinsmen. Marrying her off at tender age would not make her become uncontrollable. However, female parents considered girls hawking as an opportunity for exposure to future husbands outside their clan. Thus, hawking provided them with opportunities of connecting with future husbands, especially those suitors coming from other cliques (Ladan, 2009). Usually, the time spent on the street is regarded as part of their leisure time with prospective suitors especially on big market days.

In an interview with a mother of one of the hawkers, she stated that: "Hawking avoids deviant behaviour and can generate a sense of responsibility and belonging among children". She goes further to say that: "Sunday is the most lucrative day for them".

By tradition, brides and their mothers are expected to display their marriage trousseaus (*Kayan daki*) which widely regarded and seen as kind of family honour, status, wealth, as well as demonstrating the enterprising skills of their daughters. Fatima, a mother to a street hawker asserts that:

Any girl with few utensils is labelled as non-enterprising and lazy and may be even feared to be liability than an asset to members of her new home. While a girl with lots of marriage trousseaus earn and command the respect of her in-laws.

Therefore, the competitive life style of families exerts a lot of pressure on the girls' leaving them with no option but to get involved in hawking.

The cultural expectations to enhance their beauty required them to generate income in order to support such luxuries (Ladan, 2009; & Usman, 2010). Specifically, the Fulani girls are by custom required to ensure body modification i.e. making tattoo designs, use of local cosmetics as well as making age-grade hair styles at all times. As Hirtle and de Villiers (1997, p. 285) noted "they have their hair plaited, a lipstick of kohl blackens their lips, and yellow paste made from a friable stone called polla is spread all over their face".

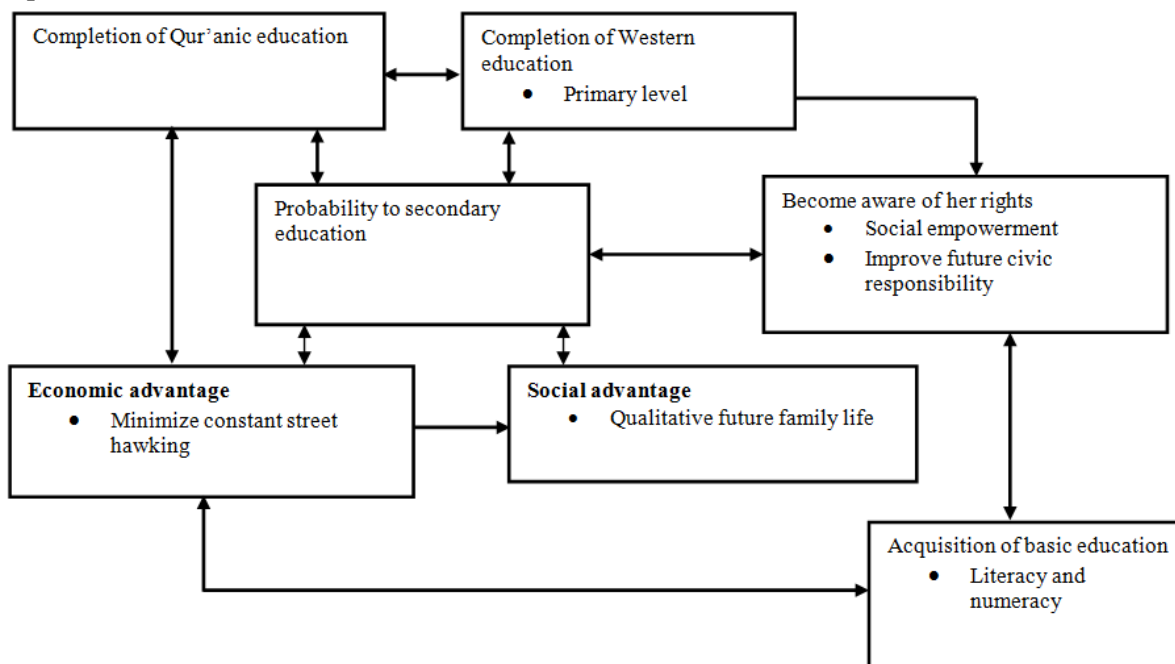
In another development, girls involvement in street hawking is widely regarded as an 'economic obligation'. The essence is to groom them right from childhood to motherhood/wifehood under the cloak "economic independence" (Ladan, 2009; Hashim, 2010; & Usman, 2010). The girls like their mothers are trained to become secondary providers to the family in the future. As a result, girls got involved with the trade of marketing on the streets to prepare them as future responsible partners expected to generate sufficient income to support the income of their spouses. So, it is a matter of prescribed responsibility for them to hawk.

