

## Street Hawking and the Health of Teenage Girls in Obi Local Government Area, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

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### **Abstract**

*Street hawking is a prevalent economic and socio-cultural activity, among teenage girls in many urban and rural areas, often driven by the need for financial independence or familial support. While this informal trade can provide immediate economic benefits, it also poses significant health risks on the hawkers that are often overlooked. Teenage girls engaged in street hawking, face a myriad of health challenges, including physical injuries from traffic accidents, exposure to harsh weather conditions, and potential harassment or violence and abuse by society. Furthermore, the long hours spent on the streets can lead to mental health issues, such as stress, anxiety, and depression, compounded by the pressures of balancing trade and education, for those of them enrolled in school. The study examined how street hawking affects the physical well-being of teenage girls, found out the psychological effects of street hawking on the development of teenage girls and explained how street hawking affects the social development of teenage girls in Obi Local Government Area. The study adopted a descriptive research survey design; questionnaires and interviews were used to gather data. The study was anchored on poverty theory, propounded by Amartya Sen and social disorganization theory, developed by Shaw and McKay to explain the effects of street hawking among teenage girls. Findings revealed that prolonged exposure to street hawking affects the physical, social, mental, cognitive and spiritual well-being of teenage girls. Therefore, the study recommends that the government should create initiatives that facilitate access to education for teenage girls involved in street hawking and enlighten parents and guidance on how to improve on the well-being of their children, by unveiling the dangers of street hawking. This could include flexible schooling options, scholarships, or vocational training programs that allow them to balance work and education.*

**Key Words:** Health, Street-Hawking, Teenage-Girls

## **1.0 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

### **1.1 Introduction**

In many parts of the world, especially in poorer nations, street hawking has long been a common informal economic activity. It involves people who frequently do not have access to formal employment prospects, selling a variety of goods and services on the streets. While it's often assumed that street hawking is done by adults who are trying to make ends meet, a trend of great concern has been observed recently: teenage girls are becoming more and more involved in the activity (Yizengaw & Gebrewold, 2018). The rise of street hawking among

teenage girls is a complex issue that stems from a combination of economic, social, and cultural factors (Omolara, 2022). These girls, typically between the ages of 10 and 19, find themselves engaging in this activity due to a variety of circumstances, including poverty, lack of educational opportunities, and limited access to other income-generating avenues, their involvement in street hawking highlights the challenges they face and sheds light on the broader issues of gender inequality and child rights violations (Olatomide & Osibanjo, 2018). Street hawking opens these young girls to other forms of child abuse and neglect, such as sexual, emotional, physical and verbal abuse (Olaku, 2012).

Street hawking among teenage girls refers to the situation where adolescent girls, typically between the ages of 13 and 19, engage in the informal selling of goods or merchandise on the streets or in public spaces without a fixed retail premises (Okafor, 2020). Street hawking is defined as when a minor, especially teenage girls, engages in street vending or selling goods or services in public spaces or on the streets, frequently as a result of a lack of access to education or financial need (Aryeetey & Yeboah, 2017). Okafor and Onyemечи (2017) defined teenage girls as a female adolescent between the ages of 13 and 19 years old, typically marking the transition period between childhood and adulthood. Similarly, teenage girl is a colloquial term used to refer to a female who is in her teenage years, typically ranging from 13 to 19 years old (Oduro, 2022).

Street hawking among teenage girls is a significant issue in India, particularly in urban areas and low-income communities. Adjei (2015) found that many teenage girls from impoverished families in India turn to street hawking as a means of earning income to support themselves and their families due to lack of other economic opportunities. Similarly, Okafor and Onyemечи (2017) revealed that a significant number of teenage girl street hawkers in India have dropped out of school, either due to financial constraints or other socio-economic factors, thereby limiting their future prospects. According to Olaku (2012), Kowo, Sabitu and Maina (2019), street hawking exposes these girls to various risks, including sexual harassment, exploitation, and potential involvement in criminal activities.

Street hawking among teenage girls is also a significant issue in Brazil, particularly in major cities and economically disadvantaged areas. Due to financial hardship, a large number of young girls from low-income urban communities in Brazil turn to street hawking as a way to support them or to augment their family's income (Okafor, 2020). Olatomide and Osibanjo (2018) also reported that in Brazil, a significant proportion of adolescent Female Street vendors have either abandoned their studies or exhibit high rates of absenteeism, impeding their ability to further their education and future opportunities. Teenage females seeking informal work in urban areas, such as street hawking, are becoming more prevalent in Brazil as a result of the country's inflow of rural-urban migration. These girls may be more vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse as well as possible involvement in illegal activities like drug trafficking and theft if they work as street vendors.

In many African countries, street selling by teenage females is a common occurrence, especially in urban areas and low-income neighbourhoods. According to Ameyaw and Koomson (2019), extreme poverty and lack of economic opportunities drive many teenage girls in Africa to engage in street hawking as a means of earning income to support themselves and their families. Also, Akor and Ofosu (2018) noted that in many parts of Africa, limited access

to education and high dropout rates among girls contribute to their involvement in street hawking activities. In many developing countries, families struggle to meet their basic needs, and young girls are often expected to contribute to the household income. Without adequate financial resources, education becomes a luxury that many cannot afford, forcing these girls into the streets to earn money through hawking various items such as snacks, beverages, trinkets, or household goods.

