
**CHILD LABOUR AND ITS SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS ON CHILDREN IN
SELECTED CITIES IN NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT: *Severe economic crisis has contributed to the rise in the incidence of child labour in Nigerian cities. For many hours a day, children are engaged in economic tasks (paid and unpaid for), which are detrimental to their physical, mental, social and moral well-being. For these children, involvement in child labour has limited their social relevance to the immediate and larger society. The main objective of this study therefore, is to examine the social implications of child labour on children in selected Nigerian cities. The specific objectives of the study include: (i) assess the incidence of child labour in the Nigerian cities, (ii) examine the implications of child labour on children's education, health and delinquent behaviour. The study adopts survey research method in which relevant data were collected through administered questionnaire to respondents. The respondents were selected from three cities in Nigeria namely; Ibadan, Enugu, and Kaduna. The cities were selected based on their strategic importance as former administrative centres of the three old regions of Nigeria. Some of these areas were chosen randomly in each city and a total of 826 child labourers were selected as respondents using judgemental sampling method. Chi-square was used to determine the relationship between the type of child labour engaged in and respondents' social characteristics. Findings from the study revealed that: (i) child labour activities fall into different categories namely, bus conducting, car washing, hawking, begging and others such as weaving, tailoring, hairdressing and auto-repairing, (ii) most children who engage in child labour are largely from the lower economic stratum of the society; (iv) incidence of child labour was also significantly related to the rate of child's health status ($r = 0.21 > t_{0.05}$); school attendance ($r = -0.62 > t_{0.05}$); academic performance ($r = 0.39 > t_{0.05}$) their delinquent behaviours ($r = 0.57 > t_{0.05}$); contact with parent ($r = 0.24 > t_{0.05}$) and child's exploitation by employers ($r = 0.31 > t_{0.05}$). In conclusion, children who engage in economic activities are found to be different with respect to their social development. It is therefore recommended that: (i) strict measure should be taken by appropriate authorities to curtail employers from engaging under-aged children in hazardous jobs that can impair their health status and hinder their educational development; (ii) there should be public enlightenment programmes, targeted at the poor section of the population, on the negative implications of child labour to the victims (the children), the family and the society at large; and (iii) efforts should be made to embark on realistic and practicable poverty alleviation programmes aimed at reducing the incidence of poverty among Nigerians which was found to be a major cause of child labour.*

KEYWORDS: Child Labour; Child Rights; Social Implications; Poverty; Delinquent Behaviour

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Over the last few decades, the phenomenon of child labour has become prominent globally with serious implications for the survival of the children. The presence of child labour in

major cities of the world has transcended the level where it was viewed as strictly uncommon occurrence to a worrisome global problem. The problem is more escalating and alarming especially in developing countries (Sylvia, 2001; Ekpenyoung and Sibiri, 2011). Child labour is a widespread problem in the contemporary world, especially in the developing countries. A report of International Labour Organization ILO (2003) confirmed that Africa has the highest incidence of child labour with 40% of all its children aged 5-14 working. Asia is second to Africa with 21%, followed by Latin America with 17%. On the contrary in continents like Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand, children below 15 years rarely work except in commercial agriculture. This is because of the effective enforcement of laws passed in the first-half of the 20th century (ILO, 2006).

In Nigeria, child labour practices seem to be on the increase (Osiruemu, 2007). This is perhaps due to economic crisis, which started in the 1980s. The Nigerian economic crisis has made life worse for children of the poor whose parents have either lost their jobs or suffered a drastic decline of income (Euka, 2006 and Onuoha, 2008). Problems such as malnutrition, high infant mortality, overcrowding, and others have been exacerbated as many Nigerian families were pushed below the poverty level even as a small class of people profited from the economic crisis. The economic crisis has also led to the abandonment of traditional and family responsibilities with serious effect on the underprivileged and the children. The outcome of this is clearly visible in the high increase of children who engage in child labour in both the formal and informal sectors (Dumalao, 2008).

