

Child Labour and Academic Performance of Junior Secondary School (JSS III) Students in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract- The study investigated the relationship between child labour and academic performance among Junior Secondary School (JSS III) students in Ogoja education zone of Cross River State. Ex post-Facto research design was adopted. A 30-item questionnaire and a 40-item achievement test were the instruments used to gather data for the study. Simple sampling technique method was applied. Six hundred and ten (610) students were randomly selected from the 74 public secondary schools in the zone using two schools each from a Local Government Area in the zone for the study. Data gathered were subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The result of the analysis revealed negative significant relationship between child labour, and academic performance of upper basic students in Ogoja education zone of Cross River State. Based on the above findings, it is strongly established that students who are victims of one forms of abuse or the other, are likely to perform poorly academically.

Index Terms- Child labour, Academic performance, Students, and junior secondary school.

I. INTRODUCTION

According to Pinzo and Hofferth, (2008) child labour is a far reaching and complex problem in developing countries. It has existed in various forms (force labour, trafficking and street trading) in different parts of the world since ancient time. The types of child labour vary according to the country's culture, and family culture, rural or urban residency, socio-economic condition and existing level of development among other factors. A survey by Global March (2008) state that child labour emerged as an issue during the industrial revolution when children were forced to work in dangerous conditions for well up to 12 hours in a day. In 1860, 50% of children in England between the ages of 5 and 15 were said to be working. However, 1919 saw the world systematically begin to address the issue of child labour and the international labour organization (ILO) adopted standards to eliminate it. Throughout the 20th century, a number of legally binding agreements and international conventions were adopted but despite all this, child labour continues to this day. The highest number of child labourers are said to be in the Asia-pacific region, but the largest percentage of children, as proportion of the child population, is evidently found in sub-Saharan Africa with Nigeria (Cross River State) having a fair share.

The word child labour is any form of physical, psychological, social, emotional and sexual maltreatment of a child whereby the survival, safety, self-esteem, growth and development of the child are endangered. Herrenkohl, (2005) and Psachropulo, (2007) view child labour as a disinvestment of social and human capital, a compromising of the development of the individual, and a hindering of the development of skills, abilities, and knowledge necessary to make significant contribution to society, Convention on the rights of the child CRC, (2002) described child labour as paid and unpaid work that occurs in any sector, including domestic, and agricultural sectors, that are harmful to children's mental, physical, social or moral development of the child in the modern society; any work that deprives children opportunity to attend school, obliges them to leave school permanently or requires them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work is categorized as child labour. The Article I of the United Nations convention on the Rights of the child, defines a child as any one below the age of 18. Child labour does not only exist in the impoverished areas of developing countries, but also flourish in other developed nations. Though, it is a complex problem in developing countries.

Child labour remains a major source of concern in Nigeria, in spite of legislative measure taken by the government at various levels. In 1998, a report from the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that 24.6% of children between the ages 10-14 in Nigeria were working (World Development Indicator 2000). Earlier before that time in 1994, the United Nations children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) reported that approximately 24 percent (12 million) of all children under the age of 15 worked (UNICEF, 2005). It is a ridiculous sight in most big cities, as well as rural villages today to see children of school age, trading food on the street, herding animals, tanning and drying raw leather product, fetching water for commercial purpose, washing dishes at restaurants, serving as domestic hands, selling wares at kiosks, collecting fire wood for business, harvesting crops in family farm or commercial plantation amongst other activities (Thomberry 2013), agreement with the labour abuse (child labour) trend, the International Labour Organization (2002) in it other report issued, states that the global figure of child labourers was put at appropriately 250 million. The report adds that the ages of the children range between 4-14 years with 120 million of them working full time.

According to Robinson (2009) the phenomenon of child labour is arguably the tallest challenges that impacts directly on school enrolment, attendance, academic performance, completion

rates as well as health rest, leisure and the general psychological disposition of children. As stated earlier, child labour takes various forms such as street trading, gardening, child caring, handicrafts, house chores, prostitutions and trafficking etc., there all have implication on the learners level of commitment.

