

Understanding ‘Children on the Street’ in the Context of Non-Western Settings through the Lens of Savolainen’s Everyday Life Information Seeking (ELIS) Theory

Jibril, Dalhatu Usman

Department of Library & Information Science, Isa Mustapha Agwai I Polytechnic, Lafia.

Nasarawa State-Nigeria

dalhatuusmanjibril@gmail.com

Abstract

“Children on the street” encountered everyday challenges and decision situations. Although extant studies have explored children on the street intending to understand better their situations, very little study exists that discusses “children on the street” in the context of nonwestern settings. This study explored the everyday life information-seeking behaviour of “children on the street” in a nonwestern context. The study identified the challenges encountered by “children on the street” and the sources and channels of information they consult in response to their everyday life challenges. A qualitative case study was adopted for the study. 15 participants were interviewed. The study findings indicated that children on the street experienced challenges related to the following: lack of parental care, ill-health, hunger, and emotional stress. The study also uncovered children on the street consulted the following sources of information in response to the challenges: interpersonal/informal sources of information, close/strong ties, and the use of cell phones to overcome their daily challenges. The study then recommended further qualitative studies to identify information-seeking behaviours of the caregivers of “children on the street” in nonwestern settings.

Keywords: Children on the Street, Challenges, ELIS, Nonwestern settings, Information-seeking.

Introduction

“Children on the street” encountered everyday challenges and decision situations. Those children are vulnerable due to the influence of peer groups, school drops out, and society at large. The existence of these children is a global phenomenon and a challenging social problem that all nations have been grappling with (Ray, 2017). Understanding the situations of ‘children on the street’ is a significant aspect in our societies to overcome their daily life challenges. In Nigeria and other sub-Saharan African countries, “children on the street” are called Almajirai. Almajirai are boys and young men from primary school to their early twenties who live beyond

the state's purview and regulatory interventions in traditional Qur'anic boarding schools (Hoechner, 2013). It is hinged on the Islamic concepts of migration which is widely practiced, especially when acquiring knowledge at home is either inconvenient or insufficient. The system was also honoured with efficiency, able to teach children how to read, responsible for literacy in northern Nigeria for centuries, and protecting millions of youth against the life of thievery, cheating, arrogance, unemployment, and ignorance (Tilde, 2010). These schools shape children's behaviour, values, preferences, and dispositions and have become places for cognitive development.

However, despite the religious significance and critical educational roles the Qur'anic schools play in the life of Muslim children, there is a paucity of literature that explores "children on the street" in the context of nonwestern settings. Scholars (Chamwi, 2014; Weber, 2013; Aptekar & Stoecklin, 2013) have identified the need to understand the sources and channels of information of "children on the street". Understanding the sources of information of "children on the street" is imperative because it enables an understanding of how those children interact with information in the different domains of their everyday lives. Knowing the information sources of "children on the street" can offer recognizable avenues for helping them with their information needs, thus influencing their behaviours, especially their information behaviours (Burfat, Burfat, & Abro, 2012; Prasad, 2012). This study reports the findings of a Doctorate thesis that identified the challenges encountered by "children on the street" and their sources of information in the context of non-western settings.

Problem Statement

It is known that "Children on the street," particularly in northern Nigeria, has become a social problem due to the negation of the ideal principles of establishing the system. The children now wade about the streets begging for alms and also doing menial jobs to sustain themselves. They experienced lots of challenges, especially when it comes to interaction with everyday life information. "Children on the street" need factual information that will keep them healthy, ensure their survival, and facilitate the understanding of their environment and roles as future leaders. Although extant studies have explored 'children on the street' intending to have a better understanding of their situations, very little study exists that discusses 'children on the street' in the context of non-western settings, particularly their everyday life information-seeking behaviour. Understanding these children's everyday life information practices may reveal the influence of information on their behaviour.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims at achieving the following objectives:

1. To identify the challenges experienced by "children on the street" in their daily life activities.
2. To examine the sources and channels of information consult by "children on the street" for each challenge.

The findings of this study may help understand challenges experienced by “children on the street” and their sources of information to overcome their everyday life challenges. It may also contribute to the everyday life information-seeking literature of ‘children on the street,’ especially in non-western settings.