Street hawking among teenage girls in Ghana has numerous effects, both positive and negative, on the lives of these girls and the society as a whole. Street hawking provides a source of income for many teenage girls and their families in Ghana. However, the income generated is often meager and inconsistent, leading to limited economic opportunities and perpetuating the cycle of poverty (Adjei, 2015; Aryeetey & Yeboah, 2017). According to Akor and Ofose (2018), street hawking contributes to the household income but is not sufficient to meet basic needs or invest in long-term economic development. Teenage girls engaged in street hawking in Ghana are vulnerable to various forms of exploitation and abuse. They face risks such as physical harm, sexual harassment, and trafficking (Adjei, 2015). The lack of adult supervision and protection exposes these girls to exploitation, as they may be coerced into hazardous or illegal activities (Aryeetey & Yeboah, 2017).

In Nigeria, street hawking is a common sight in many cities, involves the selling of goods on the streets by individuals, often children and teenagers. Among these, teenage girls represent a significant portion, engaging in this activity to support their families or themselves. According to Educate a Child program (2020) the primary driver of street hawking among teenage girls is economic hardship. Many families in Nigeria live below the poverty line, struggling to meet their basic needs. As a result, children are often sent to the streets to hawk goods and generate additional income. A report by the World Bank (2022) highlights that over 40% of Nigerians live in poverty, which forces families to rely on the labour of their children, including teenage girls, to survive. The phenomenon of street hawking among teenage girls in Nigeria is an issue of concern, with far-reaching implications for the well-being and future prospects of these vulnerable individuals. According to a study by Umar (2019), a significant proportion of street hawkers in urban areas are girls aged between 13 and 18 years.

In Nasarawa State, Nigeria, and in Obi L.G.A in particular, street selling by teenage females is a common occurrence that may have an impact on their development and well-being. Street hawking provides a source of income for many teenage girls and their families in Obi L.G.A, Nasarawa State. However, the monies generated is often insufficient and inconsistent, continuing the cycle of poverty (Adeyemi, 2015; Akpan & Ekpenyong, 2019). Study indicate that street hawking contributes to the household income but may hinder girls' ability to access formal employment or pursue educational opportunities (Umar, 2018).

Obi Local Government Nigeria was created on the 10th October 1996. It is domiciled in Nasarawa state, North-central geopolitical zone of Nigeria and has its headquarters in the town of Obi. Towns and villages that make up Obi LGA include Zhemelgi, Obi, Agwatashi, Dedere, Akanga, Adudu, Atabara, and Daddere. The current estimated population of Obi LGA by National Bureau of Statistics 2022 population projection is put at 299,000 inhabitants with the vast majority of the area's dwellers being members of the Alago ethnic group. The Alago language is extensively spoken in the LGA while the religions of Islam and Christianity are

commonly practiced in the LGA. The area is inhabited by various ethnic groups, including the Alago, Eggon, and Migili people, among others.

Obi LGA covers a total area of 967 square kilometres and has an average temperature of 30 degrees centigrade. The LGA witnesses two major seasons which are the dry and the rainy seasons with the average wind speed in the area put at 10 km/h. Farming is an important economic activity in Obi LGA with crops such as yam, onions, and tomatoes grown in the LGA. The LGA is also a hub for the rearing of a number of animals such as cows and rams. Other important economic activities of the people of Obi LGA include trade, hunting, and craftsmanship. The local government area has several primary and secondary schools, though like many rural areas in Nigeria, it may face challenges in terms of educational infrastructure and resources. According to a 2018 study by the International Labour Organization (ILO), approximately 43% of children engaged in street hawking in Nigeria are girls. In rural areas, such as Obi LGA, street hawking is more prevalent due to higher poverty rates and limited access to formal education. Street hawking among teenage girls in Obi Local Government Area (LGA) presents several pressing issues that have significant social, economic, educational, and health implications.

The proposed study on the effect of street hawking on teenage girls in Obi Local Government Area holds significant importance from various perspectives. Street hawking among teenage girls is a widespread phenomenon in Obi Local Government Area, as well as in many other parts of the country. This study will shed light on the specific challenges and vulnerabilities faced by these girls, drawing attention to a pressing social issue that often goes unnoticed or underreported. By examining the impact of street hawking on the physical health, psychological and social development of teenage girls, this study will provide valuable insights to inform policies and interventions aimed at protecting and empowering this vulnerable group. Addressing the challenges they face can contribute to their overall development and help them realize their full potential.

The findings of this study can serve as a valuable resource for policymakers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and relevant stakeholders in Obi Local Government Area and beyond. It can inform the development of targeted policies, programs, and initiatives to address the root causes of teenage girls' involvement in street hawking and mitigate its adverse effects. By highlighting the challenges and vulnerabilities faced by teenage girl street hawkers, this study can raise awareness among the general public, civil society organizations, and relevant authorities. This increased awareness can catalyse advocacy efforts and mobilize support for initiatives aimed at protecting and empowering these girls.