Child labour, according to ILO, (1998 and 2005), UNICEF (2008), involves all works which are harmful to a child's health. These works include any work that violates children's fundamental human rights and any work that is dangerous or threatening. It also includes works that exhaust children's strength and damage their bodies. Whatever works that prevents children from going to school to gain basic skills and knowledge for their future development is included in the definition of child labour. With this, child labour is a challenge that every modern society has to contend with.

Child labour has devastating effects on children, their families, communities in which they live, and generally on national development. The consequences of child labour on child development are obvious. They include health hazard, physical abuse, fatigue, poor school performance, academic wastage, sexual abuse, accident, youth violence among others. Physical and health consequences of child labour include stunting, breathing problems owing to exposure to toxic substances, accident proneness, contamination of cuts and wounds. While cognitive problems include not attending schools, class retention and high dropout rate and achievement deficits, social and physiological consequences include isolation of working children from their families and peer-groups, stigmatization of work by peers, lowering of self-esteem of children and perception of relative deprivation (ILO, 2002 and Oloko, 1999).

Many people and organisation are concerned about child labour. Various researches/project study on child labour, and numerous books and studies have been published on the subject. The concerns partly stem from the kinds of work children do, some of which cause irreversible physical or psychological damage or even thereafter their lives, and partly from the overwhelming number of children who work (Anker, 1998; Bass, 2004; Weston, 2005; Rabi, 2010; Onimajesin, 2011).

In spite of all these efforts to combat the menace of child labour, it is still prevalent in most countries of the world today including Nigeria. It is in this context that the present study sets out to examine the pattern of child labour and its socio-economic implications in some major cities in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the patterns of child labour and its socio-economic implications in some of the major cities in Nigeria.

Specifically, the study attempts to:

- a. examine the pattern of child labour in some of the major cities in Nigeria.
- b. examine the extent to which socio-economic factors influence the pattern of child labour in some major cities in Nigeria.
- c. examine the extent to which the pattern of child labour have implications on children's education, health, feeding, delinquent behaviour, etc in some of the major cities in Nigeria.
- d. make policy recommendations toward reducing the phenomenon of child labour and its social implications.

Statement Of Hypotheses

- a. There is a relationship between the pattern of child labour and the reported rate of children's health status.
- b. There is a relationship between pattern of child labour and the reported rate of school attendance by children.
- c. There is a relationship between the pattern of child labour and the reported rate of children academic performance.
- d. There is a relationship between the pattern of child labour and the reported rate of children involvement in delinquent behaviour.
- e. There is a relationship between the pattern of child labour and the reported rate of children isolation from parent.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The definition of what constitutes child labour varies among professional groups, across cultural, ethnic, and religious groups and by geographical locations (Gelles 1993; Rodger and Standing, 1981; Bissel 2003). This makes the concept of child labour not as simple and straight forward as it may be. For instance, the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1998) refers to the employment of children less than a specified legal age as child labour. Although in the context of this study, as stated earlier, a working definition of a "child" may be "a person below the international agreed age limit of 15 years". But "labour" is also a controversial concept to define especially in case of children. This is because children assist their families at home from early years. They also assist in farms, in shops, etc. But, this is not what is called child labour. Rather a work or employment situation where children engage on a more or less regular basis to earn a live hood for themselves or their families is child labour (ILO, 2002).

The notion of child labour is intended to cover the children under the age of 15, who are engaged in works or employment with the aim of earning a live hood for themselves or for

their families. It is instructive to note that there is still confusion about the definition of child labour because scholars do not always specify what definition they are using. For instance, International Conventions adopted by the United Nations and International Labour Organizations define “child” as ‘anyone below the age of 18’, and “child labour” as “some types of work performed by children below age of 18”. Yet, ILO Conventions variously defined the appropriate minimum age of work as age 15 or under 14 in developing nations; where in another Convention the definition of the “worst” forms of work applied to all children under age 18.