Literature Review

The Everyday life information-seeking (ELIS) theory incorporates the “acquisition of various informational elements which people employ to orient themselves in daily life or to solve problems not directly connected with the performance of occupational tasks”(Savolainen, 1995). ELIS model centered on two major concepts: *Way of life* and *Mastery of life*. *Way of life* refers to those choices one makes every day in life to bring about the *order of things*. These are the activities in which an individual engages in everyday life and how such activities are placed in order of priority. On the other hand, “mastery of life refers to general preparedness to approach everyday problems in certain ways in accordance with one’s values” (Savolainen, 1995). In applying the concepts of the way of life and mastery of life in ELIS research, (Savolainen 1995 as cited in Dankasa, 2018) opined that it is necessary to keep in mind that while the way of life typically indicates “general criteria for choosing and using various information sources and channels, “mastery of life “describes the tendency to adopt a certain information-seeking strategy in problem-solving situations.” However, in solving these problems, individuals’ values, attitudes, and interests, based on their lifestyle, must be taken into account. Specifically for children and adolescents, ELIS concerns “their engagement with information to address everyday life concerns, such as growing up, identity, relationship, careers, and lifestyle choices”(Todd, 2003).

Several scholars (Kitzie, 2017; Kim, 2016; Greyson, 2015) have applied ELIS theory in their studies. However, not much capture the everyday life information-seeking behaviour of children on the street’ in the context of non-western settings. Very little attention has been given to exploring the ELIS model in understanding the information behaviour of a vulnerable group of people. Due to its use in exploring the information world of normal laymen or socio-affectively marginalized groups like “children on the street,”the ELIS model is a suitable lens to comprehend “children on the street information behaviour. Several scholars have used the model to examine the information needs, sources, patterns, and problems encountered in information practices. Some of the studies merit review as follows:

Maepa (2021), in a baseline study in Limpopo province, South Africa, explored the differences in self-esteem and resilience among street children and non-street children. Using an independent sample group design and purposive sampling method, a total of 300 street children with ages ranging from 8 to 18 years were selected, while a simple random sample was used in selecting another 300 non-street children within the same age bracket to participate in this study. A questionnaire with three sections was used to collect data. Results of an independent sample t-test revealed that street children reported low self-esteem and poor resilience compared to non-

street children. The findings of the study revealed that street children and non-street children differ on self-esteem and resilience.

In a grounded theory study entitled: A Street child's perspective, Ray (2017) seeks to understand and explain how street children experience and cope with grief. The research employed qualitative techniques in which in-depth interviews, group discussions, and field notes were used to collect data. The sample comprised of 18 street children – 9 boys and 9 girls- were selected as participants through purposive and snowballed sampling. Constructivist grounded theory was used to analyze the data. The study results emphasize how similar backgrounds that include: familial, educational, religious, and shared experiences influenced expressions of grief and coping styles. Findings revealed that most street children come from broken families and are migrants; they lack the enhanced literacy level, and religion defines their existence – all these factors coalesce to shape their perspective on grief. The findings maintained that street children's coping styles reflect common underlying patterns that help them connect and experience grief together.

Buchanan & Tuckerman (2016) conducted a study to better understand adolescent information behaviours in disadvantaged and disengaged circumstances and explore social integration issues. The study adopted a mixed-method design incorporating observation, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups conducted in areas of multiple deprivations. Young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET) aged 16-19 and their support workers participated in the study. The finding of the study revealed heightened access influenced by technology and literacy issues and internalized behavioural barriers influenced by social structures and norms beyond those common to the general adolescent population.

A study by Barriage (2014) explored parental perceptions of the everyday life information behaviors related to hobbies and personal interests of children between 4 and 8 years of age. Specifically, the study investigated two research questions: What sources and strategies do parents perceive children when seeking information related to their free-time activities? What other information behaviors do parents perceive children engaging in related to their free-time activities? Parents/caregivers were selected as participants rather than the children due to the exploratory nature of the study. Using a snowball sampling method, participant recruitment was through Facebook and a local childcare centre. The findings of the study indicated that children as young as four (4) years of age engaged in information behaviours related to their hobbies and interests.

Methodology

This study adopted qualitative research methodology, which enabled learning from participants about their experiences. An exploratory case study design was utilized for the study. 15 samples were selected using the convenience sampling technique. This involves selecting participants due to their accessibility and proximity. The participants were selected within the Lafia metropolis and must be between 12 and 17 years of age. In addition to the sampling given above, inclusion and exclusion criteria were used in selecting participants in the study. Narrative

analysis was used to analyze the data collected. To maintain confidentiality, the participants were assigned a pseudonym. An in-depth interview was used for data collection. It allowed the researchers to elicit information from the participants to answer the research questions. An interview guide was developed, drawing from a variety of sources. Each respondent spent 25 - 30 minutes in the interview. The interviews with the participants occurred in (Hausa) language over one week period. The data collected were transcribed verbatim into English and coded.

