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VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMMES AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF STREET CHILDREN IN CALABAR METROPOLIS, CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated vocational training programmes and economic empowerment of street children in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State, Nigeria. Three research questions and null hypotheses were formulated to achieve the purpose of the study. The research design adopted for this study was Ex-post facto. The population of the study consisted of all street children in Calabar Metropolis with a total of 300 subjects. A sample of three hundred (300) respondents were used for the study. Census sampling technique was adopted for the study. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled: "Vocational Training Programmes and Economic Empowerment of Street Children (VTPEESCQ)." Data collected was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis at .05 level of significance. The result showed that there was a significant relationship between barbing skills acquisition programme, plumbing skills acquisition programme, furniture-making skills acquisition programme and economic empowerment of street children in the study area. These findings formed the basis of the recommendations made in this study that, Government agencies (e.g., Ministry of Youth & Sports, Social Welfare, or Skill Acquisition) should integrate barbing skill development into youth empowerment and poverty reduction policies. Include barbing in national and state-level Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) curricula and strategies. Offer scholarships, stipends, or conditional cash transfers to trainees, particularly street children, to reduce dropout rates due to financial hardship

Keywords: Vocational Training Programmes and Economic Empowerment

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Introduction

Economic empowerment in the 21st century is seen as a sine-qua-non for any progress minded society. Therefore, empowerment of street children is an important and contemporary issue in the present time. Inevitably, economic empowerment is of paramount importance to street children as this will help them come out of the street.

The expectation of every society is that all its citizens function maximally as production members of the society. Any society, whose greater percentage of the labour force is unskilled with a greater number of children found in the streets, is bound to suffer setbacks in its development drive (Federal Ministry of Youth Development, 2008). The study area has a total of population of about 335 children under the age of 14 on the streets (Vessel of Mercy Transformation Empowerment Initiative Calabar, Cross River State, 2019). Worldwide children are engaged in some form of labour with hazardous conditions that hamper their health, emotional and psychological development.

The exposure of the child to this tough condition is in no doubt a consequence of house hold poverty. The children assume the roles of breadwinners at an early age and this predisposes them psychologically to attain adulthood. This is because they have been denied childhood care, love, moral support and guidance that are the rudiment of developmental processes for proper socialisation. These street children who are unskilled, constitute a social menace in the state and are therefore quite vulnerable to crime and are often associated with vices such as drug abuse/addiction, prostitution, armed robbery and gangsterism etc which can also lead to mental cases, depression and psychological problems with severe security implications in the state. The presence of different groups of these street children on the streets (area boys) such as "skolombo" "Bakassi" boys among others poses security threats in the state that can even scare investors. Street children are children mostly coming from poor and migrant families. Consequently, unemployment, difficulties to adopt the city life, unfavorable environment for living can be counted for the reasons children end up on the street. Moreover, cities do not have enough resources to provide the formal type of education and health services for a constantly enlarging population of children on the street, therefore the frustration led many children to street life (Kulca, Yusuf Ahmet, Korkmazlar-Oral, 2003). The facts stated above evidently reveal that the problem of most street children is strongly associated with poor socio-economic factors, implying that if efforts are made to improve the socio-economic status of street children through vocational training in any part of the globe, it may serve as panacea to the problem of street children.

This scenario demonstrates the need to investigate the influence of vocational training programmes on economic empowerment of street children in the study area. Vocational training

programmes are diverse and adapted to the various needs and circumstance of street children to facilitate their chances of getting something doing (Ngwu, 2013). Vocational training provides appropriate training that is needed to equip children or individual with knowledge and skills for economic empowerment. Helen, Catherine and Ubana (2025) opined that digital learning platforms in enhancing adult literacy skills acquisition play a pivotal role to cushioning economic empowerment and promoting economic understanding. Helen, Ubana and Grace (2025) asserts that literacy education is a key component for economic development. Some of the vocational skills training programmes include; beads making, computer literacy, skills, catering, plumbing, block laying, painting and decoration, hair dressing/barbing, fashion designing, furniture-making, barbing, hat making etc. becoming experts in any of the above skills will automatically empower the street child. For instance, furniture-making has been identified as one of the major vocational skills trainings among unemployed children. It is one of the most important home accessories because it adds style and elegance beside their primary functional designs. Furniture is in various forms, such as, doors, tables, chairs, decorations, cabinets and shelves, cupboards, beds, etc.

