Child Hustlers of Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria: Occurrences and Characterisation
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Abstract
Studies on children in Africa have focused on child labour, street children and children in conflict situation. While these studies remain relevant, new and evolving trajectories of children in Africa suggest more dynamic cleavages necessitating fresh interrogations. Hustling is a nascent category that often describe tedious and less paying jobs in many African cities and in this article this is tested relative to children because it is a relevant way of capturing new existentialities of children who work away from home and in dangerously complex situations. This study therefore examined perceived occurrence of child hustling and characteristics of child hustlers in Ibadan metropolis, Oyo state, Nigeria to contribute empirically to understanding childhood in Africa. The cross-sectional research design was adopted with multi-stage sampling technique in six major commercial centers of Ibadan metropolis, Oyo state, Nigeria. Data were collected on perceived occurrence of child hustling and characteristics of child hustlers with the aid of both quantitative and qualitative instruments. The data generated were analyzed with the use of statistical package and atlas-ti. 6.2. Very important findings were made and huge contributions were made to knowledge.

Introduction
Child hustlers are defined, for this study purpose, as those children who work on the street most especially roads, market and motor parks energetically to sell essential product and render service under hazardous condition that endangers their health, education and societal development. Children are regarded as an important element of development (Akanle, 2012), therefore, their wellbeing in society is a guide for social and economic development of that society. Although child hustlers exist globally, and has become more evident in recent time in major city due to the fact that children in urban areas are easily caught up in daily struggle for survival (Bass, 2004). Africa continent especially the Sub-Saharan region of the continent continues to be the region with highest prevalence of child hustlers with increasing number of children on the street engaged in one form of business or the other (Alenoma, 2012), studies however, shows that more than one in five children hustle on the street for a living (Kurfi and Aliyu, 2014; Ojelabi and Oyewole, 2012).

Historically and culturally, Nigeria children have always worked with their families, learning skills they would need for adult role but in modern time there is a changing phase of child work into an exploitative and hazardous one exposing themselves to long hours of work in dangerous and unhealthy environments, carrying too much responsibility for their age creating a cycle of Child Rights violations (Nwazuoke and Igwe, 2016). The occurrence of child hustling appears to be getting out of the control of Governments and the general public in developing countries yet child hustling is a major urban centre challenge in most region of sub-Saharan Africa, accounting for almost 11 percent of the child population world over, hustling in hazardous environment that directly endangers their health, safety and moral development. Moreover, Adewusi (2016) report shows that child hustlers are widely spread across major street of Ibadan, as more and more cases of child hustling in the city is recorded daily but when asked few of these children do know their fundamental human right. This has become as source of
worry to scholars, policy makers, Non-Governmental Organizations and International Organisations. World Bank report (2005) shows that child hustling created an obstacle to achieving the millennium development goal (MDGs) and the case may not be different for achievement of the current Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Thus, research question engaged in are; what is the perceived occurrence of child hustler in Ibadan metropolis? And what are the characteristics of child hustlers in the study area? This is to have relevant and current understanding of child hustling and contribute to recent knowledge on the issue?

Methodology
A cross sectional research design was with explanatory and descriptive approaches were adopted for the study that informed this article. The study triangulated both quantitative and qualitative methods. The population of study included: Child hustlers (under 18years): Law enforcement agents: they are the one to make arrest and enforced the implementation of the Child’s Rights Act, Ministry of Women Affairs staff: they are in charge of child welfare, most especially the homeless one among them. They also, reunite some child hustlers with their parents. Members of the public: they have contact with child hustlers daily so therefore their perception is needed for this study. The study employed a multi-stage sampling. The multi-stage sampling involved the use of purposive, quota and snowballing sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was used to determine the appropriateness and adequacy of the study sample and their characteristics. A quota sampling techniques was used to determine the number of respondents in various unit of the study area while a snowballing sampling was employed to locate child hustlers and their parents. The summary of sample size is shown in the table below:

Table 1: Summary of Study Population and Sample Size in the Study Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Categories of respondents</th>
<th>Questionnaire</th>
<th>IDI</th>
<th>FGD</th>
<th>KII</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Child hustlers</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td></td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Law enforcement agents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Staff of ministry of women affairs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>300</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data/Findings and Discussion
Most of the respondents (86.8%) perceive child hustling to be high in the study area. An implication that points to the fact that occurrence of child hustling in the study area is very high. majority of the respondents (77.7%) unanimously perceived occurrence of child hustling to be prevalent among poor children. Regarding how often respondents encounter child hustlers a greater percentage of the respondents (88.5%) reveals they encounter child hustler often. However, 40.4% of respondents said child hustlers are found in the afternoon and a greater percentage (60.3%) said they are found in the evening (see Table 2 below for more information)

Table 2: Perceived Occurrence of Child Hustler
The study has shown that a larger proportion of the study population perceived the occurrence of child hustling to be high. The findings were corroborated by qualitative data. For example, according to one of the interviewees:

*Child hustler is very high in this area, you will even be surprise with the influx of these children in this park. They increase every day because I usually see new face here daily; we call them “Omo Oku” because we don’t know their parent and where they come from.*

(IDI/Male/Iwo Road/Parent/37years/May 2017)

Another interviewee added:

*Child hustler’s prevalence is very high and disheartening to see children of school age engaging in economic activities that can affect their health and education. They are prevalence in very looks and cranny of Ibadan, most especially in Beere, Idi-aro, Ogunpa, Agbeni and they are prevalent among children who lack motherly care.*

(KII/Female/O/c JWC/NPF/Iyaganku/June 2017)
The findings from this study as shown above are consistent with the report of ILO (2010) and findings of Stephenson (2002), Akinbola (2007) and Nicola et al. (2012). For instance, Stephenson (2002) confirmed that the engagement of children in hazardous economic activities outside the home is still prevalent while Akinbola (2007) findings indicate that child hustling is alarmingly prevalent in Nigeria, most especially in urban centers like Ibadan and Lagos metropolis. This view was captured by one of the discussants who was more specific when he said:

_We are many in this area most especially people like us who usually pick scraps. They call us “Alu” boys because we are many in this area and this is what we do for a living (FGD/Male/Beere/Child/15years/May 2017)._ 

This study revealed the group of children who engages in economic activities like hustling. The findings show that child hustling is prevalent among poor children in the study area. The study also revealed that the prevalence is also common among ambitious children who want to have financial freedom or want to stand on their own. The study further revealed that homeless children happen to be another group of children who hustle in the study area. Findings from the study also point to the fact that child hustling is prevalent among children who lacks care. Child neglect as shown in the study reveals that it is more of children who lack motherly care. This is understandable pointing to the fact that women and most especially mothers are the major care givers in the home. Regarding the location where child hustlers are found, it was found that child hustling activities is prevalent in places where pedestrian traffic is obvious. This further points to the fact that child hustler are found along commercial main roads. The finding is understandable due to the bad road network in our society making sales in this area more lucrative as some of the respondents noted. This study also finds that child hustlers are also prevalent in market places alongside motor parks. It was found that child hustlers usually hustle more in the afternoon. This finding supports Oyinye et al (2002) and Onuzulike (2007) findings in terms of the time of the day such children engage in hustling. This is due to the reason that most of the child hustlers (as interviewed interviewed) indicated that though they attend school, contrary to the findings of Oyinye et al (2002) assertion that they are usually school dropout, they often skip school a lot as noted by Kwankye, et al (2009).

**Table 3: Characterising child hustlers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Frequency (n =287)</th>
<th>Percentages (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child hustlers age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children age 6-12</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>40.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children age 13-17</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>59.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child hustlers gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>66.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both gender</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child hustlers are school drop out</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>61.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 3 shows that a greater percentage of the respondents (59.6%) unanimously profiled child hustlers to be children within 12-17 years age category. Also, two third of the respondents (66.6%) characterised child hustlers as boys. However, majority of the respondents (61.0 and 92.7%) from the public also characterized child hustlers to be children who are school dropouts and from low income family. Also a greater percentage of the respondents (69.0%) attributed child hustler’s educational background to primary education, many other yet (91.6%) profiled child hustlers as children from polygamous family structure. Regarding, child hustlers residency, a greater percentage of the respondent (50.5%) characterized child hustler as children who lives with single parents.

Figure 1: Framework Showing the Network of Themes Regarding Child Hustlers Characteristics
Table 4 and figure 1 present a network of socioeconomic categorisations prevalent among child hustlers in the context of study. The above network shows that education, age, gender, religion, poverty level, ethnicity, family structure, parent marital status, residency are part of the common variables used in profiling child hustlers in the context. However in terms of education, we found that child hustlers are either in primary school or secondary school and they either skip school or drop out of school in terms of their school attendance. It can be deduced from the above network that child hustlers are often too young - 6-11 years or 12-17 years - to engage in the hustling(s) they engage in. Moreover the above framework also shows that most child hustlers are male and religion does not play any differential roles in determining involvement in child hustling. The above framework also shows that child hustlers’ parents’ are usually artisans/petty traders and this is associated with poverty. Poverty and low class therefore play crucial roles in determining involvement in child hustling. Family breakdown also play active roles. Generally, class of family of orientation of the children plays crucial determining roles in involvement in child hustling. This is sustainable since petty traders and most artisans hardly live above the poverty line because they earn little income and might stay off sales or customers in a day and at times weeks as revealed by some interviewees. Also, the framework shows that Yoruba, Igbo, Efik and Kogi people major child hustling ethic groups in the study area. Furthermore, marriage types and family structures have links with determining child hustling while parental neglect is caused by large family structures which is associated with polygamy. And monogamy is associated with being first born of the family. Based on the above framework, it was found that child hustler’s parents’ marital status is either separated or widowed. The framework reveals that homelessness, living with friends, grandmother, single mother, relative and both parents are part of child hustlers’ residency.
It was found that child hustlers are usually boys. This view is contrary to the views of Winnie (2005) and Oloko (2006) who assert female dominance in child economic activities. We found that most male children who engage in hustling are usually first born as noted in the profile of majority of child hustler interviewed. This could be traced to the influence of cultural background in which they found themselves that expects male children to take responsibility for the family especially when the father is deceased. This study revealed that the age of most child hustler are usually children within the age category of 12 - 17years. One of the parent interviewed said: “When I see some of these children they are too small for the task they are doing. Even though I send my children to hawk for me I can’t send children of such age to hawk they are too small although I don’t blame their mother some husband are just so useless and prefer to marry more wives than to take good care of their home, they are the one who won’t support family planning they might say it inconvenient their sexual prowess, so what do you want the woman to do since she can’t kill herself” (IDI/Female/Dugbe/Mother/53years/June 2017).

