

THE INFLUENCE OF EDUCATIONAL STATUS ON CHILD LABOUR IN NIGERIA : IMPLICATIONS FOR NATION'S POVERTY ALLEVIATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper the influence of educational status on child labour in Nigeria. The paper discovered that polygamy, divorce, separation, death of parents/guardian are among the factors that contribute immensely to child labour. Education also is a crucial component and contributing factor to the level of awareness and income an individual (parents and children alike) can attain; and in a great deal determine the tendency at which parents may subject their children to child labour (knowingly or unknowingly) to boost family income. There are many interlinked explanations for child labour. No single factor can fully explain its persistence and, in some cases, growth. Equal access to education in Nigeria is a basic right and there is growing concern that all children specifically girls, minorities, and children from low – income families are not afforded equal educational opportunities. This paper recommends that child labour should be brought under control by the joined effort of the government, corporate bodies, individuals and all concerned in order to provide the child with proper education, improve their well – being and create a brighter future for children and the nation at large..

Keywords: Agriculture, Illiteracy, Poverty, Policies and Nation.

INTRODUCTION

The incidence of child labour is a widespread and growing phenomenon in developing countries including Nigeria (Hunte, 2009). Labour force participation rates for children aged 5 – 14 years vary greatly from country to country, ranging from close to zero in most developed countries to an average of 20% in Latin America and 40% in Africa (UNICEF, 2002). There is no universal acceptable definition for child labour. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2007) noted that child labour pertains to any child under the age specified by law (5-17 years), working fulltime, mentally or physically, to earn money for survival or to add to family income and that interrupts the child's social and educational development. According to Okafor, (2007) child labour is work that is mentally, socially physically harmful to children's development. He further noted that child labour

involves the participation of children in productive labour for the purpose of earning money for the sustenance of self or family members. Thus child labour is therefore a challenging issue and widely spread in Nigeria as in many African countries. In developing countries, with high poverty and poor schooling opportunities, child labour is still prevalent. In 2010, sub – Saharan Africa had the highest incidence rates of child labour, with several African nations witnessing over 50 percent of children aged 5 – 14 working. Child labour has been the main thrust of universal discussions over a period of time, the United Nation International Children Educational Fund (UNICEF,1997) has estimated that there are 100 to 200 million child labourers across both industrialized and developing countries. Child labour in developing countries is a fundamental social problem with grave consequences for development (Onyemamauwa, Ogbetere, Onyeagocha and Ben-chendo, 2013). According to International Labour Organization, (ILO) the number of working children between the ages of 5 and 14 in developing countries including Nigeria is estimated to be at 250 million in developing countries, out of which 61% is in Asia, 32% in Africa, and 7% in Latin America. The same source indicates that 120 million children are full workers and 88% of them are between the ages of 10-14 years. This they attributed to the demographic explosion of impoverished people and inadequate level of economic growth across Africa (Omoni and Ijel, 2010). However, ILO (2005) report on child labour estimated 211 million children aged between 5-17 years engaged in child labour around the world (Abaraka, 2010). ILO estimated that 246 million children age 5-17 years currently work under condition that are considered illegal, hazardous or extremely exploitative (Anumaka, 2012).Nigeria's ratification of several ILO Conventions, which have bearing on child labour, is an indication of its commitment to eradicate or reduce the problems of child labour. As far as can be ascertained these conventions are not contravened in the public sector, whilst there are scattered evidences that are violated in varying degrees in the semi-formal and informal sector.

According to the Federal Bureau of Statistics (FOS), the National Modular Child Labour Survey Report in Nigeria (2001), the major findings were:

- i The survey indicated a national population estimation of 119,616. Out of this figure, the total numbers of children aged 5-17 years were 38,061,333 and constituted 31.9 percent of the total Nigeria population.
- ii Out of this figure, it is quite worrisome that over 6 million (6,102,406) children were found not to be attending school. Of this number 987,155, had dropped out of school.
- iii iSurvey indicated that 61.1 percent of working children, who were attending school, saved their income to go to school whilst another significant proportion - 16.8 percent – who were not schooling, saved for the same reason.
- iv 41.1 percent of children who were not attending school, attributed their reason for not attending school to “parents not interested”.

Child labour is widely recognized as a major hindrance to reach the EDUCATION FOR All (EFA) goals by restricting the right of millions of children to access and benefit from education,. in spite of government efforts at stopping it and ensuring the education of all. In addition, FOS (2008) national estimates put the number of children under 14 years of age working to pay for the cost of school at 8 million. The same estimation revealed that about 1 million children have been forced to drop out of school because their parents demand that they stop attending school in order to boost family income.

