

## CHILD HAWKING: FATE OF THE NIGERIAN CHILD IN CONTEMPORARY TIME

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### **Abstract**

*Child hawking is one of the dreadful, dehumanizing rising phenomena that has battered image of the Nigerian child in contemporary time. The aim of the paper is to reawaken the consciousness of relevant authorities on the need to safeguard the moral integrity of the Nigerian from the perils of hawking. The paper made use of prescriptive, descriptive and analytic methods. Data were assembled through interviews and consultation of relevant books. The research discovered that, the Nigeria Child is at risk of being exposed to related dangers like rape, hunger, illiteracy, ignorance, stigma, hunger, lack of education, degeneration of spiritual life, unwanted pregnancies, contact with venereal diseases like HIV/AIDS, initiation into cultism, prostitution and host of other problems. The paper recommends that, Government, religious as well traditional rulers should join hands in condemning child hawking in its totality. Punitive measures should also be put in place for culprits in order to protect the right of child from being abused. Government should concentrate in providing adequate basic amenities in order to curtailed the influx of rural dwellers into the urban to hawk with their children. People should learn to be their brother's keeper. Security agents should be well informed to be vigilante at various check points*

*on those trafficking children, other states with the pretense of taking them to school.*

**Keywords:** Child, Hawking, Fate, Contemporary and Nigeria

### **Introduction**

We are living in a rapidly challenging world with so many multifaceted progresses and retrogressions with the hope of things being improved. Unfortunately, however, the richer are getting materially obsessed and sophisticated, while the poor are becoming poorer every day (Etuk, 2007:1). Poverty and human deprivation are the most central challenges of the development of human society especially in Nigeria, where the rich are getting obsessed with wealth while the poor are poorer and emaciated searching for means of survival through human labour. Hence all over Africa, disparities between the rich are fast rising. Fewer people are becoming successful while others disproportionately large number are struggling to survive amidst the difficult economic hardships been faced daily (Kass et al, 2007:1). Though poverty phenomenon is as old as human history which the United Nations Development Program ranked Nigeria 71<sup>st</sup> on the index of national development, with more than 70% of the population living in extreme poverty ([www.action.org/commentary/community](http://www.action.org/commentary/community)).

The Nigeria child has assumed an active role in hawking in order to raise something that the family, himself or herself can relied on. Thus, hawking has become a profession for the children of the poor, who lack basic human needs lack shelter, education, good road, schools and electricity. Even some of these amenities are there, the finances must be sought in order to improve the well beings of people. Hence, the fate of the Nigerian child is under risk of being destroyed due to exposures to suffering, hunger, diseases and starvation which he partakes in finding ways of ameliorating them by hawking. Child hawking today either forced or learn to carry out the act provided that proceeds can come after such a labourious work.

There are related factors as earlier observed which trigger child hawking such illiteracy of parents, parental force, hunger, peer group and parental influence, parental lack of love are indeed responsible for pushing Nigerian Child into hawking. Hence, it is common phenomenon

to see on daily routine how the Nigerian child future is being destroyed due to exposure to violence and hard economic challenges that the poor family had to grumbled with. Thus, the Nigerian child becomes a competitor in the hawking business where he or she experiences a lot of woes, frustrations, moral damages, disease, risk of being raped, infected with diseases, become a thug, arrogant and nuisance to the society (Contemporary Ethical Issues, 2019:1).

It is on this regards that the paper intends to exhume the intricacies surrounding the Nigerian child as a result of hawking which exposes him to so many dangers that ruined his or her moral integrity. The paper shall discuss the history of child hawking, types of child hawking, causes and consequences of child hawking and some recommendations would be preferred.

### **History of Child Hawking**

The history of child hawking is as old as the predicaments which pushes parents of such children to send them to hawk. However, to say that, this is the exact time child hawking started is to be exaggerative. Since the rise in human economic and social constraints and the need to satisfy pressing needs like food, clothing, school fees, health and other demands continued, the search for alternative become necessary. Child hawking has been ongoing especially in developing countries especially where poverty, hunger, diseases, poor economic policies, corruption, injustices, nepotism and lack schools and even insecurity worsened. Thus, these necessities gave rise to child hawking in order to solve human needs due poor human conditions.

