

EFFECT OF CHILD LABOUR ON THE ACADEMIC
PERFORMANCE OF SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN
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Abstract

This study examined the effect of child labour on the academic performance of selected secondary school students in Ilesa East Local Government of Osun State using descriptive research method. One hundred and fifty (150) questionnaires were administered and analyzed using SPSS statistical package. The study found that about 82% of the respondents agreed that child labour impacts negatively on the psychological development of students. 81.4% agreed that child labour leads to exhaustion and insufficient time for academic work, thus impacts negatively on student's performance. 83% agreed that child labour is usually the implication of the poverty level in the society. The study concluded that child labour hampers the academic performance of students in Ilesa East LGA and thus recommend that government at all levels should help curb the poverty rate in the society by good governance as well as educate parents on the need to send their wards to school.

Keywords: Child labour, Academic Performance, Dropout, Family Background Unemployment

Introduction

Due to high rate of unemployment, poor economic condition of many families in Nigeria, family background (step mother/ father, polygamous), it is so clear that there has been increase in the rate at which school children engage in trade activities. In order to increase income through high sale, production through high labour, some parent/ guardians engage their children in child labour. The involvement of school children in labour is an emerging trend in Nigeria and an issue of concern on their academic performance (International Labour Organisation (ILO), 2013). Parents inability to adequately provide for the needs of family members seems to make some put the heavy burden of life and jeopardizing labor on their children which causes academic set back through repetition, withdrawal

from school or dropout due to failure and shame. So sadden to hear from a child that education is not important, that money is very much important; why?, because majority of school children who comes from a low family background engage in one business or labor and the other, their minds, attention and focus could be limited to education but very high to making money.

According to international standards, child labour is defined as work that is hazardous, demands too many hours, or is performed by children who are too young. Child labour is sometimes the result of ingrained customs and traditions of a society or family. Even well-intended customs and traditions can be harmful, such as: the view that work is good for children because it helps them to build character and develop skills, the tradition that children should follow their parents' footsteps and learn their trade at an early age. Most importantly, traditions that push poor families into debt, such as social occasions or religious events, which are paid off through engaging their children in child labour. (Adeparua, 2021)

A student that takes time to study and prepare well for examination is likely to end up with good performance, meanwhile majority of children who engage in labour will seem not to have enough time to study and prepare for examination, attend classes regularly or do assignment and read. Due to the tiredness (fatigue) some doze off and find it difficult to concentrate in class and at home when doing assignment, some did not usually do their assignment (Oluwatimilehin & Owoyele, 2012). All these are negative factors that can affect study habits and enhance poor performance. Also study habit can be influenced negatively by lack of parent's support, poor economic background, too much household chores, unseriousness,

procrastination, distractions (social media),(Oluwagbohunmi, 2019).

It is expected that all students should revise their notes, do their homework, participate actively in school, be punctual to school and rest after school to prepare them for the next day school activities in order to improve their academic performance. One can insinuate however that not all the students revisit their notes after school, actively participate in classes, do homework and possibly rest after school hours. The students instead engage in income generating activities, such as hawking, farming to contribute to family income. By these routine activities, the students have their minds divided between academic work and income generation activities. Poverty, lack of employment or partial employment, also illiteracy among parents/ guardians have majority of problems facing child labour.

The failure of students' performance is of concern to the researcher due to their inability to combine income generation with academics which the researcher once is a victim of such scenario. This study therefore focused on the categories of child labour, factors contributing to child labour and the effect on the academic performance of the selected secondary school students

Research Questions

The following research questions were asked to guide the study:

- i. What is the effect of child labour on the academic performance of students in Ilesa East Local Government Area of Osun State?
- ii. What is the difference in academic performance of students exposed to child labour and those who are not in Ilesa East Local Government Area of Osun state?

Literature Review

The rectitude or otherwise of children's involvement in work situation is often divisive just as the specific concept of child labour is elusive. Precise semantic distinctions between "work" and "labour" in relation to children's exertive activities are possible; but they tend to be more intellectual than existential as empirical evidence indicates. A descriptive analysis of the

subject as it relates to our existential Nigerian context will be done in this chapter. An articulation of the different aspect of children's physical and mental exertions is aimed at putting this subject into perspective.

