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## Effect of Street Trade among School-Going Girls in Kenema City, Sierra Leone

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### ABSTRACT

The prevalence of street trading both at the national and international level has become a global concern and thus undermined economic development. School-going girls in Sierra Leone are the most vulnerable and their involvement in street trading cannot be over-emphasized. Street trading is the selling of goods or food items along the road, footway, or area without legal authority and it is normally associated with parents sending children of school age to trade as a way of boosting family income. This study investigates the effects of street trading on girls-child education in Kenema City. Similarly, challenges associated with street trading, its impact on girls-child education, and possible recommendations for curbing street trading were pinpointed. Sixty (60) respondents were interviewed in all, 50 school-going girls within the age bracket of 5-18 years and 10 parents (26 years and above). The findings of the study will be useful to the Government of Sierra Leone, Non-governmental organizations, policy-making institutions, and the general public. This study will also provide an insight on the causes of the street trade by school-going girls and suggest recommendations to curb this activity in Kenema city, Sierra Leone.

### INTRODUCTION

Africa has become the breeding ground for street trading and Sierra Leone is not an exception from this global trend and girl children are the most vulnerable in terms of street trading. This exacerbating trend has become a global concern and it demands global effort to panacea this excruciating ill. The term "Street trade" is used interchangeably with "street vendor", "hawkers" and "peddlers" (Alfers, 2015). According to (Austin, 1994; Bhowmik, 2007), a Street trader is a person that sells goods for public consumption without a permanent location or structure for his or her goods. According to the "UN Convention on the Rights of Child", a child is defined as any person below 18 years (Committee, 2003). Child labor is viewed as an anti-child right, has been described as any paid or unpaid labor that deprived a child of his/her fundamental human right. This labor does not include domestic chores as long as it does infringe on the child's development and fundamental right (Fontana & Grugel, 2015; UNICEF, 2004). Street trading is one of the leading economic activities and forms a significant part of the small and medium enterprises in Sierra Leone. It also employed about 60% of the youthful age of Sierra Leone's population. In Sierra Leone, street trading continues to grow rapidly as a result of unplanned economic, unemployment, and environmental factors. About 70 percent of Sierra Leoneans are poor, unemployed, and deprived, and thus they lived below the poverty line of \$1.25 (Dugguh, 2014; Kokofele & Junior, 2019). The problem of street trading is escalating and alarming in Sierra Leone and the proportion of street traders is increasing at a geometrical rate in cities, especially in Kenema city. In Kenema city which is Sierra Leone's third biggest city, the prevalence of street trading

in the city is primarily as a result of unemployment, rural-urban migration, school dropout and poverty. Street trading has grown increasingly in many urban areas in Sierra Leone and it has become an alternative to less deprived family members as only and true source of income to supplement family responsibilities.

Over the years, street trading has had a serious implication on school-going girls globally, especially in developing countries and this phenomenon has transcended beyond national to global concerns. According to (Kalhan, 2007; Watch, 2004), India has the largest hawker in the world of about 15 million while Pakistan records 7.5 million hawkers. The geometric increase in street trade can be associated with many factors such as poverty, unemployment, inflation, and low wages for workers. The peril of street trade has been visible in public places such as vehicle parks, garages, market squares, and other public outlets. The above-named challenges have been compromised with schooling making education difficult for these girls and this has attracted national and international organizations (Aderinto, 2000; Dovey, Fitzgerald, & Choi, 2001). This situation has affected the girls' schooling and has made school life horrendous by sharing school time with trade. Education being part of a child's development has been frustrated by compromising school time with trade thereby resulting in low academic performance, poor study habits, fatigue, and low self-esteem.

