

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Exploring Criminal Intent and Educational Aspirations Among Disadvantaged School-Age Hawkers in Two North Central Nigerian Cities

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One of the international agenda is to utilize all available human and non-human resources towards enhancing youth's educational and moral development. However, evidences abound that a good number of Nigerian youths are drawn by negative socio-economic experiences to a life of full time or part time hawking. The consequences of this life-style on the educational aspiration and moral development of the youths were studied in this research. The research comparatively surveyed the levels of criminal intent and educational aspiration of school-age hawkers and non-hawkers in North-Central Cities of Nigeria. Thus, it employed purposive sampling technique to draw a sample of 246 school age hawkers from Lokoja and Ilorin in Northern Nigeria. Data were obtained using two researcher-made questionnaires; Criminal Intent Questionnaire (CIQ) and Educational Aspiration Questionnaire (EAQ). To answer the raised research questions, data were analyzed using frequency count and percentages while t-test statistic was used to test the postulated hypotheses. Findings showed that school-age hawkers have higher criminal intent (73.98%) and low educational aspiration than school- age non-hawkers (14.63%). It was also found that the criminal intent and educational aspiration of the two categories of sampled respondents varied on the basis of gender. While criminal intent was higher on the side of male hawkers, educational aspiration was higher on the side of female non-hawkers. Based on these, it was concluded that on the basis of gender, hawking can develop criminal intent and discourage educational aspiration in school-age children. Thus, it was recommended that parents and Nigeria government should intensify efforts at reducing hawking among school-age children, if the country wants to avert raising youth with criminal orientation and if it wants to be among nations around the world to achieve the goals of Education for All (EFA) come 2015.

**Key words:** Intent, aspiration, school-age, level, criminal, high, low.

## INTRODUCTION

Theoretically, "Social Learning Theory" opines that a child's attitude to life is influenced or shaped as the child interacts within the social components of a given environment (Horowitz and Boarden, 1995). The theory places the influence of nurture above nature in human development. Social learning theorists believe that irrespective of human biological component, what he sees, hears and appreciate in his daily environment become what he models his attitude on. Thus, a child that attends school and at the same time hawk has the opportunity of

learning from two environments - the school and the street. His/her intentions and aspirations are no doubt susceptible to what he/she learns from these environments.

Youth development is an international agenda. Around the world, nations have been charged to utilize all available resources towards developing crop of energetic and resourceful youths who are morally sound and ready to embark on social investment that can guarantee their personal and national development. This call to develop the youths of the world is becoming louder now that there is strong global awareness on the importance of youthful population in economic and social development. Ashford (2007) extols this importance of youthful population in world development and particularly in Africa projecting

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that:

*"Africa's young people will be the driving force behind the continent's economic prosperity in future decades".*

Ashford however argued that Africa can achieve this, only if policies and programs are in place and implemented to enhance youths' opportunities and avert their experience of social disadvantages. As a result of age and the naive nature of youths, adults often expose them to some socioeconomic activities which sometimes have negative impact on their sociological and psychological development. Many are given out to early marriage, child trafficking, street begging, child labour and hawking. Hawking in particular is one common way adults seem to have developed to exploit youthfulness of children. It is estimated that about 8 million Nigerian children of school age spend their days hawking or begging on the street rather than being in school (FRN, 2004; Agbonna, 2008; Obanya, 2001). There is no doubt that such children will experience a lot on the street.

One way of evaluating what school-age children experience, learn or how street-life shape their behaviour is to research into the level of criminal intent and educational aspiration of children who for example spend a good time of their life on the street, hawking. The validity of findings from such study can be achieved if the study also compares school-age hawkers' and non-hawkers' attitude in relation to levels of criminal intent and educational aspiration they expressed. In child development, educational aspiration is positive while criminal intent is negative. The former is required for a child's personal development and for the achievement of EFA goals, but the later destroys individuals and national quest for peaceful coexistence. Thus, in this study, effort is made to research into the impacts of hawking on child's criminal intent and educational aspiration by juxtaposing two categories of school-age children (hawkers and non-hawkers) on development of criminal intent and educational aspiration. Knowing this could help in recommending what to do, to assist children that adults engage in hawking get out of their disadvantaged situation.