Addressing the issue of street hawking among teenage girls aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to poverty reduction, quality education, gender equality, decent work, and sustainable cities and communities. This study can contribute to the achievement of these goals in Obi Local Government Area and beyond. There is a dearth of comprehensive research on the specific effects of street hawking on teenage girls, particularly in the context of Obi Local Government Area. This study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge, providing empirical evidence and insights that can inform further research and scholarly discourse on this topic.

Based on this background, this study, seek to examine the health effects of street hawking among teenage girls in Obi Local Government Area, Nasarawa State Nigeria.

## **1.2 Research Problem, Questions and Objectives**

Street hawking, the informal practice of selling goods or merchandise on the streets or in public spaces, is a prevalent phenomenon among teenage girls in many developing countries. Despite its prevalence, the impact of street hawking on the well-being and development of these adolescent girls remains a significant concern. Numerous studies have highlighted the vulnerabilities and challenges faced by teenage-girl street hawkers. They are often exposed to various forms of exploitation, including sexual harassment, physical abuse, and exploitation by criminal elements (Omokhodion et al., 2010; Yizengaw & Gebrewold, 2018). Additionally, their involvement in street hawking can disrupt their educational pursuits, leading to high rates of school absenteeism and dropouts (Oduro, 2022; Okafor, 2020).

Street hawking among teenage girls in Nigeria is a prevalent issue that has significant implications for the girls' well-being and development. In Nigeria, a large number of young girls and their families make a living by selling goods on the streets. Nevertheless, the revenue produced is frequently insufficient and erratic, which perpetuates the poverty cycle (Adeyemo, 2013; Olatomide & Osibanjo, 2018). Research shows that while street hawking helps families make ends meet, it frequently keeps girls from going to school and taking advantage of other possibilities for financial growth (Okafor & Onyemechi, 2017). For teenage girls in Nigeria, street peddling at an early age might have serious psychological repercussions. Financial instability combined with harsh and difficult working conditions leads to heightened levels of stress, anxiety, and hopelessness (Olatomide & Osibanjo, 2018). These psychological stresses may have a negative impact on their general health and impede their academic and personal growth.

The economic necessity that drives many teenage girls into street hawking perpetuates a cycle of poverty and limited opportunities (Aransiola & Asindemade, 2011; Ikechukwu, Odinkonigbo & Ikebuaku, 2017). Street hawking activities often occur in hazardous environments, exposing the girls to risks such as traffic accidents, environmental pollution, and adverse weather conditions (Omolara, 2012; Ugochukwu et al., 2022). Furthermore, the lack of legal protection and regulated working conditions in the informal sector leaves teenage girl street hawkers vulnerable to exploitation and abuse (Kowo, Sabitu & Maina, 2019; Omokhodion et al., 2010). Their involvement in street hawking may also have long-term consequences for their physical and mental health, as well as their overall well-being and future prospects (Yizengaw & Gebrewold, 2018).

Despite these concerns, there is a dearth of comprehensive research examining the specific effects of street hawking on the physical, psychological, social, and economic well-being of teenage girls in Obi L.G.A. This research aims to bridge this gap by investigating the health effects of street hawking on teenage girls. The study aims to provide insights into the complex phenomena, in order to guide policies and initiatives that shield and empower these vulnerable people, thereby promoting their general well-being and potential fulfilment.

The study was guided by the following research questions: How does street hawking affect the physical health of teenage girls in Obi Local Government Area? In what ways does street hawking affect the psychological development of teenage girls in Obi Local Government Area? How does street hawking affect the social development of teenage girls in Obi Local Government Area? The general objective of the study examined the health effects of street hawking among teenage girls in Obi Local Government Area, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study: examined how street hawking affects the physical health of teenage girls in Obi Local Government Area, found out the psychological effects of street hawking on the development of teenage girls in Obi Local Government Area, explained how street hawking affected the social development of teenage girls in Obi Local Government Area.

## **2.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 Poverty theory**

Poverty theory was propounded by Amartya Sen in 1981, with the publication of poverty and famines: An essay on entitlement and deprivation. Poverty theory suggests that individuals engage in street hawking and other informal economic activities due to a lack of access to formal employment and other economic opportunities (Devas & Korboe, 1999). This is often the case for teenage girls from low-income households, who may turn to street hawking as a means of supplementing the family's income. According to Onyango et al. (2016), poverty is a key driver of child labour, including street hawking among teenage girls. Families living in poverty often rely on the income generated by their children to meet basic needs, leading teenage girls to engage in street hawking despite the risks and challenges it poses (Aransiola & Akinbobola, 2019).

The lack of access to quality education and vocational training opportunities for girls in impoverished communities can also contribute to the prevalence of street hawking (Okafor, 2010). Without alternative pathways to economic stability, teenage girls may see street hawking as one of the few options available to them. Furthermore, socio-cultural norms and gender-based expectations can shape the experiences of teenage girls in street hawking. Chant and Pedwell (2008) argue that in many developing contexts, the burden of contributing to household income often falls disproportionately on girls and women, leading them to engage in informal economic activities like street hawking.