These statistics most certainly carry consequences for manpower development and human resources of the nation (Ekpenyong and Sibiri, 2011)

A 2003 ILO survey of child labour in Nigeria identified eight (8) causative factors. these are; cultural influence, economic problems, national debt, low education, unemployment, inability to cope, street life, and single parents families. (Ekpenyong, and Sibiri 2011). From the list above, low-education is ranked as fourth (4th) among the causative factors of child labour. In a similar work by Onyemamauwa, et al (2013) on “household poverty status and child labour participation in Isoko-North, Delta State, Nigeria”, they came up with the summation that households’ poverty status and formal education had significance impact on child labour. They recommended that house heads should be encouraged to acquire more education which would provide better employment opportunities, increase their household’s income, move them out of poverty and also reduces their participation in child labour activities.

Most parent who engage in child labour mainly are illiterates or semi-literates and do not appreciate the importance of sending their children to school. Researchers observed that rural poverty, lack of employment or partial employment, and illiteracy have given birth to majority of child labour problems. As most parent out of share illiteracy/ignorance inadvertently give out their children to middlemen that come to them falsely, present a better lifestyle for children and in turn use them for hazardous and dangerous works (Child labour).

Cassie and Ariadne (2010) noted that over 2.7 million children in Uganda are involved in child labour, of these 35% work and attend classes at the same time, 60.3% work without going to school, while 4.7% neither involved in work nor attend school. Also, Ekpenyong, et al (2011) in their work on “street trading and child labour in Yenagoa, Nigeria” found out that 28% of their respondents had primary education, 34% had secondary education, 8% had post-secondary education, while 50% had no education. These statistics shows that a better part of those children engaged in child labour are those not in school.

Child labour is a global problem, though common in Africa, Asia and Latin America but in Delta State. The following are common ones observed - domestic house help engaged in heavy domestic work, sending of children to learn a trade, children hawking in street, child prostitution and children in farms and industries. It is a known fact that education enhances human capital; child labour is a problem which can be alleviated by a better allocation of government resources towards educating the citizens. Educational status has several implications regarding child labour. First, schools can receive the necessary structural adjustments that are necessary for quality education. Teachers can be provided with continuing education, classrooms can be equipped with basic amenities, and students can be assured of necessary resources like books and pencil and there might be some psychological effect.

Household are influenced by social events, and governments placing higher priority on education may provide the social clue needed for households to choose higher levels of education for their children. Enhanced educational status will lead to improved household income thereby converting domestic servant options to paid employments to adult workers. Although some educated homes still employ the services of children as domestic servants but with government legislation

against it will eradicate child labour in the state. The work observed that educational status has inverse relationship with child labour, the higher the level of household education, the less the incidence.

Child labour as a barrier to education

Education provides situations that equip a child to learn through experience brought about by instructions. It provides the child with certain skills, knowledge and abilities/competencies that may be required later in life. Good education provides the child with a world of opportunities for self – improvement and greater participation in the wider society. Okafor (2007), noted that the ability of young people to embrace the opportunities for employment will depend to a large extent upon the type of education and training they received. Lack of education among poorer sections of society is also a leading cause for children to start working early. Ignorant and illiterate people do not think twice about engaging their children in manual labour, since they are not aware of the harmful physical and moral trauma it can inflict on the child. Being poor, they cannot afford a decent education for the children, nor do they understand the importance of primary education in children's lives. In many developing nations, textile and garment manufacturers use children to make garments. Factory owners cut back costs by employing children rather than adults, who are in turn paid a lot less and forced to work a lot more. Also, there is no risk of these young labourers coming up against the factory owners by forming unions because they are unaware of their rights, and hence this practice flourishes on a large scale. These children often face severe mental trauma when they attain adulthood, owing to the constant threats and ill – treatment they received toiling away as labourers. Children who cannot find work to feed large families resort to begging on the streets, and in many cases, also fall prey to prostitution. At other times, they even turn into thieves just to make a quick buck on which the family's survival depends.