Barbing training skill is one of the ways of economic empowerment for youth in the 21st century. According to Wesseh (2014), barbing is one of the trades that people overlook, but it is a fast-money-making trade that youth need to pay attention to in order to avoid roaming about the streets. He maintained that barbing training skill is one of the key factors that brings about one's economic empowerment and national development. Countries faced with the challenges of street children can promotion barbing skills in order to prepare them for self-employment to avoid the poverty rate across the nation. Achieving development through skills is a significant tool for economic, social, political, cultural and environmental development in a growing and developing country (Cecilia, Ubana & Jerry 2025).

According to former researches conducted in Turkey, it is suggested that street children are mostly coming from poor and migrant families. Consequently, unemployment, difficulties to adopt the city life, unfavorable environment for living can be counted for the reasons children end up on the street. Moreover, cities do not have enough resources to provide the formal type of education and health for a constantly enlarging population, therefore the frustration led many children to street life (Kulca, Yusuf Ahmet, Korkmazlar-Oral, 2003). Konanç in Pehlivanli (2008), conducted the first research about street children in 1988, in Turkey; her findings were quite striking. In that research, she surveyed 233 children under the age of 15 in Ankara. According to the results, 52 % of the children decided to live on the street due to economic problems at home. 69.9 % started to work before the age of 11, since they earn little

money; they frequently have the tendency to change job. In addition, 20 % of their mothers were stated to be illiterate; fathers' education level was far below the average of Turkey of that time. The facts stated above evidently reveal that the problem of most street children is strongly associated with poor socio-economic factors, implying that if efforts are made to improve the socio-economic status of street children through empowerment with barbing skills in any part of the globe, it will serve as panacea to the problem of street children. Skills acquisition develop the economic capability of street children by empowering them from a deplorable state of unskilled, poor and unemployable condition to sound economic and social living, thereby, removing them from the street; curbing restiveness; crime and poverty (Aminu, 2009). Community education/skill is a vital approach to promoting economic empowerment and community goals in a developing country (Augustine, Ubana, Rose, and George). Thus, skill acquisition is an antidote for the economic empowerment of street children, idleness, and self-reliance (Ogbodo, 2009).

Plumbing skills through vocational skills training enables people the install, repair and maintain pipes, fixtures and other plumbing equipment used for water distribution and waste water disposal in residential, commercial and industrial buildings as a noble means of earning income. Thus, plumbing skills can be considered a perfect gateway into the working world for such children. There are many economic opportunities for plumbers today. Some plumbers work for companies in the construction industry, as well as for plumbing companies, while others are independent contractors working on a self-employed basis. Asor, Ubana, & Abuokwen (2022) stressed that supervision and securing is the way of guiding, stimulating, improving and overseeing activities and skills of trainees efficient and effective outcome. Street children empowered with such economic opportunities through vocational training in plumbing can be transformed from the hazards of street life to responsible living if supervised and properly secured with the requisite equipment and resources, having the ability to fend for themselves, support family and contribute to the development of society.

According to Illinois Plumbing Consultants (2017), plumbing training can increase one's potential income, and that brings benefits in everyday life. With better training, one can get better employment opportunities with a good pay package resulting to other socio-economic benefits like affording good accommodation, education, family life, mean of mobility and establishment of personal business venture. Plumbing is a good and rewarding career with great financial benefits. In the same vein, Ben (2010) added that skill acquisition is important for preventing the youths from becoming social misfits because youths who have acquired skills get gainfully employed and help to arrest anti-social vices such as arm robbery, cultism, gansterism, drug trafficking and abuse,

among others. The author also noted that acquisition of skills by individuals not only provides them with financial security, but also provides them with psychological security. Conversely, Osinem in Ben (2010), stressed that the root of poverty is joblessness, and the root of joblessness is lack of occupational skills. It is therefore implied from the authors assertions that vocational skills training for street children is a worthwhile remedy to alleviate them from the down trodden ills of poverty leading them to street life.