In some cultures, the norm of children contributing to the family's income is exacerbated by poverty. Teenage girls are often seen as responsible for helping to meet the family's financial needs, which leads them to hawk goods on the streets. Studies highlight how cultural expectations interact with economic necessity to perpetuate child labour (Grootaert & Kanbur, 1995). Street hawking perpetuates the cycle of poverty as it limits the educational and future economic opportunities of teenage girls, trapping them in low-paying, informal sector jobs. This intergenerational transmission of poverty is a well-documented effect of child labour (ILO, 2013).

Critics of Poverty Theory argue that it offers an incomplete explanation for street hawking among teenage girls by oversimplifying the issue and overlooking other significant factors. Poverty Theory tends to overlook the role of cultural and societal norms in influencing street

hawking. In many communities, cultural expectations and traditional roles play a significant part in why teenage girls engage in street hawking, independent of economic conditions. Studies have shown that in some cultures, children's work is a socially accepted norm (Lange, 2009).

In conclusion, Poverty Theory provides a useful framework for understanding the prevalence of street hawking among teenage girls in developing countries. The economic deprivation and lack of support experienced by these families drives the girls to engage in this form of informal labour, highlighting the need for policies and interventions that address the root causes of poverty and provide viable alternatives for vulnerable children.

## **2.2 Social Disorganization Theory**

Social disorganization theory, developed by Shaw and McKay in the early 20th century, posits that crime and deviant behaviour are more likely to occur in communities with weak social institutions and minimal communal cohesion. This theory can be applied to understand street hawking among teenage girls. Social disorganization theory emphasizes the role of community structure. In neighbourhoods characterized by poverty, high residential mobility, and ethnic heterogeneity, social cohesion and informal social control weaken. These conditions make it difficult for communities to regulate behaviour and provide support systems for young girls, leading them to engage in street hawking as a means of economic survival (Shaw & McKay, 1942).

Economic strain is a central aspect of socially disorganized communities. Teenage girls in impoverished areas may turn to street hawking to contribute to their family's income. The lack of legitimate economic opportunities and the necessity to support their households drive them towards this informal sector (Sampson & Groves, 1989). Schools, families, and local organizations play crucial roles in socializing youth and deterring them from deviant activities. In disorganized neighbourhoods, these institutions are often underfunded or ineffective. The absence of strong educational and social institutions fails to provide adequate guidance and supervision, leaving teenage girls with limited alternatives to street hawking (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997).

Social disorganization theory also highlights the influence of peer groups and subcultures in areas with high crime rates. Teenage girls may be influenced by peers who are already engaged in street hawking. This creates a cycle where street hawking becomes normalized and perpetuated among youths in the community (Kornhauser, 1978). Social capital refers to the networks and relationships that enable collective action within a community. Disorganized communities often suffer from a lack of social capital, making it challenging to mobilize against practices like child labour and street hawking. Without strong community ties and collective efficacy, efforts to curb street hawking among teenage girls are less effective (Bursik & Grasmick, 1993).

Critics argue that Social Disorganization Theory places too much emphasis on structural factors like poverty, residential mobility, and ethnic heterogeneity, while neglecting individual agency and personal choices. Teenage girls engaging in street hawking may do so for reasons

that extend beyond the structural conditions of their communities, such as personal aspirations, family traditions, or individual entrepreneurial spirit (Kubrin & Weitzer, 2003).

In conclusion, Social Disorganization Theory provides a useful framework for understanding the prevalence of street hawking among teenage girls in marginalized urban areas. The lack of effective social institutions and community cohesion in these neighbourhoods contributes to the erosion of social control and the emergence of this social problem, highlighting the need for comprehensive interventions that address the underlying issues of poverty, community fragmentation, and youth development.

### 3.0 METHODOLOGY

The research employed a descriptive survey research design, which allows the researcher to choose respondents from the overall population. This involves selecting a sample from the population using specific sampling techniques. The focus is on certain characteristics of the population, with a detailed study conducted on a carefully chosen sample. The study used quantitative and qualitative methods to collect data. The survey design was deemed suitable due to its effectiveness in gathering information on personal perceptions, beliefs, feelings, motivations, expectations, future plans, and past behaviours. Descriptive survey designs are valuable for assessing attitudes, orientations, and perceptions within a large population. Key informant interview (KII) was used to illicit information from the respondents.

The population of Obi Local Government Area according to the 2022 population projection by NBS at 3.0% population growth per annum was 299,000. Out of this figure, 171,000 are from 18 years and above while 128,000 are below 18 years (NBS, 2022 population projection). Majority of this population is found in the rural settlements of Obi Local Government Area.

The Yamane's (1967) sample size determination technique was employed to determine the sample for the study. It states that for a population greater than 100,000, a sample size of 204 should be selected at  $\pm 0.07\%$  level of significance. The adult population in Obi LGA was put at 171,000 at  $\pm 7\%$  level of precision.

