

# The Taxonomy of Street Children and Their Effect on the Society

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study was to find out the challenges posed by street children both to parents, government and their effects on the environment at large. This study is revealing that there is an urgent need for these children to be taken off the street before Boko haram recruits them into their camp in Nigeria. The research was carried out on 5 selected gang-outs of the street children in Calabar Metropolis of Cross River State. A survey questionnaire was administered on a sample size of twenty five children culled from five selected gang-outs in Calabar Metropolis in Nigeria. A four point Likert-scale rating was secured as the instrument for data collection and the questionnaire was face vetted and validated for data collection. The respondents indicated the extent of their agreement to the items based on the scale points; strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. The responses were weighted against the options and the mean score derived by summing the weighted scores and dividing by total number of responses.

**Keywords:** Street, children, parents, family, future, abandoned, government, environment, society, homes, and education.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Street Children are the abandoned, rejected and unfortunate youngones in our societies rejected by their parents, guardians and the society who are found roaming on the street because of the circumstances that are somehow beyond their control. Street children are divided into two groups: These are children on the street and children in the street. Children on the street are those who come from their homes to the street and go back to their homes while children in the street are those who made their homes in the street. Children are on the streets because of poor parental upbringing, poor treatment, neglect and lack of basic necessities of life. As a result, they found ready homes in abandoned areas, uncompleted buildings, under the bridges and wastelands more than their homes. Children who have homes and families are also found among them, who live in situations where there is no control, care, protection, love, supervision of guardian as well as children who are entrapped by the attitude of the policy-makers and service providers.

April 12<sup>th</sup> is generally accepted and celebrated as the International Day for Street Children. Hundreds of events and activities take place across the globe every year Thomas, S (2013). [5]

Most of the street children subjected to physical abuse sometimes even by their family members, law enforcement agencies, and murdered somehow by other gangs, they are being seen and treated by societies as destructive forces to be eradicated rather than young ones with bright future to be nurtured and protected. Unnecessary excuses are occasionally given for frequent and arbitrary detention by police like homelessness, loitering, vagrant, or petty theft. More worrisome is the incessant attacks on innocent street-girls who are sometimes sexually abused. Street children also make up a large proportion of the children who enter criminal justice systems and are committed finally to correctional institutions (prisons) that are euphemistically called schools, often without due process AdediranAtinuke, (2010). [1]

Unfortunately, a greater percentage of these people become so irredeemable to the point that they grow up in like manner without any proper orientation either from their parents/ guardians or the society. The consequence of that lack of care make most of them end up under the bridges, live in the dark and take over a number of public places where they operate illicit businesses and thus constituting environmental nuisances and environmental dangers.

Besides the nation's economic situation, these children may have chosen to make the street as their resort for other reasons. Unfortunately, some of them may have no choice - they are abandoned, orphaned, or thrown out of their homes. Some may choose to live in the streets as rebels, another state that has to do with the psychological make up of the child. Disappointedly though, some children also work in the streets because they need to support their families.

The challenges posed by these children both to the government and the environment at large cannot be overemphasized. The resultant effects created may appear very immeasurable but on the long run it creates a devastating imbalance on the polity. Experience has shown that these minors, later in life become ready tools employed by unscrupulous elements in the society to carry out their nefarious activities.

These children, either by design or default, become victims of circumstance created by the environment; sometimes emanating from parents with poor attitudes to the well being of their kids. By extension, some of these children are on the streets because of poor parental upbringing, mistreatment, neglect and lack of basic necessities of life. As a result, they found ready homes in unoccupied dwellings, uncompleted buildings, under the bridges and wastelands more than their family homes. It also includes children who might not necessarily be homeless or without families, but who live in situations where there is no protection, supervision, or direction from responsible adults as well as children in such a wide variety of circumstances and characteristics that policy-makers and service providers find difficult to describe. AdediranAtinuke, (2010)[1]

Anna Harding, (2010),[2] opined that children have the right to develop in environments that allow them to strive to become better people. When children are left to be raised on the streets they are often exploited, abused or exposed to dangerous situations which violate their rights. These violations of their basic human rights will have a negative impact on society as a whole.