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that child labour covers the work which children under the age of 18 engage in with the aim of earning a live hood for themselves or for their families. However, there are many factors that influence child labour in our society. From the literature, the causes of child labour includes parental influence, family size, and lack of labour restrictions, poverty, traditional factors, rapid rural-urban migration, level of education. Among these, poverty is the most expected but nonetheless contentious determinants of child labour. The role of poverty has been the cornerstone of much of the thinking about child labour (Basu, 1999; Ray, 2000; Nagaraj, 2002; Nwana, 2005; Kpakol, 2007). Research study seems to confirm its significance. Even in very poor nations, where child labour is widespread and human beings of all ages are subjects to the same laws, the children of doctors, lawyers, professors, and the middle class in general are not found to be labouring. But this is not so for the less privileged ones.

Child labour manifests in various forms. These manifestations can be broken down into the forms such as engaging in domestic services, forced and bonded labour, street hawking, street begging, mining and plantation works, sex workers, shoe shining, car washers/washing, apprentices among others, none of which are unique to any particular region of the world (Ukpabi 1997 and ILO, 2005). In all these forms, children in domestic services are in large number but they are among the most invisible child labour and therefore, difficult to survey and analyse. Children in domestic services are in large number but they are among the most invisible child labour and therefore, difficult to survey and analyse (Oloko, 1999). This was different from the past when children engaged in as domestic servant mainly through direct contact between the child’s parents and employees, sometimes as a form of traditional, fostering arrangement, whereby children would receive educational or vocational training in return for work in the household. Increasingly, however, this link with the child’s parents and sense of obligation has been eroded as more and more children are procured from impoverished rural families by middle men, driven only by a commercial motive. The children are transported long distances to work in urban households of Ilorin. Since the welfare condition of the domestic child labourers are no longer monitor by their own family members, employer frequently engage them in long hours of work, with little or no rest periods. They are often fed and clothed worse than the children of the house. These children are also deprived of any opportunity to go to school.

Children suffer injuries while working or fall ill due to their work. These injuries according to Ashagrie (1999) include punctures, broken or complete loss of body parts, burn and skin disease, eye and learning impairment, respiratory and gastro-internal illness, fever, and headaches from excessive heat in the factories. A high proportion of these children had no

money to consult a doctor. Moreover, child labour also leads to increase in juvenile crime, including drug abuse. Tell (May 2000) reported that three out of every ten criminals apprehended in the cities of Lagos, Ibadan, Kano and Onitsha were under the age of 18 years. The UNDCP (1998) situation report found that drug abuse was alarming among young people, especially street children, orphans and child commercial sex workers. In the age group 10-19 years, 8.2 per cent have used cannabis at some time in their lives. The report also showed a high incidence of non-medical or self medicated use of benzodiazepines, psychotropic substance which are easy to obtain as a result of the non-enforcement of law on their sale and distribution. An earlier UNDCP (1998) study confirms the use of volatile organic solvents, such as petrol, among street children, especially in the northern part of the country.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Structural Strain Model (Robert, K.M. 1968) was adopted for this study. The model explains deviant behaviour as the outcome of social strain that put pressure on some people to deviate. A version of structural strain theory is the ancient adage that says "poverty breeds crime". It presupposes that the very existence of a category of poor people within the social structure created pressure for certain deviance. Modern structural strain theory uses an important concept that Durkheim (1858-1917) introduced to modern sociology-anomie, a condition of confusion that exists in both individual and society when social norms are weak, absent or conflicting.

Merton (1968) suggests that people may respond to a discrepancy between approved goals and approved methods of reaching them in one of five different ways, depending on their acceptance or rejection of the goals or the means (see table below).

Merton Typology of Different Response to Goal Attainment

Modes of Adapting	Accepts Culturally Approved Goals	Accepts Culturally Approved Means
Conformity	Yes +	Yes +
Innovator	Yes +	No –
Ritualist	No –	Yes +
Retrealist	No –	No –
Rebel	No + (Creates and goals	No ± (Creates and goals

Source: Adapted from Robert, K.M. (1968:194) Social Theory and Social Structure New York: Free Press.