The possible importance of reduced learning achievement is well recognized as one of the major harmful effects of child labour, and this has been reflected in a number of projects around the world that are designed to mitigate this effect. Although child work has a number of other possible harmful effects, including damage to health and psychological development, particular attention has been paid to its educational impact for two reasons. First, education is seen as fundamental to improving the quality of life in developing countries, by lifting the people who are educated out of poverty and by improving the quality of human resources that are available for national economic development. Second, the impact of child labour on education is both easily believable (a child that is working cannot be at school or doing homework at the same time) and has been readily quantifiable from household survey data, at least by school attendance. It also has a negative impact on the welfare of a nation. Since these children do not receive any education, it increases illiteracy, hampering the overall economic growth of the country, reflecting poor human development. Lack of education as children also means that when they turn into adults, finding jobs become tough since these children do not possess the necessary skills and training.

However, the use of school attendance as a measure of learning achievement is not ideal for estimating the harm that child work causes. On the one hand, it might over – estimate the harm of child labour, neglecting the part played by poor quality education in many schools in developing countries and the fact that some children may receive an informal education (from work or just daily experiences). On the other hand, it might under – estimate the harm of child labour, because children that work as well as go to school may find themselves less able to learn, as a result of exhaustion or insufficient time to complete homework. Therefore, there is a strong case for measuring the effects of child labour directly on what children are able to do, instead of simply on how long they spend in school. These problems have led researchers to look for indicators of school achievement that go beyond simple attendance. Okafor, (2007) noted that several factors that contribute to child labour including, age, gender, language and number of siblings reduce school attendance and increase the chances of grade repetition in schools. The measurement of the effects of child labour on learning achievement can make several contributions. First, it will help in an understanding of the decisions that households make as to whether or not their children should work. Second, it will provide an idea of the

educational interventions perhaps through schooling at more convenient times or less formal education that might be desirable to mitigate the effects of work on education. Third, it will provide a better idea of one of the benefits of policies and projects to reduce child labour and so lead to better design of such interventions.

Social factors also influence child labour in Nigeria, among such factors is the polygamy and over population, marriage separation and divorce, death of parents/guardians, high cost of health care, lack of attention from parents among others. Such children are always underpaid, and that lowers the country's per capita income, putting long – term economic development in peril. Steps must be taken to educate ignorant people from poorer sections can turn into civilized adults, get decent jobs, and contribute to the economic growth of the nation. Child employment or under – age labour is a social evil that needs to be abolished. Even though countries have laws in place, these are not being implemented, leading to further exploitation of innocent children. In Nigeria education can hold the key towards successful livelihood while lack of it can spell doom for the individual. The impact of child labour on education cannot be overemphasized. In fact all forms child labour pose serious barrier to the education of the child and these are seen as:

i children who are engaged in domestic servants for instance and are subjected to working late into the nights and waking up early in the morning, these have the tendency to sleep while class activities are going on in the school because of physical exhaustion/fatigue. This does not in any way promote

learning in the child.

ii children who hawk before going to school are bound to arrive school late and are sure to miss the lessons, thus depriving the child of the opportunities to learn. More so they do not have time for their homework.

iii Most other children labours are not allowed to go to school at all, lack of education becomes a clog in the wheel of their progress in life.

iv Other children engaged in hazardous labour face various forms of deforming ill health and psychological experiences and infections. These constitute impediments to learning which is vital for the development and improvement of the child.

Implications for poverty alleviation

Various official reports have established that child activity options have a link to household poverty. Specifically, research acknowledges a two – way link between child labour and household poverty. Some researchers Diganta and Saswati, (2008) and Bhargava, (2009), noted that the increasing participation of children in economic activities is as a result of illiteracy and poverty, among other social and economic problems. Others view such participation as an important strategy by poor households to rise above the poverty line. From all ramifications, child labour does not provide the child with educational opportunities for self-development. It is rather a route towards abject poverty because it deprives the child, the opportunities for acquisition of skills and abilities that could help the child develop the self. Children are rather exposed to serious hazards stemming from the nature of work or poor working conditions. The hazards associated with the involvement of children in the labour market are enough to hypothesize that child labour use persist in inverse relation to the degree of economic advancement of a society. This is because children are not physically suited to long hours of strenuous works, are not usually aware of dangers at work or do not have much knowledge of the precautions to be taken to avoid injuries. This corroborates the study by Akubue and Anikweze (2014) and Vankin (2009) that low income and inequality of income among parents are the economic factors that influence child labour tremendously. Olukoye , (2013), noted that poverty is a dominant factor in the use of a child as a labourer in Africa. Families below the poverty level, force their children into work at early age to suppleent their household meager income. While Ogbonna, (2011), noted that children are predominantly employed by their parents rather than factories since agriculture is the largest employer of child labour in Nigeria hence, majority of the child labour is bound in rural settings. Low income and inequality of income among parents are the economic factor

that influence child labour tremendously in Africa as low earners often send their children to higher income families as maids and boy servants to boost their family welfare (Vakin, 2009).