Furniture is one of the most important home accessories because it adds style and elegance beside their primary functional designs. Wooden furniture are usually present in homes, offices and social infrastructure buildings such as schools, hotels, hospitals, etc. They contribute to the beautification and aesthetics of the place. Furniture are in various forms, such as, doors, tables, chairs, decorations, cabinets and shelves, cupboards, beds, etc. Ngui, Agrawal and Voon (2011) opined that furniture has the highest value-added component among the major wood-based products. Wooden furniture vocation contribute substantially to development in tropical countries, producing important economic benefits and playing a significant role in promoting economic empowerment of especially the poor masses on the street. The increasing demand for wood furniture has made it a lucrative business for those who possess the skills. Wood furniture making occupations have been identified as a veritable tool in poverty alleviation, because of it potency in revenue generation, job creation, investment attraction and creation of market for local products, (Olorunnisola, 2000). It represents the major market for wood products in Nigeria. Arowosoge and Tee (2010), noted that as wood furniture sector develops, it creates employment, generates a trained work-force, and contributes to the development of physical and economic empowerment of street children who avail themselves to be trained on the skills.

Bello and Mijinyawa (2010) observed that wood furniture makers in Nigeria are empowered with the requisite skills to start and operate their small and medium scale production furniture businesses. This furniture maker operates their workshops at roadside and within residential areas in cities and sub-urban settlements as part of economic empowerment and independence. Arowosoge and Tee (2010), reported a vocational training in furniture making have capacity to solve some social problems by providing skilled and unskilled employment in the neighbourhood, and regenerating street and slum children into human capital resources. For this to happen, all hands must be put on deck, both government agencies and social and economic institutions, NGOs, well meaningful citizen must be involved in the effort to provide street children with vocational skills with the view of relocating back to their homes for responsible living. Helen, Ubana, Glory and Emmanuel (2024) asserts that skill competence promotes

growth professionalism and increases transformation in an organization and community.

In line with the above, a furniture firm, Classic Entrance, Kaduna, Published on PUNCH Newspaper, dated Saturday September 28, 2019, that the training of 3,000 Quranic education pupils, popularly known as `Amlajiri', in furniture making just commenced, to empower them with skills to be self-reliant. The initiative, according to Mr Mathew Adejo, the Chief Executive Officer of the firm, is aimed at keeping them busy and off the streets. Adejo, at a ceremony to formally open the training, said that the scheme would last for five years, with 50 trained furniture makers graduated every four months. Adejo said that the training would be conducted in collaboration with JBN Furniture Academy, Kaduna. He added that beside furniture making, the beneficiaries would also be trained on soap making, shoe making and painting to empower them with additional sources of income. He explained that the training was also designed to help the beneficiaries establish their businesses, adding that items produced during the training would be sold and the money offered to the trainees as seed capital. According to him, the goal of the training is to create direct employment for the Almajiris as well as orphans and other vulnerable groups. "Our desire is to improve the livelihood of the less privileged by providing them with economic empowerment and job opportunities (Adejo, 2019). Ubana, Glory, Undie, Elizabeth (2024) opined that artificial intelligence promote skills and competence in a developing state and helps to reducing work stress and tension.

Despite all efforts by the government, non-governmental and private individuals to curb the menace of street children through vocational skill training, the problem still persist in the study area. It is against this background that the researcher sought to investigate the extent to which vocational training programmes could influence economic empowerment of street children in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State.