In an extreme case, some children are forced out of school for a term or a year and by the time they return to school, they will be too big among their classmates thereby becoming victims of mockery and bullying. All these derisive actions will negatively affect the psychology of the school-going girls thereby developing school phobia. It is against this background, this research seeks

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to unveil the effects of street trading and also suggest strategies to ameliorate the problems of street trading on girls-child education in Sierra Leone.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies show that poverty is one of the reasons why parents send their children to work, but many other factors in low or no income households will co-determine whether to send their children out to work. Further literature revealed that a female headed household is another determinant of street hawking. Children living in a female headed household according to (Buvinić & Gupta, 1997) are at greater risk of poverty because of male migration to the city or death of a male adult in the household. The reason for this is that female in some societies lack access to education, land and other assets. Buvinić & Gupta's study shows that there is a greater incident of children's economic activities among children whose mothers are not educated compared to children whose mother had some education. However, the girls formed a huge part of the street trading population and are plagued with challenges such as rape, eviction, sexual harassment, confiscation of goods, road accidents, thieves other street misfortune (Bromley, 2000; Mitullah, 2004). In developing countries, street trading is more common with people with less privilege and opportunities and most of these people fall within the following categories; widows, orphans, low-income earners, and uneducated and unskilled citizens (Page & Söderbom, 2012). Traditionally, girls involved in street trading normally carry their goods on heads and in most cases call the attention of passers-by with persuading or enticing sound so their goods can be sold. This method of advertising goods sometimes is accompanied by hand-bells or mini-musical set as a way of attracting the attention of pedestrians (Asiedu, 2008). Many scholars debated on how the indecent work of children can be eradicated or reduce, lots of studies suggests increment in household income and making school attractive for children in order to discourage child's work. (Edmonds & Pavcnik, 2005) reviewed that the prevalence can de-cline rapidly with the improvement of households living standards, that is, family income rise in response to trade liberalization, the work child do response to unexpected changes within the family and ineffective or expensive schools associated with poverty leave children with few option other than to work. For the fact that attention is focused on the future development of a child that work, the view ignore the reality of life for

many poor children in poor countries where schools are inaccessible nearby even if they are available, one need to think about the poor quality and discrimination and restriction of labour market opportunities that result to low returns of education (Kempe Ronald, 2005). Kempe further argued that circumstances of street hawking can be positive in a way that it teaches self-reliance, responsibility and traditional skills just like children in the industrial world who work after school or during the holiday. Additionally, (White, 1994) asserted that eradication of all forms of work from the lives of children and young workers should not be proper focus of attention, rather there is need to understand better the natures and problems of child and youth employment, identify types of work and the work relations which constitute an abuse of these categories of worker, and support the effort of working children in trying to improve their conditions of life and work. Furthermore, Street hawking may not be eliminated in a society where there is high degree of inequality. According to (Satz, 2003), inequality can occur between societies or within the families where a child will have to sacrifice his/her education for the sake of other children within the family. Viewing the harmful outcome of street hawking, Satz explained that, the nature of harm depend on the forms of work the child is doing.

## METHOD AND RESULTS

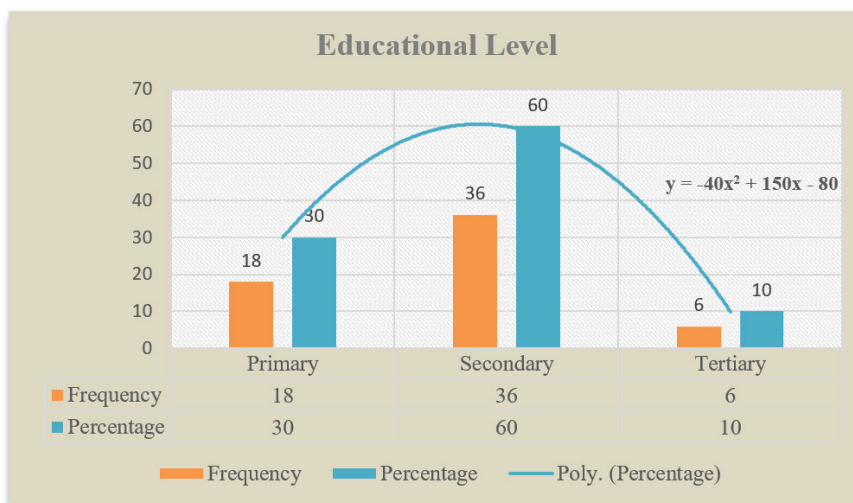
This research employs the descriptive methods and according to (Anderson & Arsenault, 2005; Creswell, 1999), descriptive research explores and gathers first-hand information about the present existing condition. To formulate sound and logical conclusions and recommendations, both qualitative and quantitative approaches were implemented. The quantitative approach was focused on numerical findings while the qualitative approach was focused on personal observations. This study uses closed and open-ended questions to solicit the required information. The questionnaire was well structured and divided into three parts for parents/guardians, students and school authorities so as to evaluate the effects of street trading among school-going girls in the study areas.