The participation of children in economic activity particularly increases in rural areas. In all the measures of poverty used, there are also differences in child activity option across poverty status which points to poverty as an important variable of child welfare. The econometric estimation noted that the age of the child, household, composition, education of father, zones, community variables and adult income determines child activity option. The effects of child labour on the psychological, emotional and Intellectual growth of the victims are also grave and the learning abilities of children working long hours can be impaired (Rosen, 1999). This means that most child labourers could be condemned to long poverty, sickness, illiteracy and social disfunction (Ezem 2001). Bennet and Shere (2010) noted that it was estimated by International Labour Organization (ILO) that 246 million children age 5 – 17 years from low income families worldwide work under hazardous or extremely exploitative conditions. They also stated that a large number of children work in fishery farm, agriculture and domestic services because their parents are poorly paid. Children involvement in child labour is a violation of childhood from parents and guardians

The past civilian administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo designed the Universal Basic Education (U.B.E) as a way forward for granting basic education to the Nigerian child and alleviating or better still eradicating poverty from the Nigeria families. The Government should define specific labour conditions and generate awareness. Most employers who engage under aged children most often do not know that are engaged in child labour. Deutsch (2007) in his study in India looked at the incidence of harmful and manual occupation among the children and their relation with level of education of mother. He observed that mothers education appear as the most important factor in curbing the manual work incidences among children, women empowerment. Children's non – participation in school is related to poverty. Chibuzor (2011) observed that child labour is very visible because of poverty, inflation and unemployment. Therefore, children in Nigeria and African nation are involved in all forms of child labour. These children work for employers either for meager cash or kind. They are used for cheap labour, paid very little and often subjected to all forms of wickedness. Azubuike (2013) observed that street work impart negatively on the child street labourer. These constitute impediments to learning that is vital to for the development and improvement of the child. The possible importance of reduced learning achievement is well recognized as one of the major harmful effects of child labour, and this has been reflected in a number of projects around the world that are designed to mitigate this effect. Adebayo (2010) noted that although child work has a number of other possible harmful effects, including damage to health and psychological development, particular attention has been paid to its educational impact for two major reasons. First, education is seen as fundamental to improving the quality of life in developing countries, by lifting people who are educated out of poverty and by improving the quality of human resources that are available for national economic development. Secondly, the impact of child labour on education is both easily believable (a child that is working cannot be at school or doing homework at the same time) and has been readily quantifiable from household survey data, at least as measured by school attendance.

CONCLUSION

This paper has clearly illustrated that many parents have knowledge of child labour and could identify forms of it. It also observed that a good number of parents think it is appropriate for children to work but many would not allow any of their children work between the ages of 5-15 years.

Furthermore, many of the parents perceive child labour as being hazardous and believe that sexual harassment, teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease, adverse effect on education, as well as other hazards could be encountered in its course. Thus, the child is likely to grow up uneducated and get married to an illiterate or semi-literate like him/her and the vicious cycle of ignorance, illiteracy, poverty, and child labour continues, at the detriment of their children, born and unborn, and the society at large. Though this paper may not have shown the perception of all parents, the effects of educational status on child labour, it will serve as baseline for further studies and research in this respect

. In view of these reasons the following recommendations were necessary:

- i Government should enact policies and legislations that will protect children from child labour.
- ii Campaigns should be organized to educate parents and children on the evils of child labour.
- iii Family planning awareness campaign should be created among parents to enlighten them on the danger and burden of many children.
- iv Ensure full implementation of the Universal basic Education (UBE) Scheme, with provision of free, and compulsory education covering primary and junior secondary education as well as rural population, nomadic population, persons in physically isolated settlements, urban slums adult illiterates, street children, “almajirai”, children and adolescents with special needs, the ‘girl child’, the ‘boy child’, and other special areas of needs.
- v Make formal education attractive rather than burdensome through adequate supply of necessary facilities, uniforms, textbooks midday meals etc
- vi Government should alleviate poverty through economic empowerment of the citizens.
- vii Enrich school curricula need that will be relevant to the need of children in particular communities.
- viii Create vocational training opportunity and apprenticeship programmes for both boy and girls above school age, which focus on education and training, and to be monitored by competent authorities.

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