Results and Discussions

Challenges “Children on the street” experienced in their Everyday Life Activities.

This section consisted of the narratives of the challenges “Children on the street” experience concerning their daily routines. Four categories arose depicting the challenges experienced. The four categories include lack of parental care, ill-health, hunger, and emotional stress. Table 1 provides details on the challenges experienced in the study setting.

Table 1: Challenges Experienced by “Children on the street” in Lafia Metropolis, Nasarawa State

Objective	Categories	Subcategories	Frequency	Percentage
Challenges ‘children on the street’ experience in their daily routines in Lafia metropolis.	1.Lack of Parental care	1. Absence of parents.	11	73.3%
		2. Lack of counseling.	1	6.6%
		3.Lack of essential needs	2	13.3%
		Group Total	14	93.3%
	2.Ill-health	1.Malaria fever	6	40%
		2. Headache	2	13.3%
		3. Stomach ache	2	13.3%
		4. Eye problem	1	6.6%
		5. Typhoid fever	2	13.3%
		6. Others	1	6.6%
		Group Total	14	93.3%
	3. Hunger	1.Lack of food	6	40%
		Group Total	6	40%

4. Emotional stress	1. Contempt from the public	2	13.3%
	2. Clothing	8	53.3%
	3. Others	3	20%
	Group Total	13	86.6%
Groups Total		47	58%

Source: Interview analysis 2021

The categories and subcategories are discussed below:

Category One: Lack of Parental Care(14/15, 93.3%) This category includes narratives related to the lack of parental care faced by ‘children on the street’ that participated in the study. This category is made up of three subcategories depicting the absence of parents (11/15, 73.3%), lack of counseling (1/15, 6.6%), and lack of essential needs (2/15, 12.3%). These three subcategories are explained below:

Absence of Parents: This subcategory depicts narratives related to the experiences of ‘children on the street’ on the challenges with regards to the absence of their parents in their everyday routines in the Lafia metropolis. ‘Children on the street’ opined that they experienced lots of challenges due to not staying under the supervision of their parents. Danuta opined that: “the absence of one’s parents naturally affects one as many challenges being faced would not have been there if one is staying under their supervision.”

Lack of proper counseling: This subcategory reveals another identified challenge experienced by ‘children on the street’ in the Lafia metropolis due to lack of parental care. It encapsulates narratives relating to the ‘children on the street’ experience of lack of proper counselling as a result of staying far away from their parents. Stressing this point, Tahir narrates that: “The counselling I receive from my parents cannot be gotten from any other person.”

Lack of essential needs: This subcategory depicts ‘children on the street’ narratives related to the lack of essential needs. This invariably affects their survival. Salim stressed that: “I didn’t have a steady supply of food and other essential needs like bathing soap and washing detergents.”

Category Two: Ill-health (14/15, 93.3%) This category includes narratives related to the challenges depicting ill-health experienced by ‘children on the street’ within the last twelve months. Ill-health is a major challenge ‘children on the street’ regarding their daily routines in

the Lafia metropolis. 'Children on the street' are highly vulnerable to sickness, particularly transmitted diseases. This category is made up of six subcategories depicting malaria fever (6/15, 40%), headache (2/15, 13.3%), stomach ache (2/15, 13.3%), eye problem (1/15, 6.6%), typhoid fever (2/15, 13.3%) and none experience of any health challenge (1/5, 6.6%). These six subcategories are explained below:

Malaria fever: This subcategory includes the narratives of the participants as regards malaria fever experienced by 'children on the street' in the last twelve months. Most of the 'children on the street' experienced malaria fever within the last twelve months. Barau indicated that "I experienced severe malaria fever within the last twelve months." 'Children on the street' generally seek healthcare from pharmacies/chemists for minor ailments. Whereas when they are seriously ill, though; some of them travel back home for medical attention. Danasabe said: "I experienced severe fever which even led to my travelling home for proper medication."

Headache: This subcategory expatiates on the ill-health experienced by 'children on the street' depicting headache in the last twelve months. Danuta summarized his experience as follows: "I experienced headache...."

Stomach ache: This subcategory explains stomach ache among challenges depicting health challenges experienced by 'children on the street' in the last twelve months. Dogara revealed that: "I experienced stomach ache but was treated at the chemist." The researcher found out from the participants that those who cannot afford healthcare are assisted with financial contributions from their colleagues and their teacher (mallam).

Eye problem: This subcategory depicts narratives about eye problems experienced by some of the 'children on the street' as one of the ill-health challenges regarding the health challenges they experienced. Balarabe revealed thus: "I experienced eye problem...."

