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APPLICATION OF ICT IN MODERATING EFFECTS OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN DEVELOPING ECONOMY: AN ALTERNATIVE SURVIVAL STRATEGY FOR STREET CHILDREN IN OGOMOSO SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, NIGERIA

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The problem of street children is a worldwide phenomenon. Many capitals and urban centers of the world have become a haven of survival for many children in distress. In Africa, street children do not only have limited access to basic resources,

but in many instances have been denied the right to childhood. These children are forced to live and earn on the street due to their vulnerable and distressed situation. Some of them are members of very poor families who must engage in different odd jobs to supplement their family income. Every child should have a right to education. Such right is likely to elude many Nigerian children for obvious reasons. Although, primary education has been declared free and compulsory, but school materials such as uniform and school shoes are still the responsibilities of parents. Some parents cannot afford to send their children to schools due to poverty. More so, Nigeria's exponential growth in population, with children less than 15 years of age, accounting for about 45 per cent, has put immense pressure on the country's educational resources and infrastructure. These factors have made mainstream education for street children a daunting task if not impossible. However, information and communications technology (ICT) provides an alternative means of providing a high quality basic education to these vulnerable children at a cheaper cost and spread over a larger segment of the population. This study therefore evaluated the application of ICT in moderating the effects of the street children as a social problem. The sample consisted of 42 street children: 32 males and 10 females participating in a programme tagged "My computer, My Class (MCMC) introduced by one of the senators from Oyo state Nigeria and located in Ogbomoso South Local Government Area. Three instruments were used to gather data: a Participatory Self Reported Scale (PSRS), Progress Monitoring Scale (PMS) and Perceived Programme Efficacy Scale (PPES). The psychometric properties of these scales were obtained. Four hypotheses were raised and tested. The findings showed a significant difference in expectations about the future among the new entrants and the old participants. There is a significant progression in contact with the parents before and during the programme. There is significant difference in awareness on health and sanitation before and during the programme. The study concluded that the programme has been facilitating access to awareness and basic education in a meaningful way. It is recommended that government should employ MCMC approach to provide basic education to her large number of disadvantaged children.

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