With the quest and search for better improved means of survival many parents who are hawkers often assigned items to their children to go about hawking or remain at a particular hawking position. For most families, according to Yusuf "child hawking is an old phenomenon which has continued from an unknown time till day (Yusuf, Oral Interview). On the history of child hawking, parents or guardians of the children are themselves old in the business, which has continued as asserts Kass et al thus "poverty or poor economic power and economic materials gave rise to undated period of child hawking (2009:2).

From the forgoing, one cannot evidently trace the history of child hawking because the phenomenon is as old as those who started it in multifaceted manner. Hence, child hawking is as old as even those who put their children into it because, the phenomenon stems from both parents of the child who experienced poverty and lack of other necessities of life (Martins and Tonga, 2017:102). It is worth gainsaying that, child hawking has no definite history when it started. It is carried in virtually poor, illiterate, unemployed, marginalized, unjust and decay economic system experienced by parents and their wards from time immemorial.

### **Types of Child Hawking**

Child hawking is categorically divided in two forms; Mobile child hawking and standby or situated child hawking.

#### **I. Mobile Child Hawking**

This pertains to a process whereby the child hawks his or her products in at streets, road checkpoints, hospitals, markets, football fields, celebration venues like churches, birthdays, during or marriage feast and in houses. This type of hawking is very spectacular because, children are seen in their numbers retailing various products in groups like sachet water, soap, soup ingredients, popcorn, groundnut, minerals, apples, mangoes, oranges, fried yam, cereal drinks, minerals, cooked rice, plantains chips and so on and so forth.

#### **II. Situated or Standby Hawking**

This type of hawking is normally carried out at fixed places. It does not require the children to be mobile because, the child remains in one place. For instance, children hawk at a stale either under tree at home, in school under trees or in shops, and frying and selling of yam, potatoes, porridge, provisions, local alcohol and cereal take place. These hawkers are not mobile but remained in one place selling their items.

### **Causes of Child Hawking**

There are related caused of child hawking as far as the practice is being carried out in different forms and places. Hence some of these causes are thus examined:

#### **Poor Parenting/ Negligence**

Every child in a community whether good or bad has a home as well as parents or guardians. Thus, the home is every first window to the outside world. What the child at this level learns about hawking originated from poor parenting. The child at this level in terms of training and orientation go a long way to determine what he or she becomes tomorrow. Ogueche et al further observed that, the child due to poor parenting is taught how to hawk through observation and learning from parents, sibling particularly senior ones (2017: 169).

A lot of children go into hawking according to Dris “poor parenting is responsible for the phenomenal rise in child hawking in Nigeria today, because parent teach and encourage their wards to take after them the profession (2022). Ismail also asserts that “poor parenting is responsible for ushering children into hawking without knowing the moral implications involved in the act (2021). Many children inherit hawking as a hereditary process by which mental and physical characteristics are passed by parents to their children (Honby, 2001:561)

Peer pressure

Peer pressure is a force that gravitate children or friends together and most times for evil or negative tendencies. The desire to belong and the fear of rejection have led many children to que into hawking against their wills sometimes. According to Volobiya. My friends persuaded me with pressure to follow them hawk banana and groundnut at road block, which sometimes they contribute money and give me to buy more goods to hawk (2019).

Since there are different children engaged in hawking, many characters are expected and learnt by these children code which are taught and learnt by these children. Other behaviours are also leant especially by providing socialization models (Shishima, 2000:5).

Musa a child interviewed in Korkaye has this to say:

My friends persuaded to leave school and join them hawk with the promises, they will contribute money and give me to become rich like them. I did not tell my parents but followed their wishes and today I hawk sweets, kolanuts, biscuits and cigarettes (2019).

In another report two, Bubu (2020) opines similarly that; We are five in our group and are four from the same village and ward. One of us persuaded us to join him hawk pure water (sachet) which after sales, we were given N50 per sales of bag. Virtually, we persuaded and pressured other boys who now joined us and we are eight hawking sachet water for ALhaji Barnawa". None of us like school because we all agreed to be rich like the Alhaji soon we gather enough money to kick start our own individual business".