On the other hand, the interview approach was conducted on street traders with special reference to school-going girls in Kenema City. The respondents were randomly selected from different schools and major streets within the study area. The interview was conducted in a semi-formal way using the country's lingua franca (Krio) which

**Table 1:** Educational level of respondents

Study Area	Educational Level	No. of Respondents	Percentage
KENEMA CITY	Primary	18	30
	Secondary	36	60
	Tertiary	6	10
	University	0	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: 2021 Survey



**Figure 1:** Showing the educational level of respondents

is widely spoken nationwide. Sixty (60) respondents were randomly interviewed with the allocated quota of questionnaires to the following targeted groups; 50 female students from five (5) different schools, five (5) teachers, and five (5) parents/guardians. Further light was thrown on the intervention programs, loopholes, and also to bring to light the underlying causes of the street trading by school-going girls. The findings of the study were analyzed using tables and charts.

The Table and figure show the distribution of respondent educational level. Sixty (60) respondents were targeted

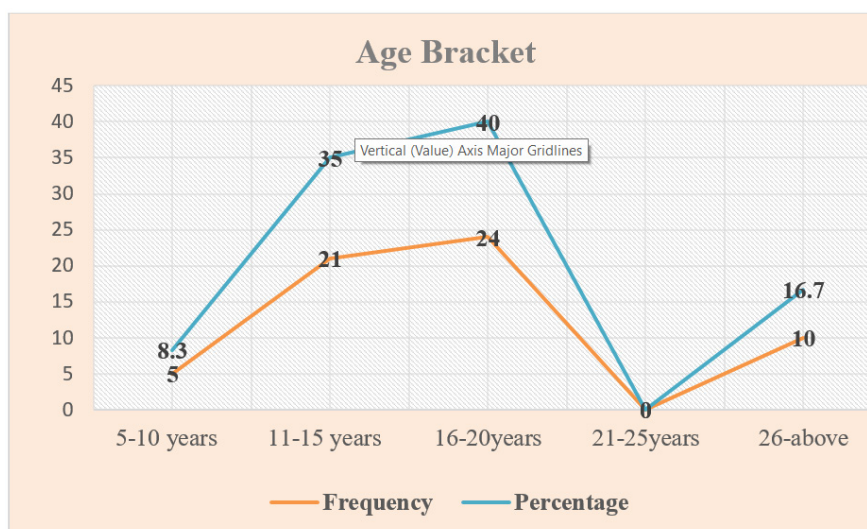
in the study area and 30 percent had primary education while 60% had secondary education. Most of these respondents were in secondary school within the ages of 15-20 years. Ten percent (10%) of the respondents had Tertiary education.