Around the world, one can find millions of children who live and work in the streets. Most of them are obligated to become street children either because they are orphans and have no other choice or because they are part of very poor families that force them to earn income in order to contribute to their household economy. Whichever the case may be the end result is the same; these children are being abused and exploited as they are obligated to work day and night in the streets.

It is very hard to determine the exact number of children that work and live in the streets but according to The Consortium for Street Children "UNICEF (1993 ) [6] estimates that as high as 100 million children are growing up on urban streets around the world and it is likely that the numbers are increasing. Despite their young age, they work washing cars, running errands, and selling different sorts of items, prostitution or just plain begging. It is very common to see people in societies turn their backs on these children as they become part of the everyday backdrop in third world countries.

Consequences for those children who work and live on the streets are various and serious. To begin with, every child has the right to go through the playing "stage" in order to develop their motor and cognitive skills. Also, at this very young age it is fundamental that they must go to school in order to obtain basic education as they learn to read and write. Without the basic right to education these children will find it difficult to pursue a better life in future.

It is also very common to find malnutrition amongst these children. Being undernourished at such a young age is a serious health risk and has long term effects on the individual such as deficient immune systems and therefore a shorter life expectancy. Another consequence to this problem is that most street children are not registered in their country's archives. There are approximately 48 million young ones who do not exist. They don't have papers and they constitute 47% of the child world population. In Latin America 20 of every 100 births are never registered. Therefore, their right to an identity is being denied and as a result other rights such as their right to nationality, the right to vote and the right to an education will be deprived. Nonetheless, the most serious consequence of this is that these undocumented children become very susceptible to becoming victims of traffickers and criminal gangs thereby making these children predisposed to a life of crime

It is also important to emphasize that children do not have the criteria to make important decisions. Consequently, they will not know when they are exposing themselves to dangerous situations like prostitution, sexual violations, drug

consumption and other forms of modern slavery. According to [stolenchildhood.net](http://stolenchildhood.net) "Street children in the third world, having no access to basic needs always become an easy prey of traffickers. The demand for street children is high among the pimps and the brothel owners because these children sell themselves at cheap rates. These children are at high risk because they neither use contraceptives nor ask the clients to use them. Thus the chances of getting pregnant or catching a sexually transmitted disease is very high.

Few of these street children that survive through childhood and become adults can be reintegrated into society as most of them become individuals without education, with low moral beliefs, psychological damage and who are indifferent to social norms and values. All these are ingredients for a recipe to cause more crime and violence in society, a growing problem in today's world. Additionally, these children when becoming adults are the ones who oppress other helpless and innocent children, creating a vicious cycle which affects societies today and will continue in the future.

It is vital to find solutions to this problem. Economic and social policies of every country should be aligned when treating this problem in order to create viable options so as to keep these children away from the street and place them in positive situations where they can grow to become productive members of the society and as a result contribute to achieve sustainable development and help prevent a generation of uneducated and unemployed individuals who would only become a burden to society.

### 1. Purpose of the Article:

The purpose of this study was to find out the challenges posed by the street children both to the parents, government and their effects on the environment at large. *This study is arrived at revealing that there is an urgent need for these children to be taken off the street before terrorist groups recruit them into their camps in Nigeria.*

### 2. Scope of the Article:

The research was carried out in 5 selected gang-outs of street children in Calabar Metropolis of Cross River State. The gang-out includes:-

1. Big-Qua
2. Cultural Centre
3. Moore Road
4. De Choice
5. Marian Road

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE ARTICLE

Street children as defined by the UNICEF: is divided into children "on" the street and children "of" the streets. Children "on" the streets are the children whose have home to live in, but have a full time work or a part time work. Children "Of" the streets are the children "whose home ties have been seriously weakened and who essentially live in the street" (UNICEF, 1993, p.22). [6] Children "of" the streets are that which live all the time on the streets or in other words children with no shelter except for the street. Also, a "street child" is defined as "any boy or girl for whom the street in the widest sense of the word has become his or her habitual abode and/or source of livelihood, and who are inadequately protected, supervised, or directed by responsible adults" ( Lusk, 1989).[4]Kopokaopines that children who work on streets and take streets as a shelter, usually come from poor slums and squatter settlements where everything is unsafe: Family financial situation, overcrowded schools and even safe place where they can run and play. Moreover, wars or armed conflicts cause the increasing of this problem where the children's parents are killed and are left them alone with no shelter or place to live. On the other hand, there are children who have guardians, but the guardians sent them to work to help the family, others are forced to work and live in streets. There are also children from well to do families or middle class who run away from home.