Meaning and Concept of Child Labour

Work is as old as humanity itself. From the creation or birth of the human species, man has had to engage in some form of work. Not only is working essential to survival, it is a fundamental element or aspect of human nature, a basic characteristics (Paul II, 1991). As a fertile area of history, work or labour has greatly influenced human history and the understanding of the human person in personal and social dimension.

The term child labour has many definitions by different scholars. Suda (2011) refers child labour to when children is working in any type of work that is dangerous and harmful to children's health or the work hinders their education. The term "child labour" as different from child work was coined specifically to describe the situation of working children and it increasingly took on a negative connotation. Moyi (2011) child labour refers to low wages, long hours, physical and sexual abuse. According to Edmonds and Pavenik (2005) child labour is viewed as a form of child labour abuse, when children work in bad condition and hazardous occupations. The meaning of the term child labour also varies among organization; ILO argues that child labour is difficult to define. It depends on the type of the job and if the age is under eighteen and if the job intervene the education and development (ILO, 2004). According to UNICEF the problem of child labour can have more bad consequences, besides all the concern of investment or its relations to economic activities (ILO, 2013; WESTON, 2005).

So child labour has historically been a complex phenomenon especially in terms of its definition, control or prohibition. In the various attempt to address the issue of child labour, the criteria for determination have varied from its being insuitable to its being exploitative and potentially destructive at the various international "landmark" legislations on the issue of child labour, beginning with the 1919 convention

minimum age (industry) convention indicate. In understanding of the UNICEF "state of the world's children" 1997 report children's involvement in work is something that happen "along a continuum". At one end is the beneficial aspect where it promotes or enhance their development by not interfering with their schooling, recreation and vest in which case one cannot technically speak of child labour but "child work" or "non-exploitative child work". At the other end when it becomes exploitative, hazardous or potentially destructive when it produces the opposite effects, then it is referred to as (exploitative) child labour (Akhogba, 2016).

Bhat (2010) asserts that the definition of child labour is not simple because it includes three difficult concepts; to define, which are "Child", "Work" and "Labour". He claims that the term childhood can be defined by age but in some societies, people cease to be a child at different ages. The onset puberty occurs at different age for different people. Therefore in the article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child and the the ILO convention on the Worse Forms of Child Labour, 1999(No 182) defines child who is under the age of eighteen (18) years (Bhat, 2011). The definition of child labour differs among societies, for example in africa and Asia they do not consider the work of 15 years old person as child labour, they view child labour as a good task that children learn skills from work. They distinguish between child labour and child work, where child work is considered to be a part of the children's training to be responsible adults while child labour is thought to be exploitative (Omokhodion & Odusote, 2006). Not all work children do is severe, for instance; helping parents at home, looking after siblings or working for pocket money after school hours and during holidays. Aquil (2012) assumes that not all work that children do can harm their health or considered as exploitative but it depends on work condition or environment.

However, Weston (2005) argues that any work children do can be damaging to their health because the work can be abusive, exploitative or hazardous and it can influence their health. Omokhodun and Odusote(2006) argued that any work that children does outside home is classified

as child labour. According to them working outside home is usually exposed to environmental hazards which may affect their health and safety.

In Nigeria as indeed in all developing countries, what we can term child labour in the light of the foregoing is an ever present phenomenon across the country in villages, town and cities, it is common to see children engaging in one form of work or the other. They are on the fields, the streets, at traffic junctions, in workshops, factories and other places of commercial or productive activities, some are school children who after school take up some engagement to supplement family income. Others at all have been withdrawn or dropped out voluntarily (Akhogba, 2016). These variation means that it is untenable to generalize on the state of working children in Nigeria in terms of the forms, level and reasons for which they are involved in work or labour as the case may be.

Forms of Child Labour

Child labour especially in Nigeria involves various work activities, prominent among them are; street trading/ hawking, Agricultural labour, Vehicle loaders, Prostitution, Bus conductors, Child begging, etc.

Child Begging

Sociologically, begging is a social deviance and a social problem which include gaining materials benefit by asking for money from other persons with no intent to reimburse the money or to provide service in return (Sambo & Mshelia 2017). Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Right, argues that, "child begging" has sometimes been presented as a survival strategy since children engaged in begging come from impoverished families who do not have an alternative income-generating job. Most child beggars from northern Nigeria came from the makarantan allo, or the Islamic Quranic schools, it is an informal education and it is an old practice in Nigeria. According to Odoh (2012) the practice of the system varies according to country, of course; given the divergent socio-cultural and political, economic differences and viabilities. The system is quite age long but the process of its development, application, and transformation is what has translated to constituting problems of

the system as it is today. Perhaps, because of the nature and character of youths referred to "Urchins" or Hoodlums" (Odoh, 2012) this was because of the operational process of how the system is being carried out today.