### **Challenges of Street Hawking**

Street hawking is probably the most risky the world over. Life on the street is insecure, especially for a girl who in the first place has no business being there. The streets are mainly for vehicles, and some of the walkways are not spacious enough for pedestrians let alone hawkers. The consequences of street hawking are overwhelming to all and sundry. Nowadays, the rate of road accident is high and we believe one major cause is street hawking. Hawking promotes decay in family values. Being constantly on the streets made them to embrace abusive language and 'garage behaviour'. This adopted negative behaviour has generated concern to religious leaders and some community members of how best girls are to be raised in an orthodox social setting. The adverse influence of negative socio-cultural values has left their survival, well-being, development, and security as citizens of Nigeria at a deplorable condition

In most cases, girls are confronted with the lack of safety and have encountered different forms of intimidation, and exploitations in the form of verbal, emotional, psychological, and even sexual molestation from their male customers (Audu et al., 2008; Nzewi, 1988; Obiako, 1986; Umar, 2010; and Usman, 2010; Action aid, 2012). The primary negative repercussion of girls' involvement in street hawking is their non-enrolment to any of the two available systems of education, i.e. Islamic and Western. Consequently, it is not a surprise that she grows up into an ignorant young lady in principles and attitudes (Umar, 2010). Although education has proved to be an effective tool for development, Nigeria's human development indicators revealed that girls' and women have significantly worse chances in almost all aspects of human endeavours than men. In general the literacy rate for males is 72% compared to only 56% for females. While there are geographical variations, Yobe State has 15% girls' net enrolment compared to 55% for boys (Action aid, 2013).

**Expected Outcome if Educated**



**IV. Conclusions**

The bane of the issue centred on indiscipline. Male parents that deliberately failed to meet their daily financial needs have left their daughters with no option but to hawk in order to supplement the family income. It can be clearly stated that the male parents are to blame for not living above board. As Muslims, Islamic law has assigned rights and duties to both partners. The Qur'an says women have rights even as they have obligations according to what is equitable (Qur'an, 2:228). It is important to note that the protection of the family relationship, which in turn ensures the sustenance of human progeny, is identified by Muslim scholars as one of the fundamental goals of Islamic law. Even mutual rights and obligations of both partners and of the family members in general, are not mere private concerns of the individual marriage partners or members of the family. They are also the concern of society in general. So the well-being, progress, and continuity of human society depend on how far the rights and duties relating to the family relationship are respected and protected.

Consequently the mutual expectations of family members, in terms of rights and obligations, are reinforced and complemented by the values and norms of the larger Muslim community. This in essence means that striving to protect the rights accorded to girls and women is one of the obligations imposed by Allah the Almighty on all members of Muslim society. It is therefore, not even the responsibility of a teenage daughter to augment the family income through street hawking. In this regard, the Shari'ah vehemently rejects the practice on the grounds that it exposes them to the dangers of sexual exploitation from some morally bankrupt members of society. The Qur'an says:

“... But force not your maids to prostitution when they desire chastity, in order that you may make a gain in the goods of this life” (Qur'an 24:33).

Therefore, children are sources of happiness and joy to their parents and families as invaluable assets to the society. They should not be abused, exploited, and deprived of their rights to general education. They should not be deprived of their rights to normal and happy childhood. Whatever affects them in childhood, if not carefully and tactfully removed, corrected, or stopped will no doubt affect them in the future. In a way, these



girls' need to be made to start stepping on a right footing so that they will have a firm stand at womanhood, a period that is accompanied with many challenges of life.

To cap it all, the contextual discussion focused on the cultural, social and to some extent "economic" motives behind girls' hawking. This is because, girls' are expected to trade in anticipation of "girls bonding", the facilitation of "peer socialization", and a means of exposure to potential suitors especially those outside their lineage hawking also brings "family honour" if a girl is married with lots of marriage trousseau – *Kayan daki*. It is a means of preparing the girls' as future wives expected to contribute to their spouses' income. So, their involvement is for future economic responsibilities, as well as a means of taking care of existing poverty pressure of their natal homes. The discussion also reiterated the social insecurity that accompanied hawking. Direct quotes are provided from the interviewees as well as the use of existing literature (Imam, 2008; Oyekere, 2009; Usman, 2010; Ladan, 2011; & Action aid, 2013).

### Recommendations

There should be greater collaboration and synergy between all stakeholders to effectively implement policies and programmes earlier initiated for the benefit and wellbeing of the Nigerian child. It has been observed that there is lack of proper planning and misplacement of priorities by the government. Also, lack of spirit of total commitment at all the three tiers of government hinders any progress towards curbing any planned change in our society. It is therefore, recommended that any strategy seeking to end street hawking must address the issues that underlies their involvement and not simply on preventing them from their daily grandeur. There should be a planned literacy/vocational programme in which the girl hawkers would be afforded the opportunity to attain some literacy level and at the same time acquire some vocational skills and basic trades like knitting, sewing, weaving etc.

Parents should also be sensitized towards accepting their responsibilities. They should also be target for adult education classes as problem started to emanated due to ignorance paving way to harmful cultural practices like street hawking. Whatever gropes up along the line, families do matter in the lives of the children most especially girls'. Parent should be made aware that female off springs are great gifts and assets not liabilities. They should also complement with proper parental up-bringing and positive values. Religious institutions should be encouraged in addressing negative values within the society. They should draws attention to the constraints within which the children live, and for which reason street hawking has become an attractive prospect. Many parents are insensitive by refusing to fulfill their own part of the obligation. The hawkers should be encouraged and assisted by non-governmental organizations, and civil societies that would advocate for their welfare and champion their course.

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