According to Merton's theory, conformism occurs when people accept both the approved goals and the approved means for success and generally use the approved means even if they are unsuccessful. Innovation occurs when people accept the approved goals, but resort to disapproved means. Thus, the most common form of deviance occurs, for example when a student wants to pass a test but resorts to cheating or when a woman who wants to earn income becomes a prostitute.

Ritualism occurs when people abandon the goals as irrelevant to their lives, but still accept and compulsorily enact the means. The classic example is the bureaucrat who becomes

obsessed with petty rules and procedures, losing sight of the objectives that the rules were designed to achieve.

Retreat occurs when people abandon both the approved goals and the approved means of achieving them. The retreaters are “double failures” in the eyes of society: the vagrant, the chronic narcotics addict, the “skid-row bum”. Rebellion occurs when people reject both the approved goals and means and then substitute new, disapproved ones instead. This, for example, may reject the goal of personal wealth and a business career as the way to achieve it, turn instead to a goal of social equality to be achieved through revolution.

The strength of the structural strain approach to the child labour practices rests on the assumption that human beings place heavy emphasis on attaining a given goal but remain fairly tolerant on how one goes to attain it. This is a plausible explanation because the employers who exploit these children believe that wealth is a basic symbol of success without a corresponding emphasis on the legitimate means of attaining them. Similarly, the parents of these child workers and the children themselves want to improve the economic needs of their household without adopting the legitimate means to match towards these goals.

METHODOLOGY

Study Location

Three cities in Nigeria were used for the study, these are Ibadan (South-West), Enugu (South-East), and Kaduna (North-Central). The choice of selecting these three cities is unique because each of the cities was the capital of former regions of West, East and North. Also they represent three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. The locations selected for this study in the three cities are: Motor Park, Street, Market, School Environment, Business centres etc. The reasons for choosing these locations are because, they are high areas where child labourers can be found. They include; children who attend school and only work after school, and those who do not attend school at all but engage in various economic activities on a full-time basis.

Research Design

The research design adopted was survey which deals with systematic description of an event in a very factual and accurate manner. The system involves direct contact with the population of the study.

Study Population

The study population is children between age 5-17 years, the urban study sites chosen for the survey are:

S/N	Zone	State	City	Sample Population
1	South-West	Oyo	Ibadan	301
2	North-Central	Kaduna	Kaduna	273
3	South-East	Enugu	Enugu	252
Total				826

Sampling Techniques

The research adopted purposive sampling and random sampling for the study. Purposive sampling was used because of non-availability of a sample frame for the target population, and

the dispersed nature of the child labourers. The random sampling was used to give equal chance of selecting the respondents from motor parks, street market and other areas in the cities where there are high activities of child labour.

Research Instruments

A self administered questionnaire was the major instrument used to collect data for the study. Direct observation was also used to observe the behavioural patterns being exhibited by the child labourers e.g (i) conditions under which children worked (ii) children physical appearance and health status (iii) types of hazards children were exposed to.

Method of Data Analysis

Two methods of data analysis were used for the data analysis, firstly, Univariate Analysis was used for calculating frequency distribution with percentage for each of the factors, and

secondly, Chi-square was used to test the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

RESULTS

Hypothesis One

Relationship between the Respondents' Pattern of Child Labour and Reported Rate of Children's Health Status

Pattern of child Labour (based on child labour)	Health status (sick per week)				
	Once	Twice	More than twice	None	Total
Supported parent	144	63	25	75	307
Pay school fees	41	27	24	43	135
Buy clothes	47	23	16	29	115
Start Business	57	33	10	36	136
Saving	44	23	6	28	101
Others	13	6	2	11	32
Total	346	175	83	222	826

$$X^2_c = 84.010 > X^2_t(0.05) = 31.404; df = 20; n = 826$$

Hypothesis Two

Relationship between the Respondents' Pattern of Child Labour and Reported Rate of School Attendance

