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WHEN THE BURDEN OF LIFE COULD NOT TAKE AWAY HAPPINESS AND LIFE SATISFACTION: EXAMINING IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENT HAWKERS' SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING

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Abstract

This descriptive cross-sectional survey research sought to investigate in-school adolescent hawkers' subjective well-being and how it could be influenced by socio-demographic variables. Using the snowball sampling technique, 210 in-school adolescent hawkers were recruited in the study. Self-reported questionnaire was employed for data collection, and descriptive and inferential statistics were employed in analyzing the data. Major findings revealed that in-school adolescent hawkers reported mean scores that were higher than average on the three aspects of subjective well-being, indicating a level of resilience in the face of the hardships connected with their lives and experiences. However, their comparatively lower mean scores on the dimension of social well-being point to significant deficiencies in their social integration and trust in societal structures. Besides, gender differences were observed, particularly in the social well-being dimension, where male adolescent hawkers scored significantly lower than their female counterparts. Adolescents living with their parents demonstrated significantly higher emotional and social well-being scores than those living with foster parents or guardians; adolescents in urban areas reported significantly higher emotional and psychological well-being compared to their rural counterparts whereas there were age-related developmental variations in subjective well-being. We conclude that in-school adolescent hawkers in Nigeria may have high subjective well-being with comparatively lower mean scores on the social well-being dimension, and that the consideration of important socio-demographic variables are critical to understanding their subjective well-being. Implications of the findings were highlighted.

Keywords: Adolescents, happiness, hawking, in-school, life satisfaction, subject well-being,

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Introduction

Statistics on child poverty in Nigeria is alarming with about 28.4% of Nigeria children in urban areas experiencing poverty whereas 65.7% of children from rural areas are classified as poor, and child poverty rate is highest among children aged 16-17 years (Federal Ministry of Finance, Budgeting and Planning, 2022). This makes it difficult for these children to access education without being recruited to assist their parents/guardians in funding their education. This is compounded by the fact that education in Nigeria is grossly underfunded. Moreso, 35.3% of Nigeria children aged 5-17 are schooling and working, 11.2% are working but not going to school while among children aged 15-17, 45.3% are working and schooling (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). One of the ways children work while they school is through street hawking which has been seen as an emergent public health concern (Ugo, 2024) in Nigeria perpetuated by weak policies and failed implementations. Even when there is the will to implement policies against street hawking, the perennial economic hardship experienced in Nigeria could constitute a stumbling block to progress. Adolescent hawking is a practice where youths, typically between the ages of 10 and 18, engage in street vending or similar economic activities to support family income while attending school (UNICEF, 2019). Children who are involved in street hawking most times are victims of sexual exploitation and forced prostitution with attendant sexual risks, physical violence, accidents, robbery, kidnapping and ritual murder (Ugo, 2024). In-school adolescent hawking is a widespread issue in Nigeria, particularly in economically disadvantaged areas. While precise statistics are challenging to obtain due to the informal nature of this work, studies suggest that a significant proportion of secondary school students engage in hawking activities. For instance, Ukwueze and Nwosu (2019) found that in some urban areas, up to 30% of secondary school students reported engaging in hawking activities alongside their studies. The causes of adolescent hawking are multifaceted and deeply rooted in socioeconomic conditions. Poverty is often cited as the primary driver, with many families relying on their children's income to supplement household earnings. Bala et al. (2021) conducted a comprehensive study on the socioeconomic factors contributing to adolescent hawking in Nigeria. They found that family size, parental education level, and household income were significant predictors of adolescent involvement in hawking activities. Cultural factors also play a role in the prevalence of adolescent hawking. In some communities, children's participation in economic activities is viewed as a form of socialization and preparation for adult responsibilities. Okyere (2021) argues that this cultural perspective, combined with economic necessities, contributes to the normalization of child labour in various forms, including hawking.