Statement of the problem

Street children are among the most vulnerable and marginalized populations in urban areas, and Calabar Metropolis is no exception. These children, often displaced by poverty, family disintegration, abuse, or orphanhood, live and work on the streets under precarious conditions. They engage in menial activities such as hawking, begging, scavenging, or petty crime just to survive. While various governmental and non-governmental interventions have attempted to address the issues facing street children in Calabar, there has been insufficient focus on long-term solutions centered on economic empowerment.

The lack of economic empowerment opportunities for street children contributes to the perpetuation of poverty and social exclusion. Most interventions tend to focus on temporary relief—such as feeding programs or shelter—without addressing the root

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causes of their vulnerability or providing them with sustainable livelihood skills. This deficiency in holistic intervention strategies leads to a cycle where street children grow into marginalized adults without formal education, marketable skills, or social support systems, thus continuing the cycle of poverty and urban insecurity. Moreover, there is a gap in data and understanding regarding the most effective economic empowerment strategies suitable for this demographic. Challenges such as stigma, lack of access to education, absence of legal identity or guardianship, and inadequate vocational training further inhibit their ability to benefit from mainstream economic programs. Without targeted economic interventions that consider their unique needs, the efforts to rehabilitate and reintegrate street children into society will remain largely ineffective.

Calabar, being a major urban and tourist center in Cross River State, is particularly impacted by the visibility and socioeconomic impact of street children. Their presence not only raises humanitarian concerns but also poses risks to public safety, urban development, and tourism. Therefore, it becomes imperative to explore sustainable economic empowerment models that can transform these vulnerable children into productive members of society. Sequel to this, the study sought to ascertain the extent to which vocational training programmes economically empowered street children in the study area.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate vocational training programmes and economic empowerment of street children in Calabar Metropolis of Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. examine the extent to which barbing skills acquisition programme relate to economic empowerment of street children in Calabar Metropolis.
2. ascertain the extent to which plumbing skills acquisition programme relate to economic empowerment of street children in Calabar Metropolis.
3. determine the extent to which furniture-making skills acquisition programme relate to economic empowerment of street children in Calabar Metropolis.

Research questions

The following questions were raised to give direction to the study;

1. To what extent do barbing skills acquisition programme relate to economic empowerment of street children in Calabar Metropolis?
2. To what extent do plumbing skills acquisition programme relate to economic empowerment of street children in Calabar Metropolis?
3. To what extent do furniture-making skills acquisition programme relate to economic empowerment of street children in Calabar Metropolis?

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Statement of hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between barbing skills acquisition programme and economic empowerment of street children in Calabar Metropolis.
2. There is no significant relationship between plumbing skills acquisition programme and economic empowerment of street children in Calabar Metropolis.
3. There is no significant relationship between furniture-making skills acquisition programme and economic empowerment of street children in Calabar Metropolis.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was the ex-post facto research design. Isangedighi, Joshua, Asim and Ekuri (2004) asserts that ex-post facto is a systematic empirical inquiry in which the scientist or the researcher does not have direct control of independent variables because their manifestations have already occurred or because they are inherently not manipulate-able. The reason for the adoption of this design is because, no direct control of the variables is possible, neither experimental manipulation nor random assignment can be used by the researcher. The designation "ex-post facto" serves to indicate that the study in question is conducted after variations in the independent variable(s) have already been determined in the natural course of events. The study area for this research was Calabar Metropolis in Cross River State, Nigeria.

The population of the study consists of all street children in Calabar Metropolis with a total of 300 subjects (Vessel of Mercy Transformation Empowerment Initiative Calabar, Cross River State, 2019.). Census sampling technique was used. The sample of the study was made up of three hundred (300) respondents in the study area. Due to the smallness of the numbers the whole population was used. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled: "Questionnaire on Vocational Training Programmes and Economic Empowerment of Street Children (QVTPEESC)." The questionnaire was divided into two sections 'A' and 'B'. Section 'A' was designed to collect respondents' personal data such as sex, age, type of skill, qualification and duration of training. Section 'B' was made up of 25 items measured on a four-point modified Likert-type scale designed to measure the sub-variables of the study. The face validity was employed for the validity of the instrument. Cronbach Alpha method was used to determine the reliability of the instruments. The scores obtained ranged from 0.71 to .81, which revealed that the instruments were reliable. Data collected was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis.