Pattern of Child Labour (based on reasons)	School attendance by Children					
	One day	Two days	Three days	Four days	Five days	Total
Supported parent	142	59	81	17	8	307
Pay school fees	67	34	25	5	4	135
Buy clothes	52	34	24	3	2	115
Start Business	66	35	27	5	3	136
Savings	50	25	23	1	2	101
Others	10	14	6	2	0	32
Total	387	201	186	33	19	826

$$X^2_c = 92.147 > X^2_t(0.05) = 31.404; df = 20; n = 826$$

Hypothesis Three**Relationship between the Respondents' Pattern of Child Labour and Reported Rate of Children Academic Performance**

Pattern of Child Labour (base on reason)	Academic Performance			
	Affect	Not affect	I can't say	Total
Supported parent	231	30	14	275
Pay school fees	78	21	9	108
Buy clothes	77	14	6	97
Start Business	98	14	6	118
Saving	62	15	6	83
Others	12	8	3	23
Total	558	102	44	704

$$X^2_c = 39.536 > X^2_t(0.05) = 19.026; df = 10; n = 826$$

Hypothesis Four**Relationship between the Respondents' Pattern of Child Labour and Delinquent Behaviours**

Pattern of child labour (based on reasons)	Delinquent behaviours' habits					Total
	Stealing	Fighting	Smoking	Taking Alcohol	Others	
Supported parent	10	129	51	54	27	271
Pay school fees	3	53	29	12	9	106
Buy clothes	4	39	21	16	15	95
Start Business	5	53	20	24	14	116
Saving	9	41	17	11	3	81
Others	5	8	7	2	0	22
Total	36	323	145	119	68	691

$$X^2_c = 62.592 > X^2_t(0.05) = 31.40; df = 20; n = 826$$

Hypothesis Five**Relationship between Pattern of Child Labour and Regular Contact with Family Members.**

Pattern of child labour (based on reason)	Regular contact with family members			
	Yes	No	I can't say	Total
Support parent	177	80	50	307
Pay school fess	87	34	14	135
Buy clothes	62	42	11	115
Start business	75	43	18	136
Saving	64	24	13	101
Others	21	4	7	32
Total	486	227	113	826

$$X^2_c = 5.727 < X^2_t(0.05) = 19.026, df = 10, n = 826$$

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The first social implication to be discussed in this section is the effects of child labour on the children's health status. Based on this, Ashagrie (1999) confirms that children suffer injuries while working or fall ill due to their works. These injuries according to him include broken or complete loss of body parts, skin burn and skin disease, eye impairment, respiratory and

gastro-intestinal illness, fever and headaches. Infected wounds sometimes result in death from tetanus; chemical poisoning from toxic substances, risk of contracting infectious diseases from decaying refuse, food processing, potential accidents from combustible material and road accident. In addition, Belsey (1999) opines that carrying heavy loads or sitting for long periods in unnatural positions can permanently disable growing bodies of child labourers as most of them are less mature for such work.

The second social implication finding is that the incidence of child labour was found to affect the respondents' school attendance. In Nigeria quality education is no longer free, and the money to attain this is very costly for child labourers and their parents to bear. This is because most of the children involved in child labour activities when interviewed confirmed that they were paid small amount of money or may not be paid sometimes. This situation may not afford their parent to cope with the expenditure of their school fees. Statistics shows in Nigeria that these working children lose out on education because they have no time, money to go to school (Aliyu, 2010; Rabi, 2010). It also shows that about six million children, comprising of boys and girls, do not attend school at all, while one million children are forced to drop out of school due to poverty or because their parents demand for them to contribute to the family's income. Over eight million children manage to stay in school and work at their spare time to pay school fees. But due to high demand at work, these children normally skip classes (Rabi, 2010; Eber 2010). Even free education where there are no tuition fees is not without its cash cost necessary supplies of textbooks, written materials, school uniform and transport. The amount of money to keep children in school can therefore be quite substantial for child labourers and their parents to be paid.