Several studies have demonstrated the deleterious impact of street hawking on not just the learning outcomes of students (Igoma & Madume, 2022; Paul et al., 2023; Yumbak, 2013) but also the overall well-being (Atofarati et al, 2024). The stigma associated with hawking, combined with the stress of balancing work and school, can lead to feelings of shame, anxiety, stress and low self-esteem. Meri and Adelanwa (2019) found that street hawking has a significant impact on the social adjustment of secondary school students. Okonkwo and Eze (2023) conducted in-depth interviews with adolescent hawkers and found that many experienced social isolations and a sense of being different from their non-working peers, which negatively affected their overall life

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satisfaction and sense of belonging in school. Subjective wellbeing, encompassing life satisfaction, positive affect, and absence of negative affect, can be both a predictor and an outcome of academic achievement for adolescent hawkers. Literature shows a dearth of studies on the subjective well-being of adolescent hawkers even though it has been widely studied among the general adolescent population (Cunsolo, 2017; Steinmeyr et al., 2019). This precludes our understanding of how this minority student population could differ from the general adolescent population regarding their subjective well-being. It then becomes imperative that the subjective well-being of in-school adolescent hawkers are determined so that informed intervention programme could be tailored to their needs. The psychological well-being will be unbundled to comprise emotional, psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction. More so, the fact that adolescents' socio-demographic variables have been considered important in studies on street hawking (Atofarati et al, 2024) and the subjective well-being of general student population (dos Santos et al., 2019), we factored in adolescent gender, place of primary residence, whether adolescents live their parents or with foster parents, number of siblings and age of the adolescents. Previous studies demonstrated that gender could be a significant factor on adolescent subjective well-being (Adıgüzel et al., 2024; Brisson et al., 2023; Esteban-Gonzalo et al., 2020; Nemček et al., 2019) with male adolescents appearing to have better subjective well-being than their female counterparts. Additionally, studies revealed that a larger number of female adolescents are involved in street hawking more than their male counterparts in Nigeria (Adebayo & Olaogun, 2019; Usman, 2018), and female hawkers are exposed to danger more than male teenage hawkers (Obioha et al., 2021).

Age could also be a potential factor in adolescents' subjective well-being. There are also few studies in this direction. However, Bojanowska and Zalewska (2011) found that subjective well-being did not differ between younger and older teenagers. Inchley et al. (2020) reported that there was decline in mental well-being with increasing age of adolescents in such a way that older ones had lower levels of life satisfaction, and that at age 15, girls reported poorer mental well-being than boys across almost all countries/ regions. Regarding place of primary residence, understanding the geographic dimension of happiness and life satisfaction is imperative given the reported differences in the dimensions of the quality of life among those who live in urban and rural areas. Rural-urban dichotomy has become increasingly important given indicators that could project differences in quality of life. Because most industrial activities take place in urban areas, it could result in wealth inequality between rural residents and their urban counterparts. There is also inequality in educational attainment between rural dwellers and urban dwellers in most developing nations. This could account for differences in quality of life. Rees et al (2017) have demonstrated that children who live in rural areas may have slightly higher subjective well-being than those in urban areas. Studies that have investigated adolescents' subjective well-being remain scare warranting that researchers make efforts to understand if the peculiarities of each area could result in differences in happiness and life satisfaction particularly among adolescent hawkers since child poverty have been reported more in rural areas of Nigeria (Federal Ministry of Finance, Budgeting and Planning, 2022). Parents' supports have been linked to adolescents' subjective well-being. Therefore, whether an adolescent lives with

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his/her parents or not could influence their subjective well-being since support from a foster parent may differ from that of a natural parent. Though literature on this remains scares, adolescents from richer families are found to report higher life satisfaction and better mental well-being (Inchley et al., 2020). Also, family size could be a significant factor in adolescents' subjective well-being since larger family may share available resources that may not be enough among themselves which may undermine the perceived well-being of adolescents. There is also a dearth of studies on family size and adolescents' subjective well-being. Given the fact that literature is still scarce on adolescent hawkers' subjective well-being and the outlined socio-demographic variables, we set out to investigate:

1. mean scores of adolescent hawkers' subjective well-being;
2. gender differences in the mean scores of adolescent hawkers' subjective well-being;
3. if living with one's parent or with a foster parent results in significant differences in the mean scores of adolescent hawkers' subjective well-being;
4. whether primary place of residence (rural/urban) results in significant differences in the mean scores of adolescent hawkers' subjective well-being;
5. if age of adolescents results in significant differences in the mean scores of adolescent hawkers' subjective well-being; and
6. if number of siblings of adolescents results in significant differences in the mean scores of adolescent hawkers' subjective well-being.