### **Illiteracy**

Illiteracy is a serious canker worm in the body of most hawking parents. Because these parents are illiterate and uninformed about the perils of child hawking, they teach their children the trade. Sad to say that, illiteracy has contributed immensely in absorbing children to hawk. Martins and Tonga Qtd. Barga to have reiterates that "illiteracy has contributed immensely to phenomenon of child hawking in the society. Thus, illiterate parents teach their children hawking without knowing the dangers teach their children hawking without knowing the dangers involved in it (2018:102). Abbas (2021) also asserts that "illiteracy has continued to plunged innocent children into hawking in our streets, motor parks, churches, schools, front of mosques. This is due to the fact that their parents are illiterate. Saminu also reiterate that illiteracy is a diseases which is affecting the foresights of some parents, whose thoughts is geared towards orienting their wards to engaged in hawking business (2022). Nasiru, an eight year old child also recapitulate that "my parents cannot read nor write but ask us not to go school but has not importance but hawking because you will get money than waste your time under the tree shouting" (2021).

Range of illiteracy is commonly found among poor, and less privileges parents, who strife to fend for themselves due to lack of necessities of life. Hence, since most of them dedicate time to hawking and verse versa their children also incined and join the league of illiteracy people. Thus, illiteracy has contributed a lot in queuing children to hawk because their parents are not educated nor know the value of education of educating these children on the danger of hawking. The illiteracy of parents are transferred to children because the children do not attend schools where mates were learning in their various classroom. The menace has learning

in their level of hawking in all locations contemporary ethical issues (2019:3).

### **Employment**

Unemployment is a major obstacles affecting quality life force in Nigeria in the labour market. Graduates are roaming the streets without finding jobs, which they fend for themselves. According to Abiem et al “unemployment is the state of joblessness. The unemployed suffered social stigma, misfortunes and are materially disadvantage. Hence, they are pushed to send their children to go and hawk with the view of getting something to relied on (2007:109). Unemployment also refers to the situation to work found themselves deprived by such opportunities in the existing job market (Nyameh, 2019:9).

In another assertion, according to Dimas (2022): I am a graduate of economics with three children and unemployed. I employed myself by hawking tubers of yam, locally made soap and bitter body oil which my three children hawk in bear parlours, motor parks and streets and I pay their fees and also eat from the sales proceeds (Oral interview).

Unemployment has pushed many parents and their wards to hawk certain items in order to make both ends meet. Hence, hawking is not an option but a profession to aid the family (Cletus, 2022). The government is not insincere in ameliorating the hardships of the masses, hence the rate of unemployment is definitely being tackled by hawking. Many parents do not wait for white collar jobs, instead, they devic means of fending themselves and children assist greatly in hawking business items like water, soap soup ingredients, fairly used cloths and host of other items (Ameh, 2002).

### **Poverty and suffering**

Poverty and suffering are among the lastest driving forces of child hawking in poor and development countries across the world. Many families cannot afford food, good clothe(s), health care, education, good drinking and are forced to look for alternative to fend. Hence, hawking becomes an option, where children are taught or learn the trade after their parents. Poverty nature of the poor, less privilege refers totally to lack of basic human needs.

Fairchild (1966) defines poverty as a state where the individual or family is unable to provide the amount of food, clothing and shelter necessary for independent experience (p227).

Poverty and suffering are calamities that constitute the bulb of major problems in Africa that pushed a lot of parents to send their wards to hawk in order to fend themselves from the proceeds. Hence, the unmitigated poverty and suffering by most parents in Africa today in the midst of their huge amount of human and natural potentials is one of the unresolved puzzles of life in Africa. These also include sickness, ignorance, marginalization, discrimination and oppression (nwaoru, p 199). According to Tyanni “our parents are suffering poverty and hunger and we had to send our children to go and hawk in order for our family to have food on the table (2018). Alheri also opines that “poverty and suffering is responsible for us sending our children to go and hawk so that, with the little resources we parents got from business, we may join with the proceeds of our children and take care of our family (2019). Hence, poverty revelation is seen on the repulsive faces of children emaciated or with stomach of kwashiork and dirty tattered cloth (Emeka, 2001: 191).

Many parents are experiencing poverty and suffering because, the government is not doing enough to bridge the gap between the poor and the rich, fight corruption and also provide soft term loan for small skills businessmen to benefit, hence, the poor are left to fend for themselves, send their wards hawk (Notani, 2012).