Table (2) and Figure (2) show the distribution of the age of respondents in the study areas. As age is one of the indicators in defining a girl child, it shows that most of the respondents who participated are within the age bracket of 11-20 years. From Figure two, 5-10 years accounted for 8.3% while age groups ranging from 11-

**Table 2:** Showing the age bracket of respondents

Age Bracket	Mean Age	No. Of Respondents	Percentages (%)
5-10years	7.5	5	8.3
11-15years	13	21	35
16-20years	18	24	40
21-25years	23	0	0
26-above	23 above	10	16.7
<b>Total</b>		<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: 2021 Survey



**Figure 2:** Showing the age bracket of respondents



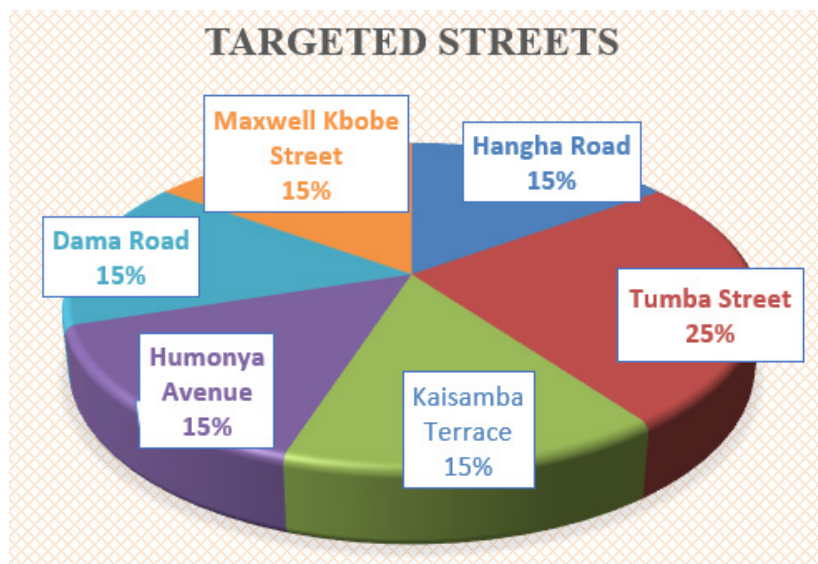
15 years accounted for 35% of the sample interviewed and thus formed the second-highest age group involved in street trading in the selected study area. The active participants involved in street trading fall within the age brackets of 15-20 years and are the most vulnerable to the odd effects of street trade. The age group 26 years-above accounts for 16.7% and the respondents are parents or guardians of most of the girls involved in street trading. Table 3 presents the predominant areas with a high

concentration of street trading in the study areas. Six (6) major streets/roads were selected within the study area and 9 (15%) respondents were targeted in each identified street/road except for Tumba Street. 15 respondents accounting for 25% were targeted for Tumba Street and the reason for such a high quota as compared to other streets/roads was because of the high concentration of street traders and its crowded nature.

**Table 3:** Shows the predominant areas of street trading

Study Area	Targeted Streets/Roads (%)	Frequency	Percentage
KENEMA CITY	Hangha Road	9	15
	Tumba Street	15	25
	Kaisamba Terrace	9	15
	Humonya Avenue	9	15
	Dama Road	9	15
	Maxwell Kboke Street	9	15
<b>Total</b>		<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: 2020 Survey