Obinaju, (2005) tried specifically to look at child work in a more detailed way, in the perspective of culture. To the author, child labour covers tasks and activities that are undertaken by children to assist their parents or guardians. In particular, such jobs as cooking, washing dishes, planting, harvesting crops, fetching water and firewood, herding cattle, and babysitting. In this case child labour simply aims at tasks and activities which are geared towards the socialization process, if education must be wholesome.

However, the International Labour Organization (ILO), in its condemnation, said, child labour is as stipulated hereunder: children prematurely leading adult lives, normally working long hours for low wages under conditions damaging to their health and to their physical and mental development, sometimes separated from their families, frequently deprived of meaningful educational training opportunities that could open for them a better future. International Labour Organization (2001), in a study entitled "focusing on the worst forms of child labour in Tanzania" says child labour refers to work carried out to the detriment and endangerment of the child, mentally, physically, socially and morally. Child labour is generally interpreted as "all cases in which children are exposed to harm at work whether or not children are less than 14 years old or less" (UNICEF, 2005). The meanings and implications of child labour have been highly dependent on its social, cultural and economic context as well as missions, strategies, and objectives of each organization. Two of the major international organizations traditionally working on behalf of child labour issues, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and United Nations Education and Scientific Organization (UNESCO) had utilized quite different child labour concepts and categorization until at least the early 1990s. Trade unions and ILO often used "child labour" and child laborer" instead of "working children" implying that children should be kept away from the labour force at least until they reach a minimum working age on the basis of the fact that these organizations historically tended to protect and secure adult labour market.

Scanlon, (2002) conversely, referred to "child labour" according to articles 32 of the conventions on the rights of the child, in which child labour includes any economic activities impeding or hindering the child's full development or education. UNICEF described child labour as work that violates children's human rights (Post, 2001).

The international labour organization categorized child labour as follows.

- i Agricultural labourers.
- ii Domestic labourers.
- iii Street labourers and
- iv Factory labourers with wages.

Golden and Prather (2009) claim that "child labour" is exploitative, as the latter potentially impairs the health and development of the children. By contrast, James and James (2008) although agencies such as ILO, and UNICEF working on

child labour issues originally had different concepts on child labour, following the establishment of the worst form of labour convention 182 in 1999 as well as inter-agency research cooperation such as understanding children's work in 2000, a growing consensus has emerged that child labour refers to unacceptable forms of child work.

According to UNICEF (2005) the current official definitions of child labour involves as follows:

1. Child work or children's work is a general term covering the entire spectrum of work and related tasks performed by children.

2. Child labour refers to the subset of children's work that is injurious to children and that should be targeted for elimination.

3. Hazardous work refers to physical, psychological or sexual abuse.

4. (unconditional) worst form of child labour includes "children of any age below 18 who are involved in forms of slavery and force labour, including forced recruitment for use in armed conflicts, commercial sexual exploitation (prostitution or pornography), illicit activities (particularly the production or trafficking of drugs) and hazardous work that jeopardizes their lives, health or moral".

On the other hand, the international labour organization's official defines child labour in the following categories.

1. In ages 5-11 = all children at work in economic activity.
2. In ages 12-14 = all children at work in economic activity minus those in light work.
3. In ages 15-17 = all children in hazardous work and other worst forms of child labour International Labour Education and International Programme for the Elimination of Child Abuse (ILO, IPEC, 2002).