. Similarly, the third finding was related to the earlier discussion, which is the effect of child labour on children's academic performance. Children who work do not have full opportunity to go to school regularly. In view of this, children can experience negative effects on their educational development and performance. Illiteracy, low school attendance, and low enrolment have developmental and performance implications and have been attributed to children's labour participation (Basu and Van, 1998). Corroborating this, a study conducted by Heady, (2000) showed that some children were able to combine school and economic work, and work did not seriously affect attendance like academic performance. In line with this, a study in Tanzania showed those excessive hours of non-school work (including housework) is related to poorer performance in reading for girls and arithmetic for boys (Akabayashi and Psacharopoulos 1999). A similar study in Nigeria by Togunde and Richardson (2006) shows that children whose parents have higher education and higher income are significantly more likely to work few hours, and their performance is averagely higher than children whose parent have low education.

The fourth finding under social implications indicates that child labour activities have relationship with respondents' delinquent behaviour. This finding supports the report of Tell (May 2010) that three out of every ten criminals apprehended in the cities of Lagos, Ibadan, Kano, and Onitsha were under 18 years. The UNDP (1999, 2003) reports found that drug abuse was alarming among young people, especially street children, orphans and child commercial sex workers. It is also a known fact that child labourers tend to keep bad company and are negatively pressured by peers to engage in delinquent behaviours (Hughes, 2009).

However, the penultimate finding of the social implication series revealed that child labour activities did not affect the respondents in having regular contact with family members. This is so because most of the respondents interviewed claimed that they were living with their parents and family members. The result is congruent with those of Emerson and Souza (2002) who claimed that children are significantly more likely to be engaged in work if their parents worked when they young. It means that many child labourers work under the knowledge of their parents.

The last finding confirmed that child labourers were been exploited by their employers and wards. It means that the money paid to the child labourers were not commensurate with the efforts they put in the kind of works they were doing. Elson (1982) and IPEC (1999) observed that in the labour market, children's jobs may involve work they are good at because they are children, such as begging, or work for which they can be paid less than adults such as unskilled tasks.

Similarly, Anker (1998) argues that employers prefer children to work in their organisations because they are paid less than adults on a daily rate basis and also more work can be extracted from them owing to their greater docility and lack of awareness of, and ability to claim. Given the predominance of child labour in the informal economy, the vast majority of working children are unpaid family workers assisting in both domestic and outside home enterprises (IPEC, 1999 and Rabiou 2010).

The general report of the results stated above is in line with some of the positions suggested by different theories adopted for this study. For example, on the issue of child labour, the structural strain theory sees child labour as a form of deviant behaviour. Deviance is as a result of social strain on the people to deviate. This was confirmed by some of our respondents who said they were into what they were doing not because they liked it but because of poverty. Therefore, stress in the family can precipitate the child to involve in delinquent behaviour. With this, child workers want to improve the economic needs of their families without adopting the legitimate means to attain these goals.

With the above findings, this study is expected to contribute to knowledge particularly on the implications of child labour and child development. Moreover, the study will serve as the basis for creating public awareness on the causes and consequences of children involvement in labour activities in the Nigerian society. Again, the study would be an important source of reference to the academic world as it would be useful to researchers who might want to conduct further studies in the areas of child labour.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Poverty is the most visible and potent reason most frequently offered as excuse for child labour. Most of the child labourers were less mature in age and are not physically capable for the kind of work they engaged. In view of this, it has physical implications on children's health status include stunted growth, bone malformation, respiratory infections, cheap sex and illness. It also has devastating implications on children's education and their delinquent behaviour. The study therefore recommends that:

- There should be public enlightenment to the grass root on the present child labour and its implication on the society.
- The family planning system should be made compulsory so as to prevent parents from having more children than they can care for.
- Poverty alleviation programme should be improved to raise the standard of living of the family.
- The government, local NGOs and civil societies should join hands and work together to ensure that children are protected from hazardous jobs that can impair their health status and those jobs that can stop their education.

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