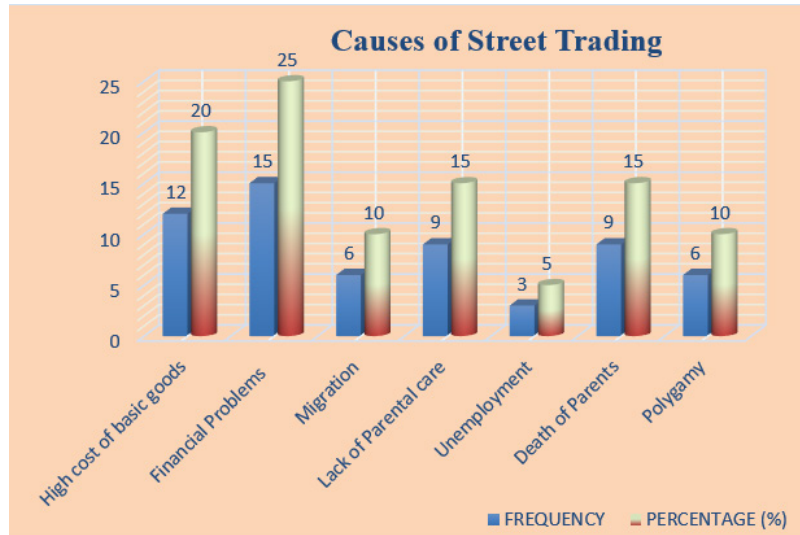


**Figure 3:** Showing the area of predominant street trading

**Table 4:** Showing the causes of street trade

Causes Of Street Trade	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High cost of basic goods	12	20
Financial Problems	15	25
Migration	6	10
Lack of Parental care	9	15
Unemployment	3	5
Death of Parents	9	15
Polygamy	6	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: 2021 Survey



**Figure 4:** Showing the area of predominant street trading

Table four and Figure four represent the reason girl children are into street trading.

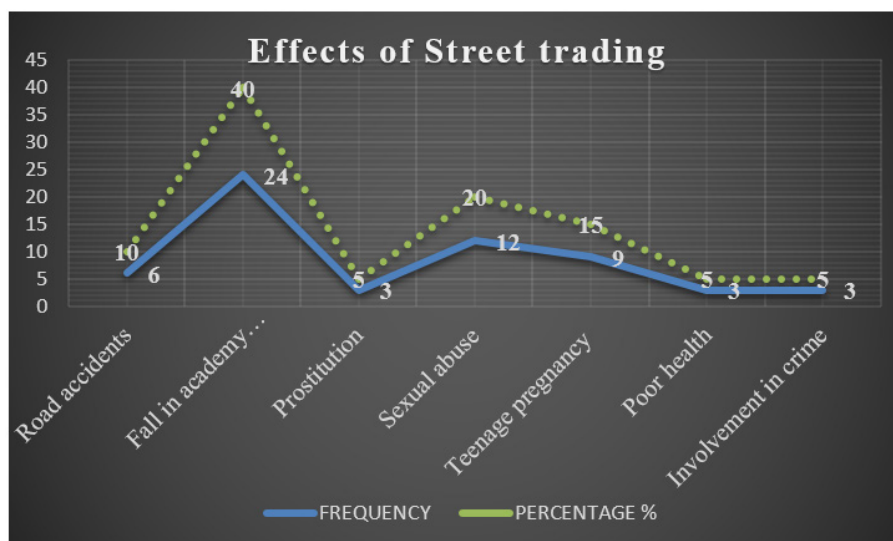
The result from the analysis revealed that the costs of basic things are high and financial problems are the main reasons for trading along the street and thus these accounted for 20% and 25% respectively. Migration, lack of parental care, unemployment, death of parents,

and polygamy are the main factors responsible for street trading in the study areas. Migration, Lack of parental care, and unemployment accounted for 10%, 15%, and 5% respectively. Other reasons that cause street trade among school-going girls are the death of their parents and polygamy and these accounted for 15% and 10% respectively.

**Table 5:** Showing the effects of street trading on school going girls

Effects of Street Trading	Frequency	Percentage %
Road accidents	6	10
Fall in academy performance	24	40
Prostitution	3	5
Sexual abuse	12	20
Teenage pregnancy	9	15
Poor health	3	5
Involvement in crime	3	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: 2021 Survey



**Figure 5:** Showing the effects of street trading in the study area

As the effects of street trading on school-going girls underpin the importance of this research, table five and Figure five above recorded the effects of street trading with poor performance at school and sexual abuse standing out as the dominant effects of street trading on school-going girls thus accounting for 40% and 20% respectively. Teenage pregnancy and Road accidents accounted for 15 % and 10 respectively which proves girls'