Method

Our research adopted a quantitative approach by employing a cross-sectional survey design. The cross-sectional survey design is appropriate in this study given that it allows for the examination of prevalent behavioral traits within a specific population by analyzing data collected from a representative sample at a single point in time (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000; Stockemer, 2019). Consequently, this survey-based methodology, would allow the researchers to obtain insights into the perceptions of adolescent hawkers regarding their subjective well-being. The population of the study consisted of in-school adolescent hawkers attending public secondary schools in Anambra State aged 13 to 17 years. Using the snowball sampling technique, 210 adolescents were sampled facilitated through a multi-stage sampling procedure. Nine local government areas in Anambra State were randomly sampled.

The instrument employed in the collection of data is an adaptation of current scales for subjective well-being which followed the tradition of Keyes' (2009) Mental Health Continuum-Short Form (MHC-SF). This line of tradition in the measurement of subjective well-being has been widely adopted, and assesses emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing. In our adaptation we arrived at 10-items for each of the clusters totaling 30-items after the items were presented for validation by three experts in measurement and evaluation, and educational psychology

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who are researchers in Nnamdi Azikiwe University. Items are structured with the response format of Most of the time (MT), Often (O), Sometimes (S), Rarely (R) and Never (N). Respondents were instructed to pick appropriate options based on how often they have felt within the past month. To assess the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted with 40 in-school adolescents from a school in Enugu State that were not selected as part of the sample population. The data collected were analyzed using Cronbach's alpha statistics. The coefficients obtained for the three clusters of the Subjective Wellbeing Instrument were 0.74, 0.76, 0.79 for emotional, psychological and social wellbeing respectively.

The structured questionnaire included items on demographic information such as gender, age, number of siblings, primary place of residence, and living with either parents or foster parents. These socio-demographic variables were measured with single items with appropriate options for respondents' choices. The questionnaire was structured in English language which is an official language in secondary schools in Nigeria. The pilot study revealed that students had no difficulty filling in the questionnaire. Permissions were obtained from the school authorities after explanations regarding the study were given. Teachers were recruited as research assistants and were briefed on the data collection process. Students' consents were obtained and those who prefer not to participate in the study were not included. The questionnaire was administered during school hours and the data collection process lasted over a period of one month to ensure that all targeted participants could complete the questionnaire. During the process of filling in the questionnaire, students who needed further explanations were attended to by the research assistants who were their teachers. We used the IBM SPSS version 25 to analyze the data collected. Data were cleaned to ensure that no wrong number was entered in SPSS. Mean, standard deviation, independent t-test statistics and ANOVA were used to analyze the data. Hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

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Results

Table 1

Item-by-Item Mean Responses of In-School Adolescents on their Subjective Well-Being