Lugalla and Mbwambo (1995), [3]the causes for these problems are enormous, some are natural and others are man-made. Children have lost contact with their parents or families, which results in the loss of the children in the streets. Some children are the offspring of prostitutes. Some families reject their children if they are handicapped. Some "respectable" parent disowned their own children because of strange behavior which family disapproved of.

Harding, (2010),[2] for every cause there is effect, and there are devastating effects on street children themselves and on the society they belong to. The children without education are without a future, which means that they will not be able to defend their future and they will face lots of difficulties to have a better life. Moreover, being undernourished from at such very young ages caused bad side effects on their health like malnutrition which affects their immune system and result is shorter life expectancy. Lugalla et (1995) research revealed that there are approximately 48 million young ones who are not registered in their country's archives, which represent around 47% of the child population around the world. 20 out of every 100 births in Latin America are never registered. That mean that all of those 47% are not on paper which means they do not exist. This is a huge problem as the poor kids do not have an identity, which exclude them from other rights like the right to vote or the right to have a proper education or even low level education. Moreover, criminal gangs which really represent a huge disaster, as they use the unregistered children to do criminals acts and violence. The children have no means of knowing what is right or wrong. They may expose themselves to very cruel situations like prostitution, sexual violations, drug consumption and other forms of modern slavery. According to [stolenchildhood.net](http://stolenchildhood.net) "Street children in the third world, having no access to basic needs always become easy prey for flesh traders. The demand for street children is high among the pimps and brothel owners because these children sell themselves at cheap rates. The children are at high risk because they neither use contraceptives nor ask the clients to use them. Thus the chances of getting pregnant or catching a sexually transmitted disease is often high".

#### Street children impacton the society:

The effects of street children in society on the United States or Canada are generally caused by children who are neglected; abused or runaways. It is called "the mean streets" and street children who are sitting targets for pimps; drug dealers and pornography. Street children more oftenthan not are forced to commit theft or other crimes as to either, provide for their pimps and habit of drugs.

There are incredible and posed unbearable burden on the society. They ganged up to attack those who desire to correct them because they are used to life without resistance, therefore, if you correct them they see you as their enemy. They have no regards for anyone as they see every elderly person as their parents who are frustrated drove them out of the house. As misplacement of such, the aggression from their parents is toward anyone who stands on their way. They are also antagonistic toward themselves. The older boys rape the new and young in-take in their group. Additionally, these children on becoming adults are the ones who oppress other helpless and innocent children, creating a vicious cycle which affects societies today and will continue in the future.

There is an urgent need for these children to be taken off the street before it gets too late. With the situation of Boko haram in Nigeria right now, if these children still remain on the street a little longer they may become ready tools for hooligans use to achieve their evil desires..

**Table 1 Distribution of study population by gender**

S/No	Item	Male	Female	Total	%
1	Big Qua	4	1	5	0.25
2	Cultural Centre	3	2	5	0.25
3	Moore Road	5	-	5	0.25
4	De Choice	3	2	5	0.25
5	Marian Road	4	1	5	0.25
	Total	19 (0.95)	6 (0.3)	25	1.25

Researchers Field Survey: 2015

### 3. PROCEDURE FOR DATA COLLECTION

The researchers collected the data and organized them according to the questions formulated for the study. The data was analyzed using the mean method after weights of 4,3,2 and1, had been assigned to the options as against strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree respectively. Item that has a mean score of 3 points and above, are regarded as agreed or accepted, whereas any item having a mean score below 3.00 points is considered as disagreed or rejected.