Typhoid fever: This subcategory highlights the narratives about those 'children on the street' that experienced typhoid fever as an ill-health challenge within the last twelve months. Salau stated: "I was sick and diagnosed in the clinic to be suffering from typhoid fever..."

None experience of any health challenge: This subcategory explains other experiences of 'children on the street' regarding ill-health challenges within the last twelve months. Despite the numerous ill-health challenges 'children experienced on the street,' some participants opined that they did not experience any ill-health challenges within the period. Kamil stressed that he has: "...not experienced any major health challenge over the last twelve months".

Category Three: Hunger (6/15, 40%). This category includes narratives related to 'children on the street' experiences with hunger as the major challenges regarding their daily routines in the Lafia metropolis. In addition, this category has a subcategory depicting lack of food (6/15, 40%) as explained below:

Lack of Food: This subcategory explains the narrative related to the experiences of lack of food by ‘children on the street’ regarding their daily routines in the Lafia metropolis. ‘Children on the street’ opined that lack of food greatly impairs their learning processes. Salau stressed that: “My major challenge is lack of food as it affects my concentration....”

Category Four: Emotional Stress (13/15, 86.6%). This category includes narratives related to the experiences of emotional stress as among the participants’ challenges in the Lafia metropolis. This category is made up of three subcategories depicting contempt from the public (2/15, 13.3%), clothing (8/15, 53.3%), and others (3/15, 20%). The subcategories are explained below:

Contempt from the public: This subcategory includes the narratives related to contempt experienced by ‘children on the street’ from society. ‘Children on the street’ indicated that they faced lots of contempt from the public in the course of their daily routines. Barau said: “the way people look at us with contempt any time we moved about has been my main challenge.”

Clothing: This subcategory describes one of the challenges experienced by ‘children on the street’ in the Lafia metropolis. ‘Children on the street’ appeared unkempt in tattered clothes. Dantala substantiated the claim of lack of clothes when he said, “The challenges I face include...lack of clothes to wear.....”

Others: This subcategory explains other experiences of ‘children on the street’ concerning the challenges faced. Some of them observed: lack of funds (1/15, 6.6%), not comprehending the Qur’an (1/15, 6.6%), and frustration (1/15, 6.6%). Kabiru maintained that: “...money to buy soaps for washing clothes is a challenge”. Similarly, Salau said: “...lack of understanding the lesson when it comes to the issue of learning the Qur’an. I am not finding easy to comprehend.” Jatau stressed that: “sometimes I feel as if I should take my bag and go back home.”

Sources of Information ‘Children on the street’ consult to overcome their daily challenges in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa State – Nigeria.

This section captured the narratives of the ‘Children on the street’ on the sources of information they consulted in overcoming each of the challenges they faced regarding their daily routines. Table 2 provides details on the sources of information consult by ‘Children on the street’

Table 2: Sources of Information ‘Children on the street’ consult to overcome their daily challenges.

Research Question	Categories	Subcategories	Frequency	Percentage
-------------------	------------	---------------	-----------	------------

Sources of information 'children on the street' consult to overcome each of their daily challenges.	1.Schoolmates/ Children on the street	1.Schoolmates/ children on the street	11	73.3%
		Group Total	11	73.3%
	2.Qur'anic Teacher	1.Qur'anic Teacher	15	100%
		Group Total	15	100%
	3. Mobile phone	1.Mobile phone	2	13.3%
		Group Total	2	13.3%
	4. Parents	1.Parents	4	26.6%
		Group Total	4	26.6%
	5.Interactions with the public	1.Interactions with the public	7	46.6%
		Group Total	7	46.6%
	1. Radio	1.Radio	1	6.6%
		Group Total	1	6.6%
Groups Total			40	68%

Source: Interview analysis 2021

Six categories emerged from the narratives as sources of information consulted by 'Children on the street' in the study setting to overcome challenges associated with lack of parental care, ill-health, hunger, and emotional stress: These include Schoolmates, Qur'anic teacher (mallam), parents, mobile phone, interactions with the public and radio. The categories and subcategories are explained below:

Category One: Schoolmates (11/15, 73.3%). This category includes narratives revealing the experiences of 'children on the street' on the sources of information consulted in overcoming health challenges. The participants opined that they rely on their schoolmates as a major source of information to overcome their health challenges. Dantala stated that: "I rely on my schoolmates who always inform our teacher any time I am sick. They sometimes tax themselves to settle the medical bills and give advice on whether I should be taken home to my parents for medication."