Presentation of results

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between barbing skills acquisition programme and economic empowerment of street children in Calabar Metropolis.

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The independent variable in this hypothesis is barbing skills acquisition programme while the dependent variable is economic empowerment of street children. The variables were measured continuously. To test this hypothesis, Pearson product moment correlation was used and the result is presented in table 1.

Table 1: Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between barbing skills acquisition programme and economic empowerment of street children (N= 300)

Variable	∑x ∑y	∑x² ∑y²	∑xy	r-cal	
Barbing skills acquisition programme		4957	7849	967	0.5
Economic empowerment of street children	4227	8477			

* Significant at .05, critical r= .133, df= 298.

The result of the data analysis as presented in Table 1 revealed that the calculated r-value of 0.50 was greater than the critical r-value of 0.133 at .05 level of significance with 298 degrees of freedom. The result of the analysis was significant since the calculated value was greater than the critical value. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there was a significant relationship between barbing skills acquisition programme and economic empowerment of street children in the study area.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between plumbing skills acquisition programme and economic empowerment of street children in Calabar Metropolis. The independent variable in this hypothesis is plumbing skills acquisition programme while the dependent variable is economic empowerment of street children. The variables were measured continuously. To test this hypothesis, Pearson product moment correlation was used and the result is presented in table 2.

Table 2: Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between plumbing skills acquisition programme and economic empowerment of street children (N= 300)

Variable	∑x ∑y	∑x² ∑y²	∑xy	r-cal
Plumbing skills acquisition programme	4674	8573		
			96406	0.48
Economic empowerment of street children	4227	8477		

* Significant at .05, critical r= .133, df= 298.

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The data analysis of the analysis as represented in table 2 reveals that the calculated r-value of 0.48 was greater than the critical r-value of 0.133 at .05 level of significance with 298 degree of freedom. The result of the analysis is significant since the calculated value was greater than the critical value. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there was a significant relationship between plumbing skills acquisition programme and economic empowerment of street children in the study area.

Ho3: There is no significant relationship between furniture-making skills acquisition programme and economic empowerment of street children in Calabar Metropolis.

The independent variable in this hypothesis is furniture-making skills acquisition programme while the dependent variable is economic empowerment of street children. The variables were measured continuously. To test this hypothesis, Pearson product moment correlation was used and the result is presented in table 3.

Table 3: Pearson product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between furniture-making skills acquisition programme and economic empowerment of street children (N= 300)

Variable	$\sum x$ $\sum y$	$\sum x^2$ $\sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	r-cal
Furniture-making skills acquisition programme	4386	8653		
			97148	0.42
Economic empowerment of street children	4227	8477		

* Significant at .05, critical r=.133, df=298.

The result of the analysis is presented in table 3 shows that the calculated r-value of 0.42was greater than the critical r-value of 0.1133 at .05 level of significance with 298 degrees of freedom. The result of the analysis was significant since the calculated value was greater than the critical value. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there was a significant relationship between furniture-making skills acquisition programme and economic empowerment of street children in the study area.

Discussion of findings

The result of the hypothesis one showed that there was a significant relationship between barbing skills acquisition programme and economic empowerment of street children in the study area. The finding of this study is in line with Wesseh (2014), who observed that barbing is one of the trades that people

overlook, but it is a fast-money-making trade that youth need to pay attention to in order to avoid roaming about the streets. He maintained that barbing training skill is one of the key factors that brings about one's economic empowerment and national development. Countries faced with the challenges of street children can promotion barbing skills in order to prepare them for self-employment to avoid the poverty rate across the nation.