The responses are weighed against the options and the mean score is derived by summing the weighed scores and dividing by total number of response.

$$\text{Mean score} = \frac{(R1 \times 4) + (R2 \times 3) + (R3 \times 2) + (R4 \times 1)}{\text{Total No of responses}}$$

**Table 2: Respondents view on the responsibility of the parents/government for the street children**

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	DA	SDA	TOTAL	X	REMARKS
1	Children are on the streets because of poor parental upbringing, maltreatment, neglect and lack of basic necessities of life.	7	9	4	5	25	2.75	Disagree
2	Street children are abandoned, rejected and unfortunate orphans are rejected by their parents, guardians and the society	5	6	9	5	25	2.44	Disagree
3	Lack of care make most of them to end up under the bridges, public places where they operate illicit businesses and thus constituting environmental nuisances and dangers.	6	5	6	8	25	2.36	Disagree
4	A large proportion of the children who enter criminal justice systems are committed finally to correctional institutions (prisons) that are called schools, often without due process	10	9	5	1	25	3.12	Agree
5	The challenges posed by these children both to the government and the environment at large cannot be overemphasized.	12	7	4	2	25	3.16	Agree
6	Children have the right to develop in environments that allow them to strive to become better people.	15	7	1	2	25	3.4	Agree
7	It is also very common to find malnutrition amongst these children.	8	10	6	1	25	3	Agree
8	Some children also work in the streets because their earnings are needed by their families,	15	9	1	-	25	3.52	Agree
9	The children without education are without future.	10	7	6	2	25	3	Agree
10	There is an urgent need for these children to be taken off the street before Boko haram recruits them into their camp in Nigeria.	15	6	1	3	25	3.32	Agree

Researchers Field Survey: 2015

The first item in Table 2 has the mean score of 2.75. This shows that the respondents disagree with the fact that the children are on the streets because of poor parental upbringing, maltreatment, neglect and lack of basic necessities of life. Item 2 has the mean score of 2.44, this shows that the correspondents disagree with the fact that street children are abandoned, rejected and unfortunate orphans are rejected by their parents, guardians and the society. Item 3 has the mean score of 2.36, this shows that the respondents disagree with the fact that lack of care make most of the children to end up under the bridges, public places where they operate illicit businesses and thus constituting environmental nuisances and

dangers. Item 4 has the mean score of 3.12, this shows that the respondent agree that a large proportion of the children who enter criminal justice systems are committed finally to correctional institutions (prisons) that are called schools, often without due process. Item 5, has the mean score of 3.16, this shows that the respondents agree with the fact that the challenges posed by these children both to the government and the environment at large cannot be overemphasized. Item 6, has the mean score of 3.4, this shows that the respondents agree to the fact that children have the right to develop in environments that allow them to strive to become better people. Item 7 has the mean score of 3, this indicate that the respondents agree with the fact that it is also very common to find malnutrition amongst these children. Item 8, has the mean score of 3.52, this shows that the respondents agree with the fact that some children also work in the streets because their earnings are needed by their families. Item 9, has the mean score of 3, this shows that the respondents agree with the fact that children without education are without future. Item 10, has the mean score of 3.32, this shows that the respondents agree with the fact that there is an urgent need for these children to be taken off the street before Boko haram recruit them into their camp in Nigeria.

**Table 3 DERIVATION RESPONSES MEAN SCORES**

Item	Mean Scores
1	2.75
2	2.44
3	2.36
4	3.12
5	3.16
6	3.4
7	3
8	3.52
9	3
10	3.32

Researchers Field Survey: 2015

#### 4. SUMMARY OF THE ARTICLE

The children without education are without future, which means that they will not be able to defend their future and they will face lots of problems to have a better life. Additionally, these children when becoming adults are the ones who victimize other helpless and innocent children, creating ananguish which affects societies today and will continue in the future.

The challenges posed by these children both to the government and the environment cannot be overemphasized. The resultant effects created may appear very immeasurable but on the long run it may create a devastating imbalance on the polity.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

Therefore, there is an urgent need for these children to be taken off the street before it gets too late. With the situation of Boko haram in Nigeria now, if these children still remain on the street a little longer who knows whether they won't be ready tools for hooligans to use to achieve their evil desire?. Street children throughout the world are subjected to physical abuse sometimes even by their parents and law enforcement agencies, and killed anyhow by other gangs, as societies treat them as aliens and a destructive force to be destroyed rather than young children to be trained, nurtured and protected for posterity.

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