Category Two: Qur'anic Teacher/(Mallam) (15/15, 100%) This category includes narratives related to the experiences of 'children on the street' that revealed the Qur'anic teacher (mallam) as another source of information consulted in overcoming health challenges. 'Children on the street' stressed that most of them rely on their teacher as their source of information. Salim argued that "It's our teacher that takes whoever is facing health challenges to the chemist for medication. Whoever is sick will either inform his colleagues to inform the teacher, or he informs the teacher himself." On his part, Gambo maintained that "Our teacher keeps a first aid box that he uses to administer medication to us any time we are facing health challenges."

Category Three: Mobile Phones(2/15, 13.3%). This category includes narratives related to mobile phones as a source of information by 'children on the street' depicting a lack of parental care. The participants stressed that to overcome the challenge of lack of parental care, few of them use mobile phones to contact their parents back home. Danasabe opined that: "I have a mobile phone which I used to be communicating with my parents at times."

Category Four: Parents(4/15, 26.6%) This category includes narratives related to parents as a source of information to the 'children on the street' depicting emotional stress. Some of the participants maintained contact with their parents back home despite the distance. Danladi indicated that: "I rely on my parents as sources of information which I consult. . ." Similarly, Salim said: "I consult my parents as a source of information concerning health challenges."

Category Five: Interactions with the public (7/15, 46.6%) This category includes narratives related to the experiences of 'children on the street' depicting hunger. 'Children on the street' also rely on the public as their source of getting information. Jatau said, ". . . we go out to look for food by way of either entering houses to beg or following girls selling beans cake as people buy and give us as alms. We do this daily, and in the process, we interact with people as our source of information."

Category Six: Radio (1/15, 6.6%) This category includes narratives depicting radio as a source of information consulted to overcome emotional stress by the 'children on the street' in the study setting. A participant indicated that he uses radio as a source of information. Kabiru opined, "I always listen to the radio through which I get important information that assists me..."

Discussion of Findings

The followings were the findings of this study:

Challenges 'Children on the street' experienced in their daily life activities.

'Children on the street' identified four challenges they experienced in their daily routines in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa State-Nigeria. These challenges are associated with lack of parental care, ill-health, hunger, and emotional stress. 'Children on the street' encountered innumerable challenges, and their predicaments were shocking.

For instance, ‘children on the street’ are separated from their parents to be under the guardianship of Qur’anic teachers (Mallams), most at times in far distant places. This has made the upkeep of ‘children on the street’ very difficult for the teachers, particularly due to the lack of supports from most of the parents. This has resulted in ‘children on the street’ relying on the care of peers and friends, which affects and makes them highly vulnerable to many challenges. ‘Children on the street’ need affection and decent living conditions. Their needs are the same as those who grow up with a lot of care, love, affection, and protection from their parents. They grow up in difficult circumstances and living conditions, hardly receiving good attention. The loss of supports and care from parents increases their levels of vulnerability.

Regarding health challenges, living in poor unhygienic conditions and eating leftover food has contributed to the health challenges which ‘children on the street’ experienced. In this study setting, ‘children on the street’ experienced major prevalent diseases: malaria fever, typhoid fever, skin diseases, injuries, and malnutrition. Generally, ‘children on the street’ sought healthcare from chemists for minor ailments. On the other hand, few of them travelled back home for medical attention when they were seriously ill.

Similarly, in this study setting, hunger was also identified as another major challenge experienced by ‘children on the street.’ Hunger has been linked to disease, pain, physical weakness, anxiety, and death (Agnew, 2017). Food insufficiency has been the cause of ‘children on the street’ jostling for food or money to buy the food. They, therefore, have to resort to begging for food. At times, ‘children on the street’ go hungry despite begging as they could not get food or money to buy the food. To overcome the challenge, ‘children on the street’ engaged in coping strategies that range from washing plates in restaurants and running errands for survival in return for food.

Emotional stress is among the challenges ‘children on the street’ in the Lafia metropolis experienced. Emotional stress includes contempt experienced by ‘children on the street’ from society. ‘Children on the street’ felt abandoned and neglected by their family and even society at large. They struggle for survival, moving from place to place, or live in a shelter such as abandoned buildings. They need emotional support or psychological needs like care, love, affection, protection, attention, security, attachment and want to be praised and rewarded.

Sources of Information ‘Children on the street’ consult to overcome their daily challenges in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa State – Nigeria.

The participants in the study setting indicated that they access information from six sources to overcome challenges associated with lack of parental care, ill-health, hunger, and emotional stress. The six sources are Schoolmates, Qur’anic teacher (mallam), parents, mobile phone, daily interpersonal relations with the public, and radio.