Shonpon further buttress that “poverty and suffering are inseparable and a lot of families are going through hell. Hence, the need for children to also hawk in order to support the family (2021). Bala further recapitulate that “you cannot separate poverty and suffering and man must struggle to fight them” (2021). Poverty and suffering can only be fought only if all and sundry rise to the challenges of being entrepreneurially active (2022).

## **Parental divorce**



Divorce is one of the key reasons that leads marriage in Africa to be dissolved due to reasons of infidelity, witchcraft, jealousy, gossip, poisoning, quarrels, disrespect to elders, stealing and so on. Hence, when parents who have children have divorced, their children if they are minor are left to suffer for lack of care under their single parent or step mothers. Thus, these children are meant to suffer hardship and they hawk for other people in order to get something to fend themselves. According Volabiya "my father divorced my mother and got married to another wicked and uncaring step mother who only are about her own children and neglected us. She cooks and never give us. So, we decided to plan and we met some girls who hawk groundnut cake and no fried cake and they absorbed us and we started hawking and saving money for our school uniform and other needs (2019). Another experience was reiterated Ado thus:

My friend is suffering in house because his mother was a divorce and his father hardly takes care of him except for the boy who goes to neighbor house, where he feeds and they kept mocking him. One day he met a friend who introduced him to Mr. Umar a provision store owner who used to give him confectionaries to sell in school and later pays him. He suffered much but today is a big man. (2019)

From the above reports, we come to see that divorce is a responsible factor culminating in the use of child hawking in our society today. Hence, it has continued to live hall marks of experiences on those who pass through the menace.

### **Moral Consequences Of Child Hawking**

Child hawking has numerous consequences on the Nigerian Child as shall be examined below:

It retards the emotional, intellectual, physical development of the child, and hence that of the society at large.

Hence, families under stress, poverty, produce children under stress and unhealthy experience due to hawking and other related socio-economic activities.

Hawking pollutes the moral life of the child thereby impending attainment of morally in the society.

Thus, this in turn produces a morally bankrupt society bedeviled with myriad of anti-social conduct (2018:110).

The child learn bad character like insults, disrespect, quarrel and salacious sexual discuses (Alba 2003:P38) Also to note, Girl child are expose to becoming prostitutes or sexual maniacs in the future if care is not taking; hence, many girls see all sorts of randy activities, and later practice them (oguetetal 2017:173). There is also risk of contracting HIV/AIDS when these girls are forced into sex against their wish and they are exposed to venereal diseases because of lack of protection. (Oguecheetal, 2017:173).

### **Poor performance in school**

Children who hawk do not have sufficient time to go to school, and as such, they record poor performance in their pursuit of education. In an interview with Al'amin saudat she says that "hawking has affected my academic pursuit in school. I always go late to school, sometimes after breakfast and am always flog by our discipline master for being absent from school (2018).Vahya Abo assents sadly that due to hawking on their village market day, which Friday she misses classes and has attested her ability to know how to read and write today (2021) many students, pupils if they narrate their Odeal due hawking, it is indeed sad. Because, many have left schools due to hawking (Bawa, Aiden 2021). Hawking has retarded by academic performance in school, and my uncle stopped me, and I was giving extra lesson at home after before I now measured up my mates to day (Adamu, 2021).

Most of these children who engaged in hawking perform very bad in school, because they often skip classes for hawking hence, many ages (Ogueche 174). Children who hawk often experience evil or suffering due to disposition and condition of their state of mind that create senses of or frustration (Abie metal 2007:106). Many of these children experience hunger and disses during hawking under the hot scourging sun and rainfall. Hence their features of sick Physiques are headlines captured by printed and electronic media (Iroegbu, 2004:38) Children who engage in hawking are exposed to the risk of being knocked down by vehicles on the highways. Another sad experience of hawking children is the experience of mental evil which is associated with inner

pains that the victims suffers and in many causes, is more serious than the purely physical evil and suffering.

Hence, sickness and death and inevitable, but these children are at risk to experience them any time (Abiem etal 2007:106).

Hawking children are potential thugs, drug addicts, are other related moral vices. These children are totally having different orientation outside of their homes due to contacts with alien values, which get inculcate into their memories as they see and put into practice what others do there. Hence, quality of their moral lives is affected later in life.

Hence, hawking has produce bad eggs for the society like criminals, drug addicts, prostitutes, child traffickers and social nuisance. The damages cause by the effects of hawking cannot be over emphasized spiritual.