This has negative psychological, social and health consequences. (Eziwho, 2018) points out three categories of child beggars which are; those who lead blind parents or relations, those who beg entirely on their own and those who act as fronts for parents especially mothers who are usually hidden from public view but supervise them close distance. The children are the most vulnerable because they are from families of the poorest of the poor. In all these categories, they run enormous risks of running or darting between cars in heavy traffic putting them in dangers of accidents. They also suffer the severe psychosocial consequences of engaging in demeaning type of activity and being exposed to constant abuse and aggression from the general public.

Factors Responsible For Child Labour **Poverty**

Poverty here refers to lack which amounts to a comparative disadvantage in meeting basic needs, such as access to goods which helps to ensure physical existence. Such goods are normally obtainable from the market by means of income which may be insufficient, irregular or even non-existent. This is a big problem for children as they are almost always exclusively dependent on the parents/guardian for their needs. In such situations it may be seen as a ready alternative to allow or even require that the children get involved in some income-yielding adventure outside the home, even when it is realized it could be inappropriate for them to do so (Akhogba, 2016).

This is in fact the biggest and greatest causes of child labour. Sunandamma, (2014) states that the most important cause of wide spread child labour is the chronic poverty which forces the parents to send their children to seek employment. Parents are not only capable of investing in their children's development due to poverty, also reluctant to support them and want them to start learning as soon as possible. The above line of thought may be considered true since poverty is

highly depriving in nature. The National Human Development Report sees poverty as "A State of long term deprivation of those essential materials and non-material attributes of well-being which are considered necessary for a decent living" (NHDR 2008-2009).

Illiteracy

This is a globally anomaly which generally explains the inability to read and write. The ailment is also linked to child labour as one of the major cause. In Nigeria, illiteracy rate is still on the high side. According to (Nwokoro, 2011) illiteracy rate in Nigeria is still said to be high as the country is ranked 118th in educational attainment with male disproportionately higher than the female. Illiterate parents develops a high tendency of sending their children to engage in paid works or income generating activities than literate parents who are less likely to do. Observably too, illiteracy and poverty are related. However, the incidence of child labour is prone to reduce considerably if parents take keen decision concerning their children's welfare and consider their education as a primary concern.

Culture

Culture is primarily the way of life of a people transferred from one generation to another. In Nigeria, different tribes and culture directly and indirectly pose a leading role to the cause of child labour. For instance, in the Northern part of the country where child labour flourished greatly, it is widely observed that little children below 10 years of age go about rearing cattle, trekking long distance and covering kilometers as they gaze. In the same geographical terrain, there are evidence of "almajirana system" an Islamic culture where very little children are trained and encouraged by (Mallam) adult guidance to go about begging for money and other things, and return by the day's end and account for their gains. This practice makes for a method of sourcing income (Nwokoro, 2011).

More also, in the South Eastern part of Nigeria, among the igbo there is a belief that children must begin early in life to learn and acquire important skills for the future. Hence, children follows their parents to farm, market, paid jobs, stream, shops etc. These practices however in its initial state was

to teach children and not for just profit derivation sake but today following independence and the heightened state of corruption in Nigeria which has brought about poverty and social inequality.

Unemployment

Due to Nigeria's economic state, unemployment is a growing disease. It is the lack of job opportunities for the proportion of labour force available for work and is linked to the high prevalence of child labour in Nigeria. Parents who are unemployed easily encourage their children to engage in work in order to generate income. This situation is prominent in urban centre's like Lagos, Port-Harcourt, Aba etc and female children appears to be more engaged in it than their male counterpart (Eziwho, 2018).

Early Loss of Parents, Destitute and Orphan Children

Children within these categories in most times suffer negligence and helplessness from the society. Since one of man's ultimate will is to survive; abandon children must survive by either working menial jobs or prostituting, hawking/street trading, begging etc (Eziwho, 2018). This is a social reality today in Nigeria as the cause of child labour incident.