Findings indicate that child hustlers in the study area are mainly Yoruba although majority of them are indigenes of Ibadan and others from neighboring towns. Some child hustlers are also from the South East, South-south and North Central regions of the country. This was unanimously added by the discussants: “We are children between the age of 9-15years, and we are from different part of Nigeria as you can see there are Yoruba, Hausa and people from the east among us. Majority of us are not from this town as you can see we are strangers. We are children whose parent has died while some of us are living with relative. While another replied by adding broken home to their characteristics (FGD/Male/Beree/child/May 2017).

This is due to the fact that migration plays a vital role in determining the incidence of child hustling in urban centers. This is because child hustlers also migrate to urban centers with the zeal to survive, despite the factor the indefinite place to stay or live. This leads to high number of street children in most urban centers as noted by Nseabasi and Abiodun (2010). We also profiled child hustling based on their family structure. Findings show that child hustlers are caught up between either polygamous or monogamous family structures. Most child hustlers are product of large family size and polygamous family structure. Marrying more than one wife is a common characteristic of the family child hustlers in the study area. Thus, marrying more than one wife is evidence that such families will be large and difficult to manage socioeconomically. This coheres with the information provided by some of the child hustlers interviewed. Some of the child hustlers can be profiled in terms of parental care since most child hustlers in the study area have experienced nonchalant or care free parenting. The study indicates that this could also be as linked to the factor of large family size. As profiled by one of the key informants: “They are usually from family with large size whose father can have more than one wife. We have seen cases here where the child is from a family of ten, eight children from one mother who is jobless just imagine. Some of them can also be product of broken home, conclusively they are children who lack parental care, who will cater for a child whose mother is no longer living with his or her father or who will take care of a child whose parent daily income is not up to 400naira? So such child most especially the first born and usually the male child need to support the family financially if they want to survive (KII/Male/Principal Social Welfare Officer/Ministry of Women Affairs/44years/June 2017).
In terms of profiling child hustlers based on their parents’ marital status, most of the children are products of broken homes. In some cases, child hustlers are product of widows/widower, lacking the capacity to care for the child. This remain a contributory reason such children hustle in order to alleviate themselves or the family. This could also be linked to the issue of residency as this played a vital role in determining child hustling activity. The child hustlers are living with both parents, relative, single mother, grandmother, friends, or homeless. As observed in the course of the research some child hustlers are homeless and they are usually called “omo oku” meaning “children with no family to identify with”.

We also further profiled child hustlers on the basis of their parents’ socio-economic status. Findings indicate that virtually all child hustlers are from low income family. Moreover, low income families and most child hustlers’ parents are either petty traders or artisans. None of the child hustler interviewed indicates that parent is a civil servant. This point to the fact that the educational status of most child hustlers’ parents is non-literate. Also as a petty trader who solely depends on sales to sustain family, such parents see nothing wrong in engaging their children in hustling for family support thus turning children to family’s socioeconomic supporters or children breadwinners in many instances. Empirical evidence from the research shows child hustlers are children from poor homes and illiterate parents who depend on socioeconomic hustling to survive and support the family.

**Conclusion**

Child hustling is a prevalent phenomenon in Ibadan, Nigeria and many parts of Africa especially in the sub-Saharan. While studies exists on child labour and street children in non-Western societies, studies are lacking on changing trajectories and phases of childhood in Africa particularly on protection and survival as well as development and participation rights. Childhood and associated existentialities are dynamic in Africa and the dynamics respond to emerging socioeconomic and political as well as cultural challenges. It is against this background that emerging conceptualisations and characterisations in line with existentialities must continually be examined for sustainable understanding. It is in this regard that this article contributes empirical data to contribute to the issues of childhood and development in Africa through a sub-Saharan case study from one of Africa’s largest and traditional but modernizing cities- Ibadan- (Olutayo and Akanle, 2009) to contribute to knowledge, scholarship and policies on childhood.

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