## Research questions

1. What is the level of the criminal intent of school-age street hawkers and non-hawkers?
2. What is the level of the educational aspiration of school-age street hawkers and non-hawkers?
3. How do levels of the criminal intent and educational aspiration of school-age hawkers and non-hawkers vary on the basis of gender?
4. Is there significant difference in the criminal intent of school-age hawkers and non-hawkers on the basis of gender?
5. Is there significant difference in the educational aspiration of school-age hawkers and non-hawkers on the basis of gender?

## Research hypotheses

- H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference in the criminal intent of school-age male hawkers and non-hawkers.  
H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant difference in the educational aspiration of school-age male hawkers and non-hawkers.  
H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant difference in the criminal intent of school-age female hawkers and non-hawkers.  
H<sub>04</sub>: There is no significant difference in the educational aspiration of school-age female hawkers and non-hawkers.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was a descriptive survey design. The research population comprised every north-central Nigerian child of basic-education age. From the population, a sample of 246 (143 male and 103 female) children comprising 123 engaged in hawking and another 123 not engaged in hawking were drawn from Ilorin and Lokoja metropolis using purposive sampling technique. Data were collected using two researcher-made questionnaires titled Criminal Intent Questionnaire (CIQ) and Educational Aspiration Questionnaire (EAQ). The former tested respondents' level of criminal intent while the later tested the educational aspiration of the same set of respondents. The items in the instrument were validated by three experts drawn from the Measurement and Evaluation Unit of the Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, Nigeria. Section A of each of the instruments consisted of items eliciting respondent's biographical data. In the Section B, the first instrument has 25 positive items testing criminal intent and the other has 25 positive items testing educational aspiration.

Each set of the 25 items had response option ranging from Not Applicable (NA), Sometime Applicable (SA), Applicable (A) and Always Applicable (AA). The scores for the responses ranged as follows: NA= 1, SA=2, A=3 and AA=4. The highest score for either of the instruments was 100 points and the lowest was 25 points (that is 25 items X 4 marks= 100 marks and 25 items X 1 points = 25 marks). The cut-off point was set at 45 marks for Criminal Intent (CI) being the range of respondents' scores on CI (77-32 = 45). On the other hand, the cut-off point for Educational Aspiration (EA) was 31 marks being the range of respondents' scores on EA (53-22 = 31). Thus, a score of 45 and above on CI was classified as High Criminal Intent (HCI) while less than 45 marks was classified as Low Criminal Intent (LCI). Also, a score of 31 and above on EA was classified as High Educational Aspiration (HEA) while less than 31 as Low Educational Aspiration (LEA). The two instruments were face and content validated and found to be valid. Also, using test-retest method, the instruments were found reliable with reliability coefficients of 0.66 and 0.74 respectively. Percentages were used to answer the raised research questions and t-test statistic was used in testing the hypotheses.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT

The raised research questions and hypotheses were answered or tested as follows:

### Research question 1

What is the level of the criminal intent of school-age hawkers and non- hawkers? Data on Table 1 shows

**Table 1.** Percentages depicting school-age hawkers' and non-hawkers' levels of criminal intent, using respondents' responses to items 1 to 25 of Section B of the instrument testing criminal intent.

Criminal intent	HW		NHW	
	n	%	n	%
HCI	91	73.98*	18	14.63
LCI	32	26.01	105	85.36

\* Embolden figures are in percentages. HW = Hawkers; NHW = Non-Hawkers; HCI = High Criminal Intent; LCI = Low Criminal Intent.

**Table 2.** Percentages depicting school-age hawkers' and non-hawkers' levels of education, using respondents' responses to items 1 to 25 of Section B of the instrument testing educational aspiration.

Educational aspiration	HW		NHW	
	N	%	n	%
HEA	46	37.39	98	79.67
LEA	77	62.60	25	20.32

**Table 3.** Percentages showing the levels of school-age hawkers' and non-hawkers' criminal intent on the basis of gender, using respondents' responses to items 1 to 25 of Section B of the instrument testing criminal intent.

Criminal intent	HW		NHW	
	n/%	n/%	n/%	n/ %
	Male	Female	Male	Female
HCI	55/44.71*	36/29.26	22/17.88	16/13.01
LCI	26/21.13	06/4.87	40/32.52	45/36.58

\*Embolden figures are percentages of corresponding figures

shows that 73.98% of school-age hawkers had high criminal intent and 26.01% had low criminal intent. On the other, while 14.63% of school-age non-hawkers were found to have high criminal intent, 85.36% of them were found to have low criminal intent. Those classified as having high criminal intent were those who scored 45 points and above on Criminal Intent while those classified as having low criminal intent were those who scored less than 45 points on Criminal Intent. This implies that the criminal intent of school-age hawkers was higher than that of school age non-hawkers.