Large Family Size

Nwokoro (2011) many researches are of the opinion that one possible reason parents in developing countries have many children is because they believe children can be profitable economically as they seem to be much less economic burden in developing versus developed countries. In the earlier days of Africa society large household size is used to qualify the wealth and social status of a man. Courtesy of this practice is in the Igbo tribe and Yoruba nation where polygamous was a common practice. In recent times, the case is different and even widely spread given that the appearance of large family size amongst Nigerian families today is prominent amongst the middle and low class citizen. However, what is important is the social reality of today whereby large families who live

below average sees it necessary to send their numerous children out for work in order to meet up home demands (Eziwho, 2018).

Poor Government Regulation As Regards Child Labour

Observably, today there are various existing and developing laws and policies which if properly applied and implemented will considerably help to reduce the practices of child labour. According to Nwokoro, (2011) the following are examples; the convention on the Right of the child [CRC] OF THE United Nations constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, section 12(3), which seeks to ensure that all citizen have adequate security, suitable employment, and abuse.

The Child Right Act [CRA] of 2003, which provides for the protection of children against discrimination, harmful and exploitative practices such as child marriage, prostitution, and child labour etc. The Education for All [EFA] of 1990 which seeks to guarantee quality education for all Nigerians of school age, the Universal Primary Education [UPE] packaged by the Military Government in 1976 to develop the educational capacity of Nigerians. The Universal Basic Education OF 1990, which made the first 9years of schooling both free and compulsory for all Nigerian children of primary school age. In all of this and more however, corruption, weak institutions, poor funding and lack of will to execute and implement are the scourge of these laws and policies in Nigeria (Eziwho, 2018).

Methodology

The study adopt a descriptive survey research method. The population of this research study comprises of some selected secondary schools students from 5(five) selected secondary schools in Ilesa East Local Government Area of Osun State through simple random sampling. Hence, they will be true representative of all the secondary schools in the local government. The 150 quantitative data was collected using structured questionnaire that was filled by students. The data collected were analysed using

Result Finding

What is the effect of child labour on the academic performance of students in Ilesa East Local Government Area of Osun state?

Table 1: showing the effect of child labour on students' academic performance

Response on the effect of child labour	Strongly agreed		Agreed		Not Sure		Disagreed		Strongly disagreed		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
There is damage to health and psychological development	58	38.7	66	44	15	10	6	4	5	3.3	150	100
Students that works as well as go to school may find themselves less able to learn, as a result of exhaustion or insufficient time to complete homework	61	40.7	61	40.7	10	6.6	12	8	6	4	150	100
Long hour spent on the job result in fatigue, listlessness and lack of concentration in class	74	49.3	39	26	12	8	21	14	4	2.7	150	100
Child labour is found to increase the students probability of repeating a class	51	34	54	36	22	14.7	13	8.7	10	6.6	150	100
The use of school attendance as a measure of learning achievement is not ideal for estimating the harm that child labour causes	45	30	51	34	22	14.7	15	10	17	11.3	150	100

The data collected above shows that in line with the response to effects of child labour on academic performance of some selected secondary school students in Ilesa East Local Government Area of Osun State, there is damage to health and psychological development had 38.7% of respondents who strongly agreed, 44% agreed, 4% disagreed, 10% respondents were not sure and 3.3% strongly disagreed. Students that works as well as go to school may find themselves less able to learn, as a result of exhaustion or insufficient time to complete homework had 40.7% of respondents who strongly agreed, 40.7% agreed, 8% disagreed, 6.6% of the respondents were not sure and 4% strongly disagreed.

49.3% of the respondents agreed with the long hours spent on the job result in fatigue, listlessness and lack of concentration in class, 26% agreed, 14% disagreed and 2.7% of the respondents strongly disagreed and 8% of the respondents were not sure. 34% of the respondents strongly agreed that child labour is found to increase the students probability of

repeating a class, 36% agreed, 8.7% disagreed, 6.6% strongly disagreed and 14.7% of the respondents were not sure. The use of school attendance as a measure of learning achievement is not ideal for estimating the harm that child labour causes had 30% of the respondents who strongly agreed, 34% agreed, 10% disagreed and 11.3% of the respondents strongly disagreed and 14.7% were not sure.