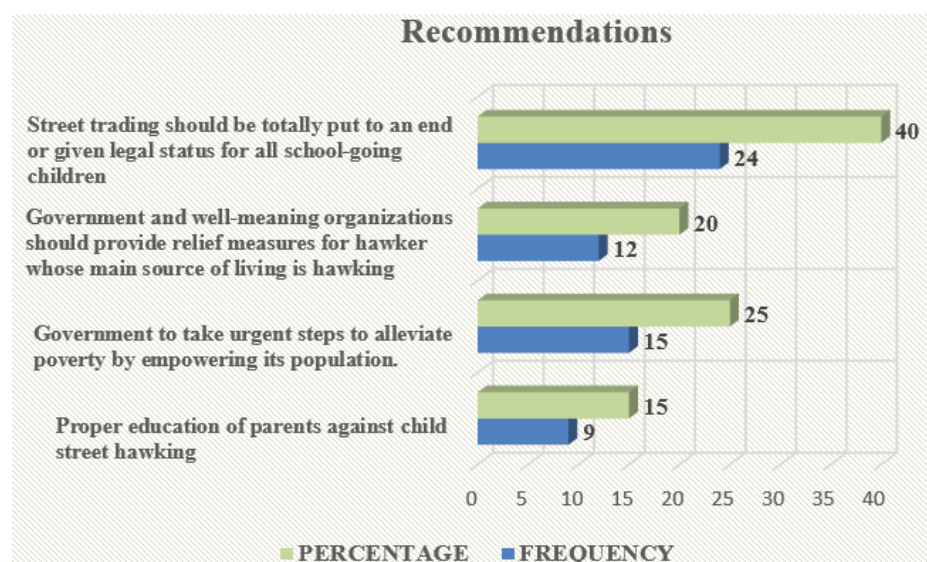
educational levels are being declined both in performance and quality. Prostitution, Poor health, and involvement in crime are all other effects of street trading in the study areas thus accounting for 5% each. It can be concluded that street trading for school-going girls leads to poor academic performance similar to the one put forward by (Hamenoo, Dwomoh, & Dako-Gyeke, 2018).

Table (6) highlights recommendations made by

**Table 6:** Showing recommendations made by respondents in the study areas

Recommendations	Frequency	Percentage
Proper education of parents against child street hawking	9	15
Government to take urgent steps to alleviate poverty by empowering its population.	15	25
Government and well-meaning organizations should provide relief measures for hawkers whose main source of living is hawking	12	20
Street trading should be put to an end or given legal status for all school-going children	24	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: 2021 Survey



**Figure 6:** Showing recommendations made by respondents in the study areas

respondents with regards to possible measures needed to remedy the problems faced by school-going girls as a result of street trading. Among the list of recommendations, giving legal status to end street trading for all school-going children accounted for 40% while providing measures by the Government and well-meaning organizations for hawkers whose main source of living is from street trading accounted for 20%. The government to take urgent steps to alleviate poverty by empowering its population accounted for 25% as it is lucid that Sierra Leone is among the poorest nations in the world (Antony & Laxmaiah, 2008). Proper education of parents against child street trading accounted for 15%. It can there be concluded that all the recommendations are very useful in curbing street trading among school-going girls in the study area, but putting an end to or giving legal status to child street trading proves to be the most appropriate

measure to address this excruciating menace in Kenema city, Sierra Leone.

### Discussion on The Effects of Street Hawking on Girls' Education

Depriving girls of education implicitly means depriving society of its deserved benefits (Basu, 1999). Similarly, the work and socioeconomic outputs of girls have both micro and macroeconomic effects on society and the elimination of such socioeconomic from girls will also impede households except with strong government policies to ameliorate poor family financial situations (Anker, 1998). According to (Oloko, 2010), countries that do not invest in children's future or with a high rate of children involved in a single work will be viewed as tails in the quest for sustainable development. He further propounded that children involved in trading supplement



family income though it creates a disastrous impact on the child's personal development both physically and psychologically. These disastrous impacts on the child's personal development as a result of trading are normally ignored by parents or caregivers either as a result of ignorance or cultural influences (Scott, 1992). Those girls involved in street trading are deprived of going to school and as such their intellectual capability is put into a coma with a bleak future (Reese, Balzano, Gallimore, & Goldenberg, 1995). The educational benefit is the "ability of an educated person to choose in a more informed way." Some of these children involved in street trading are subjugated and ignorantly ignored by their guidance or parents at an early age leaving them vulnerable to mishaps (Satz, 2003).