Vocational skills like barbing constitute about 30-35% of the population and create most of the services others pay for and enjoy. The idea of training street children to acquire barbing skills as means of economic empowerment is critical to raising functional and responsible youths who will meaningfully contribute to the development of the nation. Barbing skill acquisition is key to grassroots empowerment since a greater percentage of individuals and households utilize and consistently pay for the services of barbers on daily basis (Akosile, 2007).

More so, training street children to acquire barbing skills can address their unemployment problem by providing them with self-sustaining jobs for responsible living in society (API Smart Brief, 2007). Consequently, Uwaifo (2009) noted that vocational and technical skills enhance the relevance and functionality of individuals in the society, promote their economic survival and vibrancy and thereby, play a vital and indispensable role in the development of the society. Skills acquisition develop the economic capability of street children by empowering them from a deplorable state of unskilled, poor and unemployable condition to sound economic and social living, thereby, removing them from the street; curbing restiveness; crime and poverty (Aminu, 2009). Thus, skill acquisition is an antidote for the economic empowerment of street children, idleness, and self-reliance (Ogbodo, 2009).

The result of the hypothesis two revealed that there was a significant relationship between plumbing skills acquisition programme and economic empowerment of street children in the study area. The findings of this study are in with (Plumbing Industry Registration Board (*PIRB)*, 2018), which opined that street children can acquire Plumbing skills through vocational skills training to enable them install, repair and maintain pipes, fixtures and other plumbing equipment used for water distribution and waste water disposal in residential, commercial and industrial buildings as a noble means of earning income.

In the same vein, Ben (2010) added that skill acquisition is important for preventing the youths from becoming social misfits because youths who have acquired skills get gainfully employed and help to arrest anti-social vices such as arm robbery, cultism, gansterism, drug trafficking and abuse, among others. The author also noted that acquisition of skills by individuals not only provides them with financial security, but also provides them with psychological security. Conversely, Osinem in Ben (2010), stressed that the root of poverty is joblessness, and the root

of joblessness is lack of occupational skills. It is therefore implied from the authors assertions that vocational skills training for street children is a worthwhile remedy to alleviate them from the down trodden ills of poverty leading them to street life.

One of the advantages of training street children to acquire skills in plumbing in the midst of varied vocational and technical skills is the reliability of the career. Regardless of the economic situation in the country, there will always be a need for plumbers' services because of its relevance to environmental sanitation and healthy living. Therefore, creating opportunities for income generation (Plumbing Industry Registration Board (*PIRB*, 2018**).** Another worthwhile reason to consider plumbing skills as a means of economically empowering and getting street children off the street for better living is because plumbing training can help to increase the potential earnings of its clientele, street children in this sense. According to Illinois Plumbing Consultants (2017), plumbing training can increase one's potential income, and that brings benefits in everyday life. With better training, one can get better employment opportunities with a good pay package resulting to other socio-economic benefits like affording good accommodation, education, family life, mean of mobility and establishment of personal business venture. Plumbing is a good and rewarding career with great financial benefits.

The result of the hypothesis three indicated that there was a significant relationship between furniture-making skills acquisition programme and economic empowerment of street children in the study area. In consonance with the findings, Agrawal and Voon (2011) opined that furniture has the highest value-added component among the major wood-based products. Wooden furniture vocation makes a substantial contribution to development in tropical countries, producing important economic benefits and playing a significant role in promoting economic empowerment of especially the poor masses on the street. The increasing demand on wood furniture has made it a lucrative business for those who possess the skills. Wood furniture making occupations have been identified as a veritable tool in poverty alleviation, because of it potency in revenue generation, job creation, investment attraction and creation of market for local products, (Olorunnisola, 2000). It represents the major market for wood products in Nigeria. Arowosoge and Tee (2010), noted that as wooden furniture sector develops, it creates employment, generates a trained work-force, and contributes to the development of physical and economic empowerment of street children who avail themselves to be trained on the skills.