S/N	Items	*M*	*SD*
	Emotional Well-Being		
1	*I was able to manage my emotions in a healthy way*	*3.90*	*1.05*
2	*I found joy in my daily life activities*	*3.56*	*1.27*
3	*I felt satisfied with life*	*3.37*	*1.18*
4	*I could bounce back from difficult situations*	*3.41*	*1.21*
5	*I experience positive emotions like excitement*	*3.73*	*1.28*
6	*I felt at peace*	*3.53*	*1.08*
7	*I expressed my emotions constructively*	*3.95*	*.91*
8	*I felt calm*	*3.92*	*1.19*
9	*I found meaning in activities I engaged in*	*3.69*	*1.31*
10	*I could manage stress without becoming overwhelmed*	*3.18*	*1.28*
	Psychological Well-being		
11	*I felt good about myself*	*4.23*	*.93*
12	*I felt confident in my abilities*	*4.02*	*.92*
13	*I live according to my personal values*	*3.91*	*1.21*
14	*I took steps to continually improve as an individual*	*3.63*	*1.17*
15	*I maintained meaningful relationships*	*3.83*	*1.08*
16	*I accepted my strengths and weaknesses*	*3.77*	*1.44*
17	*I made choices that gave my life direction*	*3.64*	*1.13*
18	*I accepted my strengths and weaknesses*	*3.52*	*1.34*
19	*I could effectively balance multiple roles*	*3.12*	*1.22*
20	*I felt in control of my life*	*3.23*	*1.58*
	Social well-being		
21	*I have trusting relationships with others*	*4.02*	*1.12*
22	*My experiences that I have had challenged me to grow and become a better person*	*3.99*	*.94*
23	*I felt accepted by others*	*3.54*	*1.33*
24	*My social relationships are supportive*	*3.89*	*.93*
25	*I felt like I belonged to community or group*	*3.11*	*1.12*
26	*I felt that I had something important to contribute to the society*	*3.48*	*1.30*
27	*I felt that the society is becoming a better place for people like me*	*2.89*	*1.53*
28	*I felt that the way our society works makes sense to me*	*2.96*	*1.46*
29	*I trusted others*	*2.76*	*1.39*
30	*I felt that my life was valuable to the society*	*3.60*	*1.72*

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Table 1 revealed that in-school adolescent hawkers reported more than moderate mean scores on the three dimensions of subjective well-being. The mean scores ranged from 4.23 to 2.76. They had a lesser perception of happiness and life satisfaction on the dimension of social well-being even though such means indicated more than an average perception of their well-being. Scoring lower in the social well-being dimension included items 29 (I trusted others), 27 (I felt that the society is becoming a better place for people like me), and 28 (I felt that the way our society works makes sense to me). They had the highest mean score on item 11 (I felt good about myself).

Table 2

t-test Analysis of Mean Responses of In-School Adolescents on their Subjective Well-Being Based on Gender

	Gender	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed)
Emotional Well-Being	*Male*	*93*	*3.59*	*.52*	*-.988*	*208*	*.325*
	Female	*117*	*3.65*	*.42*			
Psychological Well-Being	*Male*	*93*	*3.76*	*.44*	*1.968*	*208*	*.050*
	Female	*117*	*3.63*	*.49*			
Social Well-Being	*Male*	*93*	*3.27*	*.79*	*-2.686*	*208*	*.008*
	Female	*117*	*3.55*	*.74*			

Results in Table 2 show that male in-school adolescent hawkers had a significantly lower mean score than their female counterparts on social well-being, $t(208) = -2.686$, $p < .05$; a non-significant lower mean score than their female counterparts on emotional well-being, $t(208) = -.988$, $p > .05$; but a non-significantly higher mean score than their female counterparts on social well-being, $t(208) = 1.968$, $p > .05$.

Table 3

t-test Analysis of Mean Responses of In-School Adolescents on their Subjective Well-Being Based on Living with Either Parent or Guardian

	Living With Parent/Guardian	***N***	***M***	***SD***	***t***	***df***	**Sig. (2-tailed)**
Emotional Well-Being	Parents	140	3.79	.40	8.227	208	.000
	Guardian	70	3.30	.41			
Psychological Well-Being	Parents	140	3.73	.51	1.875	208	.062
	Guardian	70	3.60	.37			
Social Well-Being	Parents	140	3.74	.46	10.280	208	.000
	Guardian	70	2.79	.88			

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Table 3 reveals that in-school adolescent hawkers who lived with their parents had significantly higher mean scores than their counterparts who lived with foster parents/guardians on emotional and social well-being, $t(208) = 8.227$, $p < .05$; and $t(208) = 10.280$, $p < .05$ respectively but a non-significant higher mean score than those who lived with foster parents/guardians on psychological well-being, $t(208) = 1.875$, $p > .05$.