In this study setting, Schoolmates represent a source of information for overcoming the challenges associated with three key issues: ill-health, hunger, and emotional stress. ‘Children on the street’ consult each other for information and advice. Regarding health challenges, like one of them is sick, ‘the participants indicated that they taxed themselves to generate money for treatment and medications. They do so by communicating and sharing information among

themselves. Similarly, 'children on the street' also consult each other for information regarding the need to bring food to the sick and incapacitated among them. Likewise, they also consult each other to get advice on the most appropriate time to take a sick schoolmate home to his parents/guardian for proper medical attention.

'Children on the street' are strong sources of information among themselves. This finding is not surprising because, for decades, schoolmates, peers, and significant others are a strong source of information. This has been explicated by Granovetter (1973) in the spirit of the 'strong ties' principle. The principle has outlined how schoolmates and peers are considered as primary sources of information. In the spirit of this principle, 'children on the street' receive and share information regarding overcoming challenges associated with ill-health, hunger, and emotional stress.

During the period of emotional stress, information seeking is of critical significance (Vernon, 1971). It is, therefore, not surprising that 'children on the street' seek information among themselves to overcome challenges associated with empathy by the public. Trying to seek for information to overcome emotional stress is related to the concept of mastery of life as explicated by Savolainen (1995). Mastery of life refers to a situation in which individuals faced with challenges are optimistic that the problem can be solved. He, therefore, will make conscious efforts to seek information actively. The person is involved with the defensive-affective mastery of life (Savolainen, 1995). That's to say; there is the dominance of information-seeking activities by influential factors.

'Children on the street's reliance on their schoolmates support the well-documented preference for the interpersonal source of information (Case, 2008). This preference may be especially keen among the disorienting newcomers (Hoechner, 2013). Disorienting newcomers refer to the process of understanding values, and behaviours essential for participating as a member of a new group. In the context of Quranic schools, newcomer children are exposed to an unfamiliar culture or attitude. Therefore, schoolmates/peers or teachers are often newcomers' sole supports during the period. Schoolmates, therefore, were instrumental in offering information in overcoming daily challenges to master life. 'Children on the street,' therefore, see each other as one, optimistic of solving their challenges. Therefore, they consult each other in their attempts to overcome their numerous challenges positively.

Similar to schoolmates as a source of information, Qur'anic teachers are also regarded as an important source of information by 'children on the street' in the study setting. Quran teachers include the teacher/mallam and senior students who also double as students/teachers. Both act as a source of information, especially when 'children on the street' are experiencing challenges associated with health and emotional stress. 'Children on the street' seek advice from Qur'an teachers whenever they are sick. An interesting finding of Qur'anic teachers as a source of health information is that some Qur'anic teachers in Lafia metropolis keep first aid boxes to respond to information on health challenges of pupils in their care. This is contrary to the belief among some pundits that Quranic teachers in northern Nigeria adopt a lackadaisical attitude concerning the welfare and wellbeing of their pupils. The first aid box addresses the children's minor health

challenges like headaches and injuries. Other than offering first aid medication, another way in which Qur'anic teachers respond to information concerning the health challenges of pupils is to refer the pupil that is sick to a pharmacy/chemist outlet and arrange for the incapacitated pupil to be sent home to his parents for proper medical attention.

The Qur'anic teachers/mallams give aid and direction. They, therefore, play a crucial role in conveying information to the children. The exchange of information between the Qur'anic teacher and the children breeds trust by enabling the creation of social ties and networks among them. This also makes information emanating from these networks trustworthy. This supported the assertion by Ryan (2018) that children are more comfortable with their teachers, which leads to more emotional stability, which increases their learning ability.

In the same vein, parents are also another source of information consulted by 'children on the street' in overcoming health and emotional stress challenges. In overcoming health challenges, 'children on the street' consult their parents back home despite the distance. This is so particularly for those children with specific health challenges that warrant consulting home. They do consult their parents for information and advice on medication. Even though 'children on the street' may be far away from home, this study found that some of them nevertheless maintained a great deal of contact with parents and family members through the use of mobile phones, teachers, and some relatives coming to weekly markets. Hoechner (2013) observed that getting the family member, especially the parents involved in self-care behaviour can be of significant importance in providing health care, particularly to 'children on the street'. Parents play an active role in 'children on the street's' livelihood, consulting them as the source of information to overcome daily challenges positively influence the development of 'children on the street.'