Thus, see the formula below

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = Total population

(e)<sup>2</sup> = Margin of error (0.07)

1 = Unity (a constant)

Where:

N = 171,000

(e)<sup>2</sup> = 0.07%

n = ?

Therefore

$$n = \frac{171,000}{1 + 171,000 (0.07)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{171,000}{1 + 171,000 \times 0.0049}$$



$$n = \frac{171,000}{171,001 \times 0.0049}$$

$$n = \frac{171,000}{837.9}$$

$$n = 204$$

204 people made up the sample size.

In order to achieve empirical data, a combination of proportional sampling technique and random sampling technique was used in the selection of sample from the target population. Obi Local Government Area is made up of twelve (12) political wards. Four wards were selected using fishbowl technique, where the names of all the wards were written on a piece of paper squeezed and dropped in a basket, the papers were mixed together and four (4) papers were randomly picked. The selected papers were opened to reveal the selected wards. The randomly selected wards represented the study area. The basis of the selection of the four (4) wards is to be able to contain the size of the population that the study can handle within the period of the research. For the qualitative study, 2 street hawkers from each political ward were interviewed. Making a total of 212 people.

Since each selected political wards has different population size, we determined the number of respondents from each political wards; thus

S/N	Political wards	Population	Size	Total
1.	Agwatashi	22,000	$\frac{22,000}{85,700} \times 204$	52
2.	Deddere/Riri	15,000	$\frac{15,000}{85,700} \times 204$	36
3.	Kyakale	26,800	$\frac{26,800}{85,700} \times 204$	64
4.	Tudun Adabu	21,900	$\frac{21,900}{85,700} \times 204$	52
<b>Total. 85,700</b>				<b>204</b>

**Source:** Author compilations 2024

According to the proportional sample design, 52 participants were selected from Agwatashi ward, 36 from Deddere/Riri, 64 from Kyakale ward, and 52 from Tudun Adabu ward, totalling 204 respondents. An electronic recorder was used to capture the in-depth interview session. Before the administration of the questionnaire and interview process, the respondents were informed on the subject matter that the study is for academic purpose. The targeted respondents for the interview session were teenage street hawkers, these set of individuals were able to provide unbiased information to compliment the response from the questionnaires.

The self-administered questionnaires were used, with the closed-ended question style. The questionnaire had two parts: A and B. Part A focused on the respondent's demographic characteristics such as name, gender, age, and so on, whereas Part B focused on the substantive topics of the study activity. The questionnaires were filled out by members of the Obi LGA's designated political wards, which comprise the study's sample size. While some selected teenage girls who hawk on the street were interviewed, to gain more insight on the subject matter.

The data collected from the questionnaires were recorded on frequency tables and analysed using frequency distribution and percentages. The percentages were used to show the demographic statistics and formula of the responses, using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. The qualitative data for this research was analysed through manual content analysis. This was done by presenting the views and opinions of the key informants as expressed during the interview.

## 4.0 DATA AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Socio- demographic attributes of respondents

A total of 204 questionnaires were administered, and only 194 were retrieved. And 12 Key Informant Interviews were conducted. Thus, analysis is based on that. Table 4.1.1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, which includes: gender, age, class, and religion.

**Table 4.1.1: Distribution of respondents by socio- demographic attributes**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	67	34.5
Female	127	65.5
<b>Age</b>		
18-28	81	41.8
29-39	51	26.3
40-50	48	24.7
51 and above	14	7.2
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	104	53.6
Married	75	38.7
Divorced	9	4.6
Widowed	6	3.1
<b>Occupation</b>		
Trader	68	35.1
Civil servant	32	16.5
Student	74	38.1
Farmer	20	10.3
<b>Level of education</b>		
Non formal	17	8.8
Primary	43	22.2
Secondary	72	37.1
Tertiary	62	32.9
<b>Religion</b>		
Christianity	104	54.0
Islam	88	45.3
Africa traditional worshipper	2	1.0

**Source:** Field work, 2024

Table 4.1.1 presents the respondents' distribution by gender, revealing that 65.5% were female, while 34.5% were male, indicating that more males participated in the study than females. Regarding age, the majority, 41.8%, fell within the 18-28 years range, followed by 26.3% aged 29-39 years, 24.7% aged 40-50 years, and 7.2% were above 51 years. In terms of marital status, most respondents, 53.6%, were single, 38.7% were married, 4.6% were divorced, and 3.1% were widowed.

The table also details respondents' occupations, showing that 38.1% were students, 35.1% were traders, 16.5% were civil servants, and 10.3% were farmers, with students forming the largest group. Regarding education, 37.1% had secondary education, 32.9% held a degree, 22.2% had primary education, and 8.8% had no formal education. For religion, the majority, 54.0%, identified as Christians, 45.3% as Muslims, and 1.0% followed African traditional worship.