### Research question 2

What is the level of educational aspiration of school-age hawkers and non-hawkers? As shown on Table 2, only 37.39% of the sampled street hawkers in the selected

cities expressed having high educational aspiration while 62.60% of the hawkers expressed having low educational aspiration. However, a higher percentage of the sampled non- hawkers (79.67%) had high educational aspiration; only 20.32% of them expressed otherwise. Thus, non-hawkers school-age children were found to have higher educational aspiration than school-age hawkers.

### Research question 3

Does gender have any influence on the criminal intent of school –age hawkers and non-hawkers? Data on Table 3 show that 44.71% of male hawkers and 29.26% of female hawkers have high criminal intent, the remaining 26% male and female hawkers expressed having low criminal intent. On the other, 17.88% of male non- hawkers and 13.01% of female non-hawkers expressed having high criminal intent while the remaining 69.10% have low criminal intent. This implies that male hawkers were more criminal minded than female hawkers (44.71%>29.26%). This also goes for non- hawkers, male non-hawkers expressed being criminal minded than female non-hawkers (17.88%>13.01%).

### Research question 4

Does gender have any influence on the educational aspiration of school –age hawkers and non-hawkers? Data on Table 4 indicate that 17.88% of male hawkers and 19.51% of female hawkers have high educational aspiration while a higher percentage (62.59%) of them (male and female) have low educational aspiration. Contrary to these, only 16.26% of male non- hawkers and 4.06% of female non- hawkers have low educational aspiration. On the other hand, a high percentage of male non-hawkers (34.14%) and 45.52% of female non-hawkers have high educational aspiration. These data show that educational aspiration was higher on the side of female non-hawkers than male non-hawkers.

### Hypotheses testing

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference in the criminal intent of school-age male hawkers and non-hawkers.

As shown on Table 5, the t-test calculated value (11.04) is higher than the t-test table value (1.96), thus hypothesis one was rejected and it was concluded that significant difference existed between the criminal intent of male school-age hawkers and non-hawkers. The difference in mean scores confirms that male hawkers had higher criminal intent than male non-hawkers.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant difference in the educational aspiration of school-age male hawkers and non-hawkers.

**Table 4.** Percentages showing the levels of educational aspiration of school-age hawkers and non-hawkers on the basis of gender, using respondents' responses to items 1 to 25 of Section B of the instrument testing educational aspiration.

Educational aspiration	HW		NHW	
	n/%	n/%	n/%	n/ %
	Male	Female	Male	Female
HEA	22/17.88	24/19.51	42/34.14	56/45.52
LEA	59/47.96	18/14.63	20/16.26	05/4.06

**Table 5.** T-test of difference in the criminal intent of male school-age hawkers and non-hawkers.

Gender	n	X	SD	df	t.cal	t.crit
Male hawkers CI	81	56.05	8.31	141	11.04	1.96
Male non-hawkers CI	62	34.90	12.62			

Significant @ 0.05

Data on Table 6 show that there was significant difference in the educational aspiration of male school age hawkers and non- hawkers. This is because, the calculated t-test (2.50) is higher than the t-test table value (1.96). Also, the mean scores of the two categories of respondents on educational aspiration show that the educational aspiration of male hawkers was lower than that of the male non-hawkers.

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant difference in the criminal intent of school-age female hawkers and non- hawkers.

Based on the data on Table 7, hypothesis 3 was rejected and it was concluded that there was significant difference in the criminal intent of female school-age hawkers and non-hawkers. The hypothesis was rejected because the t-test calculated value (6.22) is higher than the t- test table value (1.96). Going by the mean scores of the two categories of sample, the data further show that female hawkers had higher criminal intent than the female non-hawkers.

H<sub>04</sub>: There is no significant difference in the educational aspiration of school-age female hawkers and non-hawkers.