Table 4

t-test Analysis of Mean Responses of In-School Adolescents on their Subjective Well-Being Based on Place of Primary Residence

	Place of Primary Residence	N	M	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Emotional Well-Being	*Urban*	*85*	*3.7200*	*.55844*	*2.480*	*208*	*.014*
	Rural	*125*	*3.5600*	*.37696*			
Psychological Well-Being	*Urban*	*85*	*3.7953*	*.50988*	*2.710*	*208*	*.007*
	Rural	*125*	*3.6184*	*.43056*			
Social Well-Being	*Urban*	*85*	*3.3224*	*.88174*	*-1.576*	*208*	*.117*
	Rural	*125*	*3.4928*	*.68311*			

Table 4 reveals that in-school adolescent hawkers who live in urban areas had significantly higher mean scores than their rural dwellers counterparts on emotional and psychological well-being, $t(208) = 2.480$, $p < .05$; and $t(208) = 2.710$, $p < .05$ respectively but a non-significant lower mean score than those who live in rural areas on social well-being, $t(208) = -1.576$, $p > .05$.

Table 5

ANOVA for Mean Responses of In-School Adolescents on their Subjective Well-Being Based on Age of Respondents

Variables	**Years**	***N***	***M***	***SD***	***F***	**Sig**
Emotional Well-Being	*13-14 years*	*93*	*3.6204*	*.48197*	*2.334*	*.099*
	15-16 years	*90*	*3.5778*	*.46345*		
	17 years and above	*27*	*3.7963*	*.37363*		

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	Total	*210*	*3.6248*	*.46459*		
Psychological Well-Being	*13-14 years*	*93*	*3.7968*	*.44635*	*5.531*	*.005*
	15-16 years	*90*	*3.5711*	*.45475*		
	17 years and above	*27*	*3.7185*	*.53063*		
	Total	*210*	*3.6900*	*.47122*		
Social Well-Being	*13-14 years*	*93*	*3.3731*	*.81229*	*.603*	*.548*
	15-16 years	*90*	*3.4367*	*.75572*		
	17 years and above	*27*	*3.5556*	*.69022*		
	Total	*210*	*3.4238*	*.77225*		

Regarding the emotional well-being dimension, the mean responses of the in-school adolescent hawkers did not differ significantly according to the age category, $F(2, 207) = 2.334$, $p > .05$). respondents within the age category of 17 and above had the highest mean scores on emotional well-being followed by those between 13-14 years of age whereas in-school adolescent hawkers between 15 and 16 years had the least mean score. The responses of in-school adolescent hawkers on psychological well-being differed significantly, $F(2, 207) = 5.531$, $p < .05$) with those between the ages of 13-14 scoring the highest mean scores whereas those between 15-16 years of age scoring the least mean score. The post hoc analysis in Table 6 revealed a significant difference on the psychological well-being dimension between the 13-14 years of age category and the 15-16 years of age category, $p = .003$. Mean responses on the social well-being did not differ significantly based on the age categories, $F(2, 207) = .603$, $p > .05$) with those in the 17 above age category scoring highest while those in the 13-14 years age category scored the least.

Table 6

Post Hoc Analysis on Mean Responses of In-School Adolescents on their Subjective Well-Being Based on Age of Respondents