#### 4.2 Street hawking and the physical health of teenage girls

**Table: 4.2.1 Respondent's response on street hawking and the physical health of teenage girls**

	Yes	No	Not certain
Do you think that prolonged exposure to street hawking environments impact the physical health of teenage girls	132 (68.0%)	43 (22.2%)	19 (9.8%)
Does engaging in street hawking lead to chronic pain problems in teenage girls	129 (66.5%)	54 (27.8%)	11 (5.7%)
Does the exposure to vehicular traffic during street hawking increase the risk of accidental injuries in teenage girls?	122 (62.9%)	54 (27.8%)	18 (9.3%)
Are teenage girls who engage in street hawking more likely to experience musculoskeletal problems from carrying heavy loads?	149 (76.8%)	40 (20.6%)	5 (2.6%)
Does the exposure to harsh environmental conditions during street hawking lead to higher rates of eye problems in teenage girls?	115 (59.3%)	65 (33.5%)	14 (7.2%)

**Source:** Fieldwork, 2024

Table 4.2.1 shows street hawking and the physical health of teenage girls. Majority of the respondents 68.0% agreed that prolonged exposure to street hawking environments impact the physical health of teenage girls, 22.2% agreed while 9.8% were unsure. Engaging in street hawking lead to chronic pain problems in teenage girls, this was agreed by majority of the respondents 66.5%, and 27.8% disagreed while 5.7% were not sure. During an interview, a respondent were asked if they have experienced any health issues, a 17 years old female hawker from Kyakale ward stated that:

Yes, I have experienced several health issues from street hawking. I often feel extremely fatigued after long hours on my feet. I also suffer from muscle pain, especially in my back and legs, due to carrying heavy

loads and standing for long periods. Occasionally, I get minor injuries like blisters on my feet and sore shoulders. These issues make it difficult to keep up with my daily work and affect my overall well-being.

Also, majority of the respondents 62.9% agreed that the exposure to vehicular traffic during street hawking increase the risk of accidental injuries in teenage girls, 27.8% disagreed while 9.3% don't know. Majority of the respondents 76.8% agreed that teenage girls who engage in street hawking are more likely to experience musculoskeletal problems from carrying heavy loads, 20.6% agreed while 2.6% don't know. This finding aligns with the response of an interviewee who posits that:

I usually spend about 8 to 10 hours a day hawking on the streets. This long duration takes a toll on my body. I often experience back pain from carrying heavy loads, and my feet hurt from walking and standing for extended periods. I also feel very tired by the end of the day, which affects my overall energy levels. Sometimes, I get headaches and feel dehydrated because I don't always get the chance to rest or drink enough water (15 years; Agwatashi ward).

Lastly, majority of the respondents 59.3% agreed that exposure to harsh environmental conditions during street hawking lead to higher rates of eye problems in teenage girls, 33.5% agreed while 7.2% were unsure. These findings underscore the multifaceted health risks associated with street hawking for teenage girls. The high percentages of agreement across all health concerns indicate a widespread recognition of the potential negative impacts of this practice on young females' physical well-being.

#### 4.3: Psychological effects of street hawking on the development of teenage girls

**Table 4.4.1: Respondent's response on psychological effects of street hawking on the development of teenage girls**

	Yes	No	Not certain
Does street hawking increase the risk of depression in teenage girls	119 (61.3%)	64 (33.0%)	11 (5.7%)
Do teenage girls who engage in street hawking exhibit lower levels of self-esteem compared to their peers?	115 (59.3%)	69 (35.6%)	10 (5.2%)
Are teenage girl street hawkers more likely to develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)?	145 (74.7%)	41 (21.1%)	8 (4.1%)
Are teenage girls who street hawk more likely to experience disruptions in their social relationships?	140 (72.2%)	48 (24.7%)	6 (3.1%)
Does street hawking lead to a decreased sense of personal safety among teenage girls?	136 (70.1%)	56 (28.9%)	2 (1.0%)

**Source:** Fieldwork, 2024

Table 4.3.1 indicates that, majority of the respondents 61.3% agreed that street hawking increase the risk of depression in teenage girls, 33.0% disagreed while 5.7% don't know. Teenage girls who engage in street hawking exhibit lower levels of self-esteem compared to their peers, this was agreed by majority 59.3% of the respondents, 35.6% disagreed while 5.2% don't have idea. Majority of the respondents 74.7% agreed that teenage girl street hawkers are more likely to develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), while 21.1% disagreed while 4.1% don't know. This finding also aligns with the response of an interviewee, who asserts that:

Yes, I do feel a lot of stress and anxiety from hawking. The pressure to meet daily sales targets and the constant need to be on the move can be overwhelming. I worry about my safety, especially when hawking in busy or unfamiliar areas. This stress affects my mental well-being; I often feel anxious and find it hard to relax. Sometimes, the stress also leads to sleepless nights and a lack of concentration during the day, which makes it even harder to perform well at work (18years; Tudun Adabu ward).