Similar to parents as a source of information, mobile phones are likewise regarded as an important source of information by 'children on the street' in the study setting. Mobile phones also act as a source of information for 'children on the street,' especially in overcoming the challenges of health, emotional stress, and being homesick. The participants receive information through mobile phones when consulting their parents any time they have opportunities. For instance, some participants use mobile phones of their schoolmates and Qur'anic teacher to seek information from their parents back home. This shows that mobile phones connect 'children on the street' with their parents, thereby given access to social support in terms of needs.

Mobile phones are now incorporated by people into their daily lives as an important means of communicating (Berge, 2013). This has given greater opportunities for information seekers to consult and resolve challenges. It, therefore, reduces challenges associated with distance and absence of parents and siblings, which have been major barriers in terms of communication between 'children on the street' and their parents. Mobile phones have been used to address social networks and transportation issues (Wang, Krishnan, & Diehl, 2010).

In addition to consulting schoolmates as a source of information, participants in the study setting also indicated that their daily interpersonal relation with the public is another major source of information in overcoming challenges associated with hunger. Interpersonal relation

plays a critical role in the success of daily individual's activities. It allows effective communication and understanding among people. Relating with the public is one of the most important relationships 'children on the street' established in their attempts to master life.

'Children on the street' consult the public by way of interacting through begging for food daily with the view to overcoming hunger challenges. They enter houses daily or follow girls selling beans cake so that people can buy and give them as alms. This daily routine of entering houses and also undertaking menial jobs enable 'children on the street' to share and exchange information. The information accessed through these interactions assists 'children on the street' greatly in overcoming hunger challenges.

'Children on the street' tend to rely on informal sources of information and equally support from their informal networks such as caregivers and the general public to help them make decisions (Darkwah & Asumeng, 2016; Mnubi-Mchombu & Ocholla, 2014). Interactions with the public made them closer to 'children on the street' than immediate family members who, due to distance, are not immediately available.

In the same vein, 'children on the street' listened to the radio for information and guidance as a source of information in the study setting. 'Children on the street' received information through the various programmes from the radio in overcoming the challenges associated with emotional stress. However, despite the importance of radio as a means of getting information, this source was found not to be widely consulted as only one out of the participants indicated that he listened to the radio. This can be attributed to the schedules of the Qur'anic schools and due to the financial implication of buying radio.

Conclusions

This study uncovers not only the major challenges experienced by 'children on the street' in the context of non-western settings but also identifies the sources and channels of information they consult in overcoming their everyday life challenges. Consequently, the aforementioned findings have already distilled the fact that the challenges and uncertainty associated with daily livelihood struggles for basic needs have been the major contributing factor to the phenomenon of 'children on the street.' Hence, they have to recourse to begging and doing menial jobs to secure their survival. Therefore, a deeper understanding of the 'children on the street' through the lens of Savolainen's ELIS allows their challenges to be tackled. The study concluded that "children on the streets" had a strong penchant for informal channels (i.e., friends, schoolmates, and relatives).

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Skills acquisition programmes/centres should be established as part of the Qur'anic school lessons to enable 'children on the street' to learn entrepreneurial skills and trades. This can be achieved through social intervention by the government and non-governmental

organizations. The idea of acquiring skills by the Almajirai is expected to promote wellbeing and income-generating activities.

2. Statistics of 'children on the street' and their Teachers/Mallams should be maintained by the government. In addition, conventional teachers should be posted to impact formal education/knowledge to these children.
3. Further research should be specifically conducted to explore the information practices of parents and caregivers of 'children on the street,' as more intimate contact with this population group would allow a greater understanding of their subjective experiences.
4. Enlightenment programmes should be undertaken for stakeholders, i.e., parents, teachers/mallams, and the general public, on the need to address the psychological wellbeing of these children.

References

- Agnew, Andrea (2017). The effects of hunger on children. Retrieved from <https://www.livestrong.com>article>21> ... Accessed 30 June 2021
- Aptekar, L. & Stoecklin, D. (2013). Street children and homeless youth: A cross-cultural perspective. doi:10.1007/978-94-007-7356-1-2. Accessed 2 May 2021
- Marriage, S. C. (2014, November). Parental perceptions of young children's information behavior related to free-time activities. *ASSIST*, 1-4. Retrieved from <http://www.asis.org/asist2014/proceedings/submissions/.../247poster.pdf>. Accessed 21 June 2021
- Berge, Zane L. (2013). Barriers to communication in distance education. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 14 (1): 374-388. Retrieved from www.researchgate.net Accessed 20 April 2021
- Buchanan, S. & Tuckerman, L. (2016). The information behaviours of disadvantaged and disengaged adolescents. *Journal of documentation* 72(3): 527-548. Doi:10.1108/JD-05-2015-0060 Accessed 4 June 2021
- Burfat, F.M., Burfat, G.M. and Abro, A.A. (2012). The study of association between risk behaviours and living situations of street children in urban Sindh. *Journal of social science and humanities*. 203-221.
- Case, D. (2008). Looking for information: A survey of research on information seeking, needs, and behavior (Second edition ed.). London, UK: Academic Press.
- Chamwi, E.C. (2014). Street children Moshi: A study of the phenomenon of the street children in Moshi Tanzania: "Masoro" (Master thesis, Aalborg University Denmark). Retrieved from http://www.projekter.aau.dk/projekter/files/204661830/Masoro_2_10_2014.pdf
- Danka, J. (2016). Mapping the everyday life information needs of catholic clergy: Savolainen's ELIS model revisited. *Journal of Documentation*, 72 (3), 549-568. DOI 10.1108/JD-08-2015-0097. Accessed 11 April 2021