On Table 8, data show that the t-test calculated value (2.36) is higher than the t-test table value (1.96); thus, hypothesis 4 was rejected and it was concluded that there was significant difference in the educational aspiration of female school-age hawkers and non-hawkers. The mean scores shows that the educational aspiration of the female non-hawkers is higher than that of female hawkers.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

School-age hawkers are no doubt disadvantaged in many ways. Apart from the risk life hawking poses, hawkers are exposed to series of negative social learning that may hamper development. Social interaction on the street often involves persons of diverse social backgrounds. Such interaction affords the child on the street access to uncensored social experiences that inculcate in the child certain moral orientation that may not meet societal standard (Haralambos and Holborn, 2008). Nations all over the world and international organizations have been helping youth development through enactment of educational policies. Many of the policies solely emphasize formal education as the main instrument that guarantees universal education and promotes family-life, healthy and peaceful living. The focus on using education in achieving these is hinged on the belief that the larger part of a child's moral component is derived from the content of what he learns in the classroom (Biehler and Snowman, 1995; Agbonna, 2008).

However, in many urban centers, learning goes beyond the daily academic routine of the classroom. Many commercial zones in urban centers are arena for social education. Most of these places are black sports that defy security and social control mechanisms (Giddens, 2001; Conklin, 2007). Such environments are known to be rich in criminal networking and because of the economic advantage of such commercial zones; little children are drawn to hawk. As they hawk, their interaction with the human and non-human elements of the commercial centers is inevitable. This interaction is itself a form of education.

One major finding in this study that has implication for

**Table 6.** t-Test of difference in the educational aspiration of school-age male hawkers and non-hawkers.

Gender	n	X	Sd	df	t-cal	t-crit
Male hawkers EAS	81	35.01	12.29	141	2.50	1.96
Male non-hawkers EAS	62	40.25	12.52			

**Table 7.** t-Test of difference in the criminal intent of female school-age hawkers and non-hawkers.

Gender	n	X	SD	df	t.cal	t.crit
Female hawkers CI	42	56.24	17.33	101	6.22	1.96
Female non-hawkers CI	61	41.42	15.11			

Significant at 0.05.

**Table 8.** t-Test of difference in the educational aspiration of female school-age hawkers and non-hawkers.

Gender	n	X	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit
Female hawkers EAS	42	41.38	14.22	101	2.36	1.96
Female non-hawkers EAS	61	43.14	15.11			

Significant at 0.05.

engaging school-age children in hawking is that school-age hawkers were found to have criminal intent and low educational aspiration. Their criminal intent was far higher than that of school-age children who were not engaged in hawking (hawkers = 73.98% > non-hawkers = 14.63%). Having high criminal intent and low educational aspiration is itself anti-development. World wide, it is believed that educational exposure can aid development of good behaviour. Good educational attainment has been identified as a critical factor in youth development. Nugent (2005) sees it as what determines young people's employment opportunities.

In the future, it is what gives good earnings and power and allow the youth to contribute to their society. Educational aspiration however precedes educational attainment. Young people can benefit from educational opportunities only if they aspire to utilize the opportunities. However, as confirmed in the findings of this study, child- hawkers do not aspire for educational attainment. This, itself, makes them more vulnerable to life of crime that street life offers. Thus, when a child has no educational aspiration and is exposed to hawking, his chance of learning the life of crime will increase. Criminal intent increases on constant exposure to what Horowitz and Boarden (1995) call aggressive script common on the streets of urban centers. Many of the subculture of violence that permeates our schools today (Agbonna, 2009; Anderson, 1999) may have originated from the street and the street hawkers may be the carrier of such subculture of violence to the school.

This study also established significance difference in

the level of criminal intent and educational aspiration of school-age hawkers and non-hawkers on the basis of gender. Male hawkers were found to be criminal minded and less educationally inspired than their female counterparts. This implies that learning crime on the street while hawking could be stronger among male than female hawkers. This finding is in line with early research findings that pointed to gender as a contending factor in crime and violence (Agbonna, 2009; Agbonna and Okafor, 2008; Mustaine and Tewksbury, 1998). This situation may be attributed to the masculine nature of crime itself.

Criminal intent increases and educational aspiration reduces in a situation of child's exposure to hawking. School-age children that are engaged in hawking are at disadvantage of developing themselves to the maximum, educationally. This situation can also hamper child's aspiration to acquire knowledge and skill that can make him/her functional and contribute to his/her nations' development. Thus, as hawking destroys a child's moral and educational development, it deprives the nation of getting its youths adequately utilized for socio-economic growth. Therefore, based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended:

1. Efforts should be intensified to eradicate the incidence of hawking among school-age children.
2. Government and other stakeholders should develop means of rehabilitating school-age children already exposed to hawking.
3. Parents should be sensitized on the negative short time and long time impacts of hawking on their children's

moral and educational development.

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