Majority of the respondents 72.2% agreed that teenage girls who street hawk more likely to experience disruptions in their social relationships, 24.7% disagreed while 3.1% were unsure. Lastly, majority of the respondents 70.1% agreed that street hawking lead to a decreased sense of personal safety among teenage girls, 28.9% of the respondents disagreed and 1.0% aren't sure. An interviewee stated that;

I have faced harassment and discrimination while hawking. People sometimes treat me disrespectfully, and I've had some unpleasant encounters with local authorities who try to chase us away or confiscate our goods. This kind of treatment has really affected my mental health. It makes me feel undervalued and anxious about going out every day. The stress from these experiences has affected my confidence and made me feel insecure. It also impacts my personal development, as the constant worry and negative experiences leave me less focused on other aspects of my life, like pursuing education or developing new skills (18years; Deddere/Riri ward).

These results emphasize the substantial perceived psychological effects of street hawking on teenage girls. The high levels of agreement across all psychological issues suggest a broad acknowledgment of the possible negative impact this activity has on the mental well-being and social development of young females.

#### 4.4: Street hawking and the social development of teenage girls

**Table 4.4.1: Respondent’s response on Street hawking and the social development of teenage girls**

	Yes	No	Not certain
Does street hawking reduce teenage girls' participation in school activities?	149 (76.8%)	40 (20.6%)	5 (2.6%)
Does street hawking limit teenage girls' ability to form long-lasting friendships?	142 (73.2%)	44 (22.7%)	8 (4.1%)
Does street hawking increase the risk of sexual exploitation for teenage girls?	123 (63.4%)	59 (30.4%)	12 (6.2%)
Are teenage girl street hawkers more likely to engage in risky social behaviours?	147 (75.8%)	42 (21.6%)	5 (2.6%)
Are teenage girls who hawk on the streets more likely to experience bullying?	122 (62.9%)	60 (30.9%)	12 (6.2%)

**Source:** Fieldwork, 2024

The study probed to know how street hawking affects the social development of teenage girls. Table 4.4.1 shows that majority of the respondents 76.8% agreed that street hawking reduce teenage girls' participation in school activities, 20.6% disagreed while 2.6% were not sure. Similarly, 73.2% respondents agreed that street hawking limit teenage girls' ability to form long-lasting friendships, while 22.7% disagreed and 4.1% of the respondents were not sure. An interviewee stated that:

My daily schedule as a hawker has made it really hard to build and maintain friendships. I work long hours and often on weekends, so I miss out on social gatherings, parties, and other activities where I could connect with people my age. This lack of time means I can't hang out with friends or make new ones. When I do have a free moment, I'm usually too tired to go out or engage in social activities. This has made me feel isolated and has strained my relationships with peers, who may not fully understand why I can't be as available or participate in group activities (15years; Tudun Adabu ward).

Additionally, of all the respondents, 63.4% agreed that street hawking increase the risk of sexual exploitation for teenage girls, 30.4% disagreed while 6.2% were not sure. Teenage girl street hawkers are more likely to engage in risky social behaviours, majority of the respondents 75.8% agreed, while 21.6% disagreed and 2.6% were unsure. These finding align with the responses of an interviewee, who posited that:

Street hawking has had a significant impact on my relationships. With my demanding schedule, I often miss out on social activities and events with friends, which has caused me to drift apart from them. My family also feels the strain; they worry about my safety and the long hours I work, which sometimes leads to tension at home. I rarely have time to spend with my family, and this

affects our bond. Additionally, the financial pressures and stress from hawking can make me more irritable and withdrawn, further affecting my interactions with those close to me (13years; Deddere/Riri ward).

Lastly, majority of the respondents 62.9% agreed that teenage girls who hawk on the streets are more likely to experience bullying, while 30.9% disagreed and 6.2% of the respondents were not sure.

#### **4.5 Discussion of Findings**

##### **Street Hawking and the Physical Health of Teenage Girls**

Majority of the respondents believe that prolonged exposure to street hawking environments impacts the physical health of teenage girls. This aligns with existing research that highlights the various health risks associated with street vending, particularly for young individuals (Roever & Skinner, 2016). Also majority of the respondents indicated that engaging in street hawking leads to chronic pain problems in teenage girls. This perception is supported by (Kongtip, Nankongnab, Chaikittiporn, Laohaudomchok, Woskie & Slatin, 2018) who found a high prevalence of musculoskeletal disorders among street vendors, often due to prolonged standing, repetitive motions, and carrying heavy loads.

Furthermore, majority of the respondents believe that exposure to vehicular traffic during street hawking increases the risk of accidental injuries in teenage girls. This concern is well-founded, as research by Bromley and Mackie (2019) has shown that street vendors, especially in urban areas, are at higher risk of traffic-related accidents and injuries.

Majority of the respondent agreed that there is likelihood of teenage girls experiencing musculoskeletal problems from carrying heavy loads. This finding is consistent with studies that have documented the ergonomic hazards associated with street vending, particularly the strain placed on the musculoskeletal system due to lifting and carrying heavy merchandise (Adegun, Ajayi & Oluwatosin, 2017).

Lastly, majority of the respondents believe that exposure to harsh environmental conditions during street hawking leads to higher rates of eye problems in teenage girls. While this percentage is lower compared to other health concerns, it still represents a majority. Environmental factors such as sun exposure, dust, and air pollution have been associated with various eye conditions among outdoor workers, including street vendors (Aryal, Shrestha, Shrestha & Sharma, 2021).