The South Asian Coalition on child servitude, (SACCS, 2003) in its perspectives defined "labour as a set up where an employee (labour) sells his or her labour to an employer with certain work related conditions, such as wages, amenities bargaining power, rights and legal safe-guards. It implies that not all work performed by children can be termed child labour. In some studies like Aderinto, (2000) children labourer are regarded as "street children" or "children of the street" who run away from parental or guardian abused, leaving them to eke out a living on their own. This name "street children paralyzed them from thinking ahead, thus rendering them educationally useless and hopeless. Teichman, (2000). States that most times they go through physical and health consequences such as respiratory problems, injuries accidents, physical and sexual abuse such as rape and molestation malnourishment, extortion of income, police harassment, and participation in harmful delinquent activities all inimical to educational successes. In other studies, by (Charles and Charles, 2004) child labourers face robbery, inadequate sleep due to fatigue and long hour job, and confinement in juvenile homes. Most times they suffer from mental related sickness such as; stigmatization from the press and public, feelings of disheartenment, stress and irritability, personality disorders, and anti-social behaviour, and alienation and isolation from their family and these have significant negative effect upon the level of education, school attendance, academic performance, grade,

literacy, leisure time, and overall human capital formation of the child worker.

The general notion held by many is that child labour, is detrimental to learners academic capability, however, some opinions differ regarding “when and how” a particular work is to be truly regarded as harmful to the future of a child or even interferes with his wellbeing. There is an argument of relativism in this discourse. A possible interpretation in this regard is to look at it in terms of opportunity cost” (gains and foregone alternatives). From this purview, a particular work would be harmful if it entails an opportunity cost in terms of other activities that are beneficial for the child and his development with reference to safety, nutrition, study, morality, leisure, rest (Okafor, 2010). This school of thought believes and sees child labour as an inevitable process of growth, development and integration of the child as stated in the social theory above. Nevertheless, the adverse consequences of child labour differ by whether they are oriented toward market or home production, as well as whether they are inside or outside the home. Therefore, the question should be child time allocation to work activities by where they occur (inside or outside household) by whether or not they are related to a family enterprise.

For Rosati and Rossi (2003), attending school and working are decision that are usually considered simultaneously as a family conversely, these authors also posit that the number of hours the child devote to work is one of the fundamental variables for evaluating the child wellbeing. Added researches in developing countries have found that the majority of child and youth labourers regularly attend school. However, in certain cases, a negative relationship between the number of hours worked and the hours of school attendance has been found (Boozer and Suri, 2001).

Buonomo (2011) found that children who work below the medium predicted by the proposed statistical model (up to two hours daily) demonstrated better school results (measured years in school, age grade ratio, completion of elementary education, completion of at least one year secondary education) than those children who only attend school. This finding indicates that while there is clear evidence of the negative impact of labour on the minor education, a minimal devotion to labour does not seem to have a significant effect on the education of children and youth. However, attendance is an indication that does not sufficiently explain the impact of child labour, as it does not take into account the quality of the child’s experience in school. Main while, majority cases, child labour makes adequate child and youth inclusion in the educational system difficult. (Grootaert and Kanbur, 2005). Dyer (2007) observes that, given that the time for work takes away from the time allocated to studies and that the attention to academic activities is reduced, due to the fatigue produced by the labour. .

One of the major adverse trends in child labour is the proliferation of young conductors in the transport industry. Horsch, (2002) state that most victims work in public place such as street, markets which does not give them time to go to school and perform excellently this is mostly affected by students in secondary school. All in all, child labour seems to have a clear negative effect on academic performance.

Ukwu, (2001) estimate on child labour in Nigeria in general and Cross River State in particular, indicate that 20 percent of

children between the ages of 10 and 14 involved in street trading on cheap articles, edible and products such as sachet water, plantain chips, bread, biscuit, okpa, ugba, fruits, vegetable, wears and newspapers in the streets and along the road especially at damaged portions of the roads where motorist and other road users are constrained to slow down due to bad condition of such roads. Bonded labour which is also known as debt bondage is another form of child labour suffered by most youths at the current generation (Sebre, 2004).