According to (Nwabueze, 1992), structural inequalities, underemployment, poor quality of life, massive retrenchment, and poor economic environment are the main causes of street trade in developing countries. Poverty is the cause of most social problems and public issues in developing countries and is postulated as the prime cause of children being forced into hawking. It is believed that poor housing, poor health facilities, inadequate food, and lack of basic social amenities compel parents/guidances to send their children to trade to contribute to family income (Ekpenyong & Sibiri, 2011; Nmomo, 2003). According to (Oruwari, 1996), Unemployment, illiteracy, and single-parent families are the main factors worsening

poverty. Five factors namely: Unemployment, inability to attend to family needs, illiteracy housing, and clothing are the main cause for hawking (Okojie, 1987). The migration of people from rural to urban areas in search of greener pasture are often involved street trade because of their unpreparedness for urban life. In such a situation, parents normally forced or engaged their children in economic activities (Hoyano & Keenan, 2007). Another theory postulates that cultural beliefs and ideas hold that giving birth to so many children will help contribute to family activities such as farm work, domestic chores, and other socio-economic activities (Aderinto, 2000). Hawking has also been linked to the "rise of capitalism as a system of production, where labor becomes a commodity to be bought and sold". Implicitly, labor can be sold in any form either positive or negative and this is tantamount to organized slavery.

Society is viewed as a social system where parts relate with one another in order to accomplish its goals for the survival of the social system. To maintain the values of the social system, there is a need to solve social institution problems such as Education, Religion, and the family system. The behavior and skills of children can be shaped based on the functional and structural make-up of a family. Children should be raised responsibly as sub-component members of society with the appropriate moral values and beliefs (Ekpenyong & Sibiri, 2011).

Based on the research findings, it was revealed that



**Figure 7:** Showing recommendations made by respondents in the study areas

the high cost of living, lack of financial support, poor home conditions, lack of parental care, high level of unemployment, death of parents, large family size are factors contributing to street trading in the study areas. These findings correlate with the results of (Fawole, Ajuwon, Osungbade, & Faweya, 2003) who asserted that the predisposing factors to child street hawking include; poverty, high cost of living, lack of sponsorship, single parenting, large family size, peer group pressure, poor home conditions, and lack of parental care. It is also evident that school-going girls are vulnerable to sexual

abuse, teenage pregnancy, and at the same time lead to psychological torture which will necessitate poor academic performance and dropout syndrome. This research findings also revealed that students who engaged in income-generating activities lack the opportunity to revise their notes, do homework, and rest after school, which would have improved their academic performance. Students in the study area sell goods in the morning before going to school and continue after school until late at night as this process takes away the time they could have used to study.



## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Poverty is endemic in Sub-Saharan Africa of which Sierra Leone is not an exception as urban poverty is still rife in Kenema city. As street trading serves as a source to eke a family living, many challenges have emerged including causing vehicular traffic, accidents, teenage pregnancy, school dropout, sexual abuse and poor academic performance, filth, and harassment of commuters. One of the recommendations in table 6 has already been implemented by the city authorities (City Council and Metropolitan police) by designated street trading as illegal in the city with a fine to be levied if found guilty. The most surprising observation is that many traders even though they know the problems and challenges that emerge due to their activities, they still overlook the directives and bye-laws instituted. In a nutshell, street trading deeply relegate school going girls' psyche, educational prowess, and physical strength thus resulting in poor academic performance and school dropout. Therefore, there is still the need to holistically reconsider and diverse an alternative strategy to remedy school-going girls' off-street trade.

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