Multiple Comparisons

Bonferroni

Dependent Variable			**Std. Error**	**Sig.**	**95% Confidence Interval**

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	(I) Age of Adolescent Hawkers	(J) Age of Adolescent Hawkers	Mean Difference (I-J)			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Emotional Well-Being	*13-14 years*	*15-16 years*	*.04265*	*.06826*	*1.000*	*-.1221*	*.2074*
		17 years	*-.17587*	*.10092*	*.249*	*-.4194*	*.0677*
	15-16 years	*13-14 years*	*-.04265*	*.06826*	*1.000*	*-.2074*	*.1221*
		17 years and above	*-.21852*	*.10130*	*.096*	*-.4630*	*.0260*
	17 years and above	*13-14 years*	*.17587*	*.10092*	*.249*	*-.0677*	*.4194*
		15-16 years	*.21852*	*.10130*	*.096*	*-.0260*	*.4630*
Psychological Well-Being	*13-14 years*	*15-16 years*	*.22566**	*.06821*	*.003*	*.0610*	*.3903*
		17 years and above	*.07826*	*.10085*	*1.000*	*-.1652*	*.3217*
	15-16 years	*13-14 years*	*-.22566**	*.06821*	*.003*	*-.3903*	*-.0610*
		17 years and above	*-.14741*	*.10123*	*.441*	*-.3917*	*.0969*
	17 years and above	*13-14 years*	*-.07826*	*.10085*	*1.000*	*-.3217*	*.1652*
		15-16 years	*.14741*	*.10123*	*.441*	*-.0969*	*.3917*
Social Well-being	*13-14 years*	*15-16 years*	*-.06355*	*.11441*	*1.000*	*-.3397*	*.2126*
		17 years and above	*-.18244*	*.16914*	*.846*	*-.5907*	*.2258*
	15-16 years	*13-14 years*	*.06355*	*.11441*	*1.000*	*-.2126*	*.3397*
		17 years and above	*-.11889*	*.16977*	*1.000*	*-.5287*	*.2909*
	17 years and above	*13-14 years*	*.18244*	*.16914*	*.846*	*-.2258*	*.5907*
		15-16 years	*.11889*	*.16977*	*1.000*	*-.2909*	*.5287*

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 7: *ANOVA for Mean Responses of In-School Adolescents on their Subjective Well-Being Based on Number of Siblings of the Respondents*

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Variables	No of Siblings	N	M	SD	F	Sig
Emotional Well-Being	*1-3*	*69*	*3.48*	*.45*	*5.103*	*.007*
	4-6	*120*	*3.70*	*.47*		
	7 and above	*21*	*3.69*	*.35*		
	Total	*210*	*3.62*	*.47*		
Psychological Well-being	*1-3*	*69*	*3.66*	*.38*	*.419*	*.659*
	4-6	*120*	*3.72*	*.52*		
	7 and above	*21*	*3.66*	*.43*		
	Total	*210*	*3.69*	*.47*		
Social Well-being	*1-3*	*69*	*3.13*	*.87*	*8.410*	*.000*
	4-6	*120*	*3.59*	*.71*		
	7 and above	*21*	*3.41*	*.48*		
	Total	*210*	*3.42*	*.77*		

The mean responses of in-school adolescent hawkers on emotional well-being and social well-being differed significantly based on the number of siblings, $F(2, 207) = 5.103$, $p < .05$); $F(2, 207) = 8.410$, $p < .05$). Respondents whose siblings were between 4-6 had higher mean scores all the dimensions while those whose siblings were between 1-3 had the least mean scores in all the dimensions. The post hoc analysis on emotional and social well-being in Table 7 revealed that differences lie between those whose siblings are 1-3 and 4-6. However, there was no significant mean difference on psychological well-being, $F(2, 207) = .419$, $p < .05$).

Table 8

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Post Hoc Analysis on Mean Responses of In-School Adolescents on their Subjective Well-Being Based on Number of Siblings of the Respondents