Arowosoge and Tee (2010), reported a vocational training in furniture making has the capacity to solve some social problems by providing skilled and unskilled employment in the

neighbourhood, and regenerating street and slum children into human capital resources. For this to happen, all hands must be put on deck, both government agencies and social and economic institutions, NGOs, well meaningful citizen must be involved in the effort to provide street children with vocational skills with the view of relocating back to their homes for responsible living.

Conclusion

The issue of street children in Calabar Metropolis presents a multifaceted challenge that requires urgent, strategic, and sustainable intervention. Vocational training programmes have emerged as one of the most promising tools for the economic empowerment and social reintegration of these vulnerable youths. Through skill acquisition in areas such as plumbing, barbing tailoring, carpentry, welding, hairdressing, ICT, and other trades, street children are given the opportunity to break the cycle of poverty, homelessness, and social exclusion.

Findings indicate that when vocational training is delivered in a structured, supportive, and inclusive environment—coupled with psychosocial support, mentorship, and access to start-up capital—street children are not only able to acquire market-relevant skills but also demonstrate the ability to become economically self-reliant. These interventions also contribute positively to reducing urban crime rates, youth unemployment, and the societal costs associated with neglecting this demographic.

However, despite the clear benefits, several barriers hinder the effectiveness of vocational training programs in Calabar. These include inadequate funding, lack of coordination among stakeholders, limited access to training centers, social stigma, and insufficient post-training support such as business development services or job placement. Moreover, without addressing foundational issues such as shelter, education, healthcare, and psychological trauma, vocational training alone cannot achieve lasting results.

To maximize impact, vocational training initiatives must be integrated into a broader economic empowerment framework that includes life skills education, legal protection, financial inclusion, and continuous mentorship. Furthermore, partnerships among government agencies, NGOs, community-based organizations, and the private sector are essential for scaling successful models and ensuring sustainability.

In conclusion, vocational training programmes hold transformative potential for the economic empowerment of street children in Calabar Metropolis. If strategically implemented and holistically supported, they can serve as a vital pathway toward restoring dignity, fostering independence, and creating opportunities for a better future for these forgotten members of society. The success of such programs is not only a reflection of societal compassion but also a critical investment in the social and economic development of the

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region as a whole.

Recommendations

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

1. Government agencies (e.g., Ministry of Youth & Sports, Social Welfare, or Skill Acquisition) should integrate barbing skill development into youth empowerment and poverty reduction policies. Include barbing in national and state-level Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) curricula and strategies. Offer scholarships, stipends, or conditional cash transfers to trainees, particularly street children, to reduce dropout rates due to financial hardship. Create or support micro-finance programs or startup grant schemes to help trainees launch their own barbing businesses post-training. Barbing skill acquisition, when supported and scaled by government and NGO-led initiatives, has the potential to economically empower thousands of vulnerable individuals in Calabar Metropolis. With a holistic approach that includes funding, training, certification, mentorship, and post-training support, these programs can reduce youth unemployment, prevent streetism, and promote inclusive economic development. Collaborative action among stakeholders is essential to maximize the social and economic impact of this practical and sustainable skill.
2. Plumbing is a high-demand vocational skill that offers strong potential for sustainable employment and entrepreneurship. When supported by targeted government policies and NGO initiatives, plumbing training can significantly uplift disadvantaged populations, reduce youth unemployment, and enhance infrastructural development. Through a coordinated approach involving funding, training, mentorship, certification, and job placement, plumbing can serve as a powerful pathway to economic empowerment and social transformation—particularly in urban centers like Calabar Metropolis.
3. Furniture making is a practical, high-demand skill that, when harnessed effectively through government and NGO collaboration, can serve as a powerful engine of economic empowerment. With the right training, tools, and support systems, vulnerable individuals can transition from dependency to self-reliance, contributing to their families, communities, and the broader economy. A strategic, inclusive, and well-funded approach will ensure the sustainable success of furniture-making empowerment programs in Calabar Metropolis and beyond.

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