The quality of lives of these children is repeated by hawking. Hence, these children suffer from poor spiritual lives because; they have no time for spiritual renewal with their God. Attending worship and praying with other Muslim and Christian faithful's is at risk because, they dedicate much of the time hawking. Amidst these challenges, these children answer good religious names like Elijah, Joel, Muhammad, Sarah, Mary and so on and so forth but are in active adherents of their faiths because, hawking has usurped their spiritual life and left spiritually sterile at the mercy of hawking (Idris, 2022). In an interaction with Nasiru, he asserts that "I don't have time to say my five daily Islamic prayers because I am always hawking drape fruits at army check points" (2022). Pius also says that even on Sundays, his mother fried groundnut and put it with plantain on the tray for him to go hawk (2020).

When am hawking, if it is time to my prayer, I go to an area with my goods and I pray by the side of the road or under a shade then continue my business (Buba Nutu, 2022). Another hawker replied us that "he has no time to go to church to pray, because he prays in his heart as he hawks (Jalo, 2020)".

Ismaila is a similar view also that “when I finished hawking, I say my prayer (2022)”. Hawking children are deprived of spirit filled worship because, their parents often assigned them goods to hawk, which they missed prayers or worship on Fridays or Sundays (Yamusa, 2019). Some of these children do not go to church or mosque on worshipping days. One of the parent reports us that “if we do not hawk on Sunday na sand we go chop?” (Okoro, 2022).

Due to hawking, many parent and children have no time to attend Sunday worship or Juma’at pryer. Hence their quality of their spiritual live are affected. (Dagin 2005:193).

Government should set up rehabilitation centres whose moral image at strategic places in order to rehabilitate children had been battered by hawking. Hence, parents should also be mandated to enroll their wards in school with the aim of equipping them with knowledge for a better tomorrow scholarship or free education should be made available for the poor and less privilege citizens (Martin 2020).

Government should sponsor sensitization programs that would go along way in enlightening the masses on the dreadful impacts of child hawking with the view of managing its scourges on the Nigeria child. Hence rich loaded programmes that will be bring about character formation should be well encouraged (Sylvester, 2005:196).

Government and respected traditional rulers can come up with a policy to sensitize parents on the dangers of child hawking. This program should be reiterate quarterly or annually.

Government religious as well as political leaders should have it a point of duty by assisting the less privilege in their midst in bid to cultural Wanton moral destabilization of Nigeria children due to effects of hawking. Other relevant stakeholders should also assist in bettering lives of their people with the view of giving them humanistic sense of belonging.

### **Recommendations**

Amidst some of the related problems associated with child hawking, the paper makes the following recommendations

Religious leaders should step up measures to help restore the dignity of the Nigeria child from being exposed to the wanton risk of hawking. Hence, couple should also assist by laying much emphasis on the divine provision for love for one another and protection of their right of these innocent children. Thus (Martins and Tonga, 2020:111).

Government should create more job or employment opportunities, provide active and well-furnished skill acquisition centers, good roads, water, hospital, schools and also give soft loan to medium entrepreneurs. Thus, this will help to curtailed the rate at which parents' influx into the cities in search for better conditions of livelihood (Martins and Pamu 2017:133). When these needs are well provided, child hawking will drastically reduce to a barest minimal (Mamman, Oral Interview).

Parents should serve as custodian of moral formation of their wards, and should not relent in ensuring that wards are protected from the dangers of hawking. Thus they should give sound moral training as the first teacher of the child (Opok, 1978:153) in order to curtailed the risk exposition of the child to immoral activities of the world lying, disrespect, stealing, irreligious among others parents should also learn to bring their children in the fear of God by emphasis good values for formation (Ogueche et al, 2017:175).

Security Agencies in collaboration with relevant stakeholders should monitor the influx of hawking children at motor parks, roads check points, and hospital and schools with the view of mitigating the rise of the menace (Alheri, Oral Interview). Hence, punitive measures should be put in place to deal with parent who exposed these children to the risk of hawking (Lawan, Oral Interview). Hence punitive measure agent such parent who engaged their wards into hawking should reactivate.