Multiple Comparisons

Bonferroni

Dependent Variable	(I) Number of Siblings	(J) Number of Siblings	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval Upper Bound
Emotional Well-Being	*1-3*	*4-6*	*-.21467**	*.06885*	*.006*	*-.3809*	*-.0485*
		7 and above	*-.20932*	*.11358*	*.200*	*-.4834*	*.0648*
	4-6	*1-3*	*.21467**	*.06885*	*.006*	*.0485*	*.3809*
		7 and above	*.00536*	*.10780*	*1.000*	*-.2548*	*.2655*
	7 and above	*1-3*	*.20932*	*.11358*	*.200*	*-.0648*	*.4834*
		4-6	*-.00536*	*.10780*	*1.000*	*-.2655*	*.2548*
Psychological Well-Being	*1-3*	*4-6*	*-.06076*	*.07139*	*1.000*	*-.2331*	*.1116*
		7 and above	*-.00207*	*.11777*	*1.000*	*-.2863*	*.2822*
	4-6	*1-3*	*.06076*	*.07139*	*1.000*	*-.1116*	*.2331*
		7 and above	*.05869*	*.11178*	*1.000*	*-.2111*	*.3285*
	7 and above	*1-3*	*.00207*	*.11777*	*1.000*	*-.2822*	*.2863*
		4-6	*-.05869*	*.11178*	*1.000*	*-.3285*	*.2111*
Social Well-Being	*1-3*	*4-6*	*-.46228**	*.11274*	*.000*	*-.7344*	*-.1902*
		7 and above	*-.27764*	*.18598*	*.411*	*-.7265*	*.1712*
	4-6	*1-3*	*.46228**	*.11274*	*.000*	*.1902*	*.7344*
		7 and above	*.18464*	*.17652*	*.890*	*-.2414*	*.6107*
	7 and above	*1-3*	*.27764*	*.18598*	*.411*	*-.1712*	*.7265*
		4-6	*-.18464*	*.17652*	*.890*	*-.6107*	*.2414*

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Discussion

Our study aimed at investigating the subjective well-being of in-school adolescent hawkers' well-being given the established relevance of subjective well-being on the development of adolescents. This study is important since most at-risk or minority populations report lower subjective well-being than the general population. Results of our study demonstrated that in-school adolescent hawkers reported mean scores that were higher than average on the three aspects of subjective well-being, indicating a level of resilience in the face of the hardships connected with their lives and experiences. Although our study did not compare in-school adolescent hawkers' subjective well-being to that of the general population, our findings revealed that they have a high level of subjective well-being. Some research on at-risk groups, such as adolescents in residential care, demonstrated that they had poorer subjective well-being than the general population (Llosada-Gistau, et al., 2015). Our

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findings indicate that, despite the problems they confront, they persevere throughout life. However, their comparatively lower mean scores on the dimension of social well-being point to significant deficiencies in their social integration and trust in societal structures. Specific items such as "trusting others," "feeling that the society is becoming a better place for them," and "the way our society works makes sense to them" underscore a lack of societal connection or optimism about societal systems. Importantly, research has continuously documented social dimension of life in shaping adolescent subjective well-being (Cunsolo, 2017). Where there is lack of or insufficiency of the social dimensions of life, adolescents' subjective well-being could be affected. Conversely, the highest mean score on the item "feeling good about themselves" suggests that these adolescents maintain a positive self-concept, which could serve as a protective factor in their overall well-being.

Gender differences were observed, particularly in the social well-being dimension, where male adolescent hawkers scored significantly lower than their female counterparts. This finding could indicate that females may have access to stronger social networks or receive more community support, which fosters better social well-being. On the other hand, emotional and psychological well-being did not significantly differ by gender, suggesting that both male and female adolescent hawkers face similar challenges and adopt comparable coping mechanisms in these dimensions. This finding could be said to be a bit contradictory to several studies that have demonstrated that male adolescents are happier and more satisfied than their male counterparts (Adıgüzel et al., 2024; Brisson et al., 2023; Esteban-Gonzalo et al., 2020; Nemček et al., 2019). Though current literature underscores gender-gap in subjective well-being, considering a number of variables females may be as happy as males (Blanchflower & Bryson, 2024). However, our findings, which suggest that females have, in part, higher well-being than males particularly in the social wellbeing dimension, contradict previous notions because female in-school adolescent hawkers are more involved in hawking, and more susceptible to risks than their male counterparts. It is possible that social constructions have an impact on this outcome, as hawking may be considered more appropriate for girls than boys in Nigeria.