##### **4.6 Psychological Effects of Street Hawking on the Development of Teenage Girls**

The table presents data on the perceived psychological effects of street hawking on teenage girls' development. A majority of respondents believe that street hawking increases the risk of depression in teenage girls. This perception aligns with research on child labour and adolescent mental health by Sturrock and Hodes (2016) who have shown that engagement in work during adolescence, particularly in challenging environments, can contribute to increased depressive symptoms. Majority of the respondents indicated that teenage girls who engage in street hawking exhibit lower levels of self-esteem compared to their peers. This finding is consistent with research by Olaku (2012) and Woodhead (2014), suggesting that child labour, including street vending, can negatively impact self-esteem and self-concept in adolescents.

The highest percentage of agreement (74.7%) was observed for the likelihood of teenage girl street hawkers developing PTSD. This significant concern reflects the potential traumatic

experiences associated with street hawking, such as exposure to violence, harassment, or accidents. Research by Alem, Zergaw, Kebede, Araya, Desta, Muche and Medhin (2016) has shown that children engaged in street work are at higher risk of experiencing traumatic events that can lead to PTSD symptoms.

More so, Majority of the respondents believe that teenage girls who street hawk are more likely to experience disruptions in their social relationships. This perception is supported by Olaku (2012), Bourdillon (2006) indicating that child labour, including street vending, can interfere with normal social development and peer relationships. Lastly, majority of the respondents agree that street hawking leads to a decreased sense of personal safety among teenage girls. This concern is well-founded, as research has documented the various risks and safety concerns faced by young street vendors, particularly girls, including harassment and exploitation (Cumber & Tsoka-Gwegweni, 2015).

#### **4.7 Street Hawking and the Social Development of Teenage Girls**

The table presents data on the perceived impact of street hawking on the social development of teenage girls. Majority of the respondents believe that street hawking reduces teenage girls' participation in school activities. This perception aligns with existing research on child labour and education. A studies by Hamenoo (2018) have shown that engagement in work, particularly street vending, can negatively impact school attendance and participation in extracurricular activities. This reduced involvement in school life can have long-term consequences for educational outcomes and social development.

Also, majority of the respondents indicated that street hawking limits teenage girls' ability to form long-lasting friendships. This high percentage reflects the understanding that time spent working can significantly reduce opportunities for social interaction and relationship building with peers. Research by Bourdillon (2016) has shown that child labour, including street vending, can interfere with normal social development and peer relationships. More so, majority of the respondents believe that street hawking increases the risk of sexual exploitation for teenage girls. This concern is well-documented in the literature on child labour and street children by Cumber and Tsoka-Gwegweni (2015) and have shown that young female street vendors are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment and exploitation due to their exposure to various risks in the street environment.

A high percentage (75.8%) of respondents agree that teenage girl street hawkers are more likely to engage in risky social behaviours. This perception is supported by research conducted by Embleton (2013) indicating that children involved in street work are at higher risk of engaging in substance abuse, early sexual activity, and other high-risk behaviours. Lastly, majority of respondents believe that teenage girls who hawk on the streets are more likely to experience bullying. This concern reflects the vulnerable position of young street vendors and aligns with Nath (2020) that have documented various forms of harassment and abuse faced by street children, including bullying from peers and adults.

#### **4.8 Summary of Findings**

The first objective focused on the physical effects of street hawking on teenage girls. The findings indicate that many female hawkers spend extensive hours hawking, which leads to various health issues such as fatigue, muscle pain, and injuries. Prolonged exposure to adverse weather conditions, including sun and rain, further exacerbates their physical well-being. The



second objective examines the mental health effects of street hawking. Many female hawkers experience stress and anxiety related to their hawking activities. The interactions with customers and strangers can significantly impact their emotional and psychological wellbeing negatively, often leading to feelings of insecurity and emotional distress. The third objective explores how street hawking affects the social lives of these teenagers. The findings suggest that hawking limits their participation in social activities and events with peers, which can hinder their ability to build and maintain friendships. The demanding daily schedule of hawking often leads to feelings of isolation and affects their relationships with family and friends, indicating a significant social cost associated with their economic activities

#### **4.9 Conclusion**

Street hawking has great negative effects on the physical, social and psychological aspects of the health of the hawkers, which limits their development and that of society.

#### **4.10 Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn from the study on the health effects of street hawking on teenage girls in Obi Local Government Area, the following recommendations are proposed to address the identified challenges:

- There is need to establish accessible healthcare services specifically tailored for street hawkers, including regular health check-ups and treatment for common ailments related to their work. Mobile clinics could be an effective way to reach these girls in their working environments.
- Provide access to counselling and psychological support services for teenage hawkers. Establish partnerships with local NGOs and mental health professionals to offer confidential support and coping strategies.
- Government should create initiatives that facilitate access to education for teenage girls involved in street hawking. This could include flexible schooling options, scholarships, or vocational training programs that allow them to balance work and education.

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