### **Conclusion**

That there is so much suffering, hunger disease, insecurity, shelter problems, infrastructural decay left no one with foresight to conclude that, all is okay. People have been seen struggling in various facets of life in order to make both ends meet. However, this struggle is indeed a challenging one, where children have been made to join queue of

hawkers at strategic places, which has a lot of moral implications on them, their families and the society at large. The driving enforces of poverty, disease, hunger is responsible for the rise in the menace which is as old as the aforementioned triggering factors.

In the foregoing the paper tries to examine key concepts like moral, consequential, child hawking. It went further discuss the consequential of child hawking on the Nigerian child history child hawking, types of child hawking and causes child hawking respectively. Going further, also the paper examined the moral consequential of child hawking and some preferred recommendation and conclusion were given.

The Nigerian child has suffered so much in facets of human survival struggle through involvement in hawking with the view to making both ends meet. Hence, so many factors culminated in the rise of the menace of hawking and the child should not be made suffer such fate because of the demands for means of survival. However, the right of child under the child right Aids is been abused daily, and their child suffer from the dreadful effects of hawking. All hands need to be on deck to defend the dignity of the Nigerian child, who is been exposed to the dreadful risk of hawking. Child hawking is an act of violation against human right especially on the Nigeria child, whose integrity is supposed to be protected but abused. A clarion call is that, the child should be given due respect, and his right be respect, and his right be respected and abused by relevant authorities.

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## Appendix

### List of Informants

S/n	Name	Age	Sex	Occupation	Place	Date
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Ameh, Nancy	27	Female	Student	M/Biyu	14/1/2022
Audu, Alheri	38	Male	Teacher	Lau	10/5/2022
Alkali, Punarimam	40	Female	Farmer	G/Doruwa	21/2/2021
Cletus, Monica	60	Female	Student	Sibre	8/12/2021
Bala, Lami	14	Female	Wine brewer	Pupule	3/10/2021
Bawa, Aiden	51	Male	Student	K/Napu	20/1/2021
Dimas, Dinatu	30	Female	Pupil	Jalingo	12/1/2022
Al'amin, Saudat	8	Female	Hawker	Sabon /Gida	19/10/2022
Kefas, Gloria	54	Male	Hawker	Garin-Dogo	10/5/2019
Buba, Nuhu	10	Male	Hawkwer	Iware	4/1/2018
Ado, Bawa	38	Male	Student	Bantaje	1/8/2019
Adam, Sakinatu	22	Female	Business man	Monkin	14/1/2021
Idris, Maimuna	68	Female	Business man	Nahuta	4/1/2022
Idi, Hadiza	58	Female	Housemaid	Zing	2/11/2019
Tyani, Maryam	29	Female	Housewife	Hamza	28/12/2020
Mamman, Talatu	38	Female	Hawker	Monkin	2/4/2019
Ismail, Ronald	52	Male	Pupil	Shavon	9/1/2021
Jalo, Amos	12	Male	Farmer	Apawa	3/11/2021
Gang, Nyawari	13	Male	Hawker	Kofai	11/1/2019
Notani, Aisha	58	Male	Custom off	Nukkai	24/4/2021



Lawan, Danladi	43	Male	Housewife	Kodong	8/1/2022
Nana, Nawati	45	Female	Hawker	Mallam Gana	24/4/2020
Nasiru, Tijjani	38	Male	Hawker	Kpanti- Napo	10/1/2020
Pius, Nathan	10	Male	Wine brewer	Kofai	2/11/2021
Shompon, Waawi	9	Female	Farmer	Lankaviri	3/12/2019
Martin, Adamu	48	Male	Applicant	Mutum/Bi yu	3/2/2020
Swaibu, Blessing	68	Female	Pupil	Kona	11/1/2022
Alheri, Notani	16	Male	Hawker	Kofai	9/2/2021
Okoro, Chineye	15	Male	Housewife	Gindin- Doruwa	12/1/21
Vahme, Saratu	68	Female	Pupil	Bali	28/10/21
Vahya, Martha	34	Female	Student	Lamma	28/10/21
Volobiya, Ernest	15	Female	Hawker	Dong	25/12/21
Yusuf, Fa'iza	68	Female	Hawker	Pupule	2/12/21
Wakili, Maryamu	20	Female	Housewife	Yali	19/3/21
Yamusa, Joy	63	Female	Rtd Police	Amadu	3/8/19