- Darkwah, E. & Maxwell A. (2016). Caregiver perceptions of children in their care and motivations for the care work in children's homes in Ghana: Children of God or children of white men? 66, July, 161-169. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2016.05.007>
- Granovetter, M.S. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78 (6), 1360 – 1380.
- Greyson, D.L. & Johnson, J.L. (2015) The role of information in health behavior: A scoping study and discussion of major public health models. *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 67 (12), 2831-2841. <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.23392> Accessed 8 May 2021.
- Hoechner, H. (2013). Search for knowledge and recognition: Traditional Qur'anic students (Almajirai) in Kano, Nigeria. Ibadan University, French institute for research in Africa/ Institut Francais de Recherche en Afrique (IFRA-Nigeria). Retrieved from <http://www.ifra-nigeria.org>
- Kim, J. (2016). Information practices during life transition: Korean immigrant women's everyday life information seeking and acculturation. Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). Retrieved from <http://drum.lib.umd.edu/handle/10.1016/j.childyouth.2016.05.007> Accessed from 23 April 2021
- Kitzie, V. (2017). Beyond behaviors, needs, and seeking: A qualitative investigation of information practices among individuals. Rutgers: The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick. Ann Arbor, Michigan. <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/librarianship/> Accessed 7 June 2021
- Maepa, M.P. (2021). Self-Esteem and Resilience Differences Among Street children Compared to Non-street children in Limpopo Province of South Africa: A Baseline Study. *Frontiers in Public Health*. April. Vol 9, Article 542778. www.frontiersin.org. Accessed 7 June 2021
- Mnubi-Mchombu, C. and Ocholla, D.N. (2014). Information needs and seeking behaviour of orphans, vulnerable children, and caregivers, and the role of service providers in Ohangwena and Khomas region in Namibia. 32 (1) 23-45. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/269992322> Accessed 23 April 2021
- Prasad, H.N. (2012). Information needs and users. New York: B.R. Publishing Corporation.
- Ray, S. (2017). A Street Child's Perspective: A Grounded Theory Study of How Street Children Experience and Cope with Grief. *The Qualitative Report*, 22(1), 291-308. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2017.2560> Accessed 22 June 2021
- Ryan, K. (2018). Refiguring childhood: Hannah Arendt, natality and prefigurative biopolitics. *Childhood*. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0907568218777302> Accessed May 11 2021
- Savolainen, R. (1995). Everyday life information seeking: Approaching information seeking in the context of 'way of life. *Library & Information Science Research (LISR)* 17, 259-294. Retrieved from <http://www.bogliolo.eci.ufmg.br> Accessed 11 May 2021
- Tilde, A. (2010). Discourse 268: The future of the Almajiri (2). Retrieved from <http://www.fridaydiscourse.blogspot.com/> Accessed 11 May 2021
- Todd, R. J. (2003). Adolescents of the information age: Patterns of information seeking and use, and implication for information professionals. *School Libraries Worldwide*, 9(2), 27-46.
- Vernon, David T.A. (1971). Information seeking is a natural stress situation. *Journal of Applied*

Psychology, 55(4), 359-363. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/1.1037/h0031500>

Accessed 2 May 2021

Wang, W.; Krishnan, R. and Diehl, A. (2015). Advanced and challenges in “Intelligent transportation”: The evolution of ICT to address transport challenges in developing countries. *Connections: Transport & ICT*. World Bank Group. Retrieved from <http://www.worldbank.org/transport/connections> Accessed 2 may 2021

Weber, A. (2013). Challenges affecting street children in post-conflict Northern Uganda: Case of Gulu municipality. Independent study project (ISP) collection (paper no. 16850). Retrieved 4th February 2018 from http://digital.collections.sit.edu/isp_collection/1