Adolescents living with their parents demonstrated significantly higher emotional and social well-being scores than those living with foster parents or guardians. These results align with the literature emphasizing the protective role of parental care in fostering emotional security and facilitating social integration. Recent studies corroborate this by emphasizing the role of parents in adolescent subjective well-being (Cunsolo, 2017). While psychological well-being did not differ significantly based on living arrangements, the trends still favoured adolescents living with their parents, potentially reflecting the stabilizing influence of a nuclear family structure.

Adolescents in urban areas reported significantly higher emotional and psychological well-being compared to their rural counterparts, which may be attributed to the relative availability of resources, opportunities, and exposure to supportive environments in urban settings. This is contrary to Rees et al (2017) who demonstrated that children who live in rural areas may have slightly higher subjective well-being than those in urban areas. However, rural adolescents demonstrated

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slightly higher (though non-significant) scores in social well-being, likely due to the communal and cohesive nature of rural societies, which often emphasize collective responsibility and support.

The findings revealed age-related developmental variations in subjective well-being. This is particularly important since research has noted the continuous changes in the physical, emotional, cognitive and psychological developments of adolescents (Cunsolo, 2017). Emotional well-being was highest among older adolescents (17 years and above), possibly due to increased maturity and the ability to manage stress more effectively. However, a dip in emotional and psychological well-being among adolescents aged 15–16 highlights a critical period where individuals may face heightened challenges related to identity formation and peer pressure. In contrast, younger adolescents (13–14 years) scored highest on psychological well-being, potentially reflecting a more optimistic outlook and fewer responsibilities at this stage. Social well-being did not vary significantly by age, but trends indicated better outcomes for older adolescents, perhaps reflecting improved social skills and independence with age.

Family structure, particularly the number of siblings, emerged as a significant factor influencing subjective well-being. Adolescents with 4–6 siblings reported higher mean scores across all dimensions of well-being compared to those with fewer siblings (1–3). This finding underscores the role of larger family networks in providing social and emotional support, which can foster a sense of belonging and mitigate the adverse effects of hawking. Post hoc analysis revealed significant differences in emotional and social well-being between these groups, further emphasizing the protective role of robust family systems.

Conclusions, Implications and Limitations

Our findings have demonstrated the subjective well-being of in-school adolescent hawkers in Nigeria. Findings indicated that despite the unfavourable life experiences that may face that they reported high subjective well with a dip in in the social well-being dimension indicating inequalities in social structures that may be unfavourable to this population. The fact that these students reported high subjective well-being is an indication that they persevere in the face of challenges before them. Besides, our findings revealed that such demographic variables as gender, age, living with parents or not, number of siblings and primary place of residence are important determinant to in-school adolescents' subjective well-being. We conclude that in-school adolescent hawkers in Nigeria may have high subjective well-being with comparatively lower mean scores on the dimension of social well-being pointing to significant deficiencies in their social integration and trust in societal structures, and that the consideration of important socio-demographic variables are critical to understanding their subjective well-being. These findings have significant implications, theoretically and practically, and reveals the need for tailored interventions to address the social well-being of in-school adolescent hawkers, particularly in enhancing societal trust and fostering a sense of inclusion. There should be intervention programmes that should focus on strengthening family ties, especially for adolescents living with foster parents or guardians. Though our study has made significant contributions to literature regarding the subjective well-being a minority or at-risk adolescent population, the generalizability of its findings could be

limited by a number of factors. First, the sole reliance on self-reported questionnaire could limit the depth of our conclusions. The data did not contain perspectives from other stakeholders, and there was no comparison between the findings from these population and those of the general population. As a result, future studies should utilize a mixed method approach that includes additional stakeholders to obtain more robust conclusions. Furthermore, there is a need to compare this minority student group to the overall population in terms of subjective well-being. Second, our study used a cross-sectional descriptive survey research approach, making it difficult to determine a link between subjective well-being and other outcome variables. Future research should investigate the impact of in-school adolescent hawkers' subjective well-being and other relevant variables.

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