According to the responses to the effect of child labour on academic performance of some school students in the study area, some of the respondents who strongly agreed and agreed, it's evident that child labour has got a number of effect on academic performance, majority of respondent were that child labour is found to increase the students probability of repeating a class with, the use of school attendance as a measure of learning achievement is not ideal for estimating the harm that child labour causes had, students that works as well as go to school may find themselves less able to learn as a result of exhaustion or insufficient time to complete

homework. There is damage to health and psychological development, as well as long hours spent on the job result in fatigue, listlessness and lack of concentration in class. The findings therefore imply that many respondents agreed

that child labour has got a number of negative effects on academic performance through increase in the student's probability of repeating a class and the lack of concentration in class,

The difference in academic performance of students exposed to child labour and those who are not

What is the difference in academic performance of students exposed to child labour and those who are not in Ilesa East Local Government Area of Osun state?

Table II: showing the response on the difference in academic performance of students exposed to child labour and those who are not

Response on the difference in academic performance of students exposed to child labour and those who are not	Strongly Disagreed		Disagreed		Not Sure		Agreed		Strongly Agreed		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Students exposed to child labour perform excellently than those who are not	32	21.3	60	40	20	13.4	24	16	14	9.3	150	100
Students exposed to child labour concentrate and are determined than those who are not	38	25.3	59	39.3	19	12.7	23	15.3	11	7.4	150	100
Because some children work and study, it makes them less competitive	13	8.6	19	12.7	25	16.7	60	40	33	22	150	100

The data collected above shows that in line with the response to the difference in academic performance of students exposed to child labour and those who are not, Students exposed to child labour perform excellently than those who are not had 21.3% of respondents who strongly disagreed, 40% disagreed, 16% agreed, 9.3% strongly agreed and 13.4% of respondents were not sure. 25.3% of respondents strongly disagreed that students exposed to child labour concentrate and are determined than those who are not, 39.3% disagreed, 15.3% agreed, 7.4% strongly agreed and 12.7% of respondents were not sure. 22% of respondents strongly agreed that because some children work and study make them less competitive, 40% agreed and 16.7% respondents were not sure, 12.7% disagreed and 8.6% of respondents strongly disagreed. According to the response to the difference in academic performance of students, the respondents who strongly agreed and agreed that it is evident that there is a number of differences in academic performance for students exposed to child labour do not perform excellently than those who are not.

students that are exposed to child labour do not concentrate, determined and are less competitive than those who are not. The findings therefore imply that there is difference in academic performance of students exposed to child labour and those who are not.

Conclusion

It was concluded that to a certain extent numerous and various factors are responsible for students' child labour. However, there are major difference in academic performance of students exposed to child labour and those who are not. The parent, school management and the government have a couple of role to play in eradicating child labour. There is need for government and other stakeholders to discourage child labour from the family level, since poverty emerged as the most constraining factor on working children. Consequently policy reform and poverty reduction strategies remain fundamental upstream concern and must be pursued to tackle inequality and poverty.

The school management should encourage both the parents to send their children to school since this eventually would reduce poverty in their homes when their children have received education (as a factor to liberate them from poverty). Also the children should be sensitized about the importance of educating and need for them to learn other than getting involved since this would mean a bright future for the children. Parents too should be sensitized on the importance of educating their children rather than using them to supplement to family income. Hence it should give parents the courage to face challenges and overcome them without stopping their children from going to school.

Finally, the government can help in curbing dropout rates by empowering parents through self-help programmes; hence children who have dropped out of school to help their parents will be able to continue with their education more effectively. Education policy/ officers at national and local level should also work with children officers to ensure that teachers and other facilitators will not discourage students' from learning in various educational institutions.

Recommendations

In light of the findings, the following recommendations were made.

There is need for government and other stakeholders to discourage child labour from the family level, since poverty emerged as the most constraining factor on working children. Consequently policy reform and poverty reduction strategies remain fundamental upstream concern and must be pursued to tackle inequality and poverty.

The school management should encourage both the parents to send their children to school since this eventually would reduce poverty in their homes when their children have received education (as a factor to liberate them from poverty). Also the children should be sensitized about the importance of educating and need for them to learn other than getting involved since this would mean a bright future for the children. Parents too should be sensitized on the importance of educating their children rather than

using them to supplement to family income. Hence it should give parents the courage to face challenges and overcome them without stopping their children from going to school.

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