Child labour, also according to Okafor, (2010) exists in the form of house help or domestic servants. In this case, privilege people from the cities easily convince poor rural parents to hand in their children to them with various promises of better life and education. However, these children are sooner than later turned into house helps who cook food, wash clothes, care for babies, fetch water and attend to all sorts of household chores etc. “Children in domestic service in Nigeria can be in several forms. Firstly, it may include children from other families, parents or another society employed by certain people who are believed to be wealthy and sometime of modest income. Abused children gets up very early in the morning and begins his or her work by fetching water from a nearby well, balancing the heavy jug on his or her head as he or she returns, Prepares breakfast, and serve members of household. In addition, he/she later does the remaining jobs in the evenings and late in the night (Moses, 2005). In other instances, some of the children are taken to shop and business centres/workshops, to serve for a number of years (usually between 5-7 years) with the promise to assist them establish their personal business outfit at the end of their service period. In many case such children are exploited as they are merely used and dump on the basis of one accusation or the other. This has led to the frustration of many youths who lack the adequate machinery to seek any form of redress or social safety nets to fall back on. (Nanchi and Uba 2003).

Sabate and Rayah(2011), in his assertion, comment as thus: child labour impacts negatively on the achievement or performance of basic education because it leads to high drop rates as it easy for children to be easily deceived by meager income that trickle in, into believing that leaving school to give more time and attention to their work is a better option as they will get rich faster than their peers who have to spend many years in school. This can also lead to low academic achievement/poor performance on account of which the child would be expected to repeat a grade, this can cause fear, low self-esteem/shame both on the parts of the child and parents and make them to develop certain apathy for schooling and in such cases, and drop out could be a possible consequence. In some situations, such children are considered poor and unfit for academic pursuits and the tendency is usually to pull them out of school for a certain trade or apprenticeship thereby perpetrating further abuses since many poor parents may not be willing to give them a second chance. There is trade-off by most parents between the time children spend in labour and that spent attending school and doing some school related assignment (homework). Majority of child labourers either do not attend school or skip school to various degree (Ekwe 2002). Obviously, the greater the time children allocated to work and economic activities, the increasingly difficult it becomes to attend school since one cannot eat his/her cake and still have it.

According to ILO 2006, report, 74.4 million children aged 5-14 year who skipped school and engage in employment were victims of physical and mental hazard, most common are road and industrial accidents, abduction and ritual murder etc. many of them have been hit by cars, tricycle (Kekenapep), motor cycle (Okada), bicycle etc leading to deaths, disabilities and various magnitude of injuries. The National Modular Child Labour Survey (NMCLS 2001) confirmed that “across zones, South East recorded the highest percentage – 16.4 percent-of children who suffered injury often, followed by children in the North-West who recorded 7.8 percent. Whilst South-South, South-West and North-central recorded 2.8 percent, 2.9 percent and 1.1 percent respectively, North-East had the least percentage of .09 percent of children who suffered injury often (NMCLS, 2001 P.97). There is also a psychological dimension to the health related issues of child labour. These include; low self-esteem, stigmatization, personality crises since they often see and hear things beyond their maturity. Thus posit a huge challenge that negatively affect their cognition and retention abilities. Generally, working children are known perceived themselves as less privilege and less fortunate than their non-working counterparts. An ILO survey across 26 countries found that at least one in every four economically active children suffered sickness and injury as a result of their work, while about 2.7 million healthy year of life are lost due to child labour, each year with the highest rate in the sectors where children are employed, (ILO, 2006). Such hazardous incident could eventually jeopardizes the capability of being sound academically.

Despite the various views on the effect of child labour and the contradictory opinions by some authorities, in all, time spent in school is a poor measure of learning in school. Above, it was separately indicated that child labour and time in school may be inversely related, even if child labour does not harm learning. It is possible that child labour harms learning even if it does not alter time in school. For example, it is possible that child labour does not alter school enrolment, or even that it does not alter school attendance because child leisure is lowered to make time for child work. However, child labour could still adversely affect school outcome by limiting time spent on homework, or it could leave the child too tired to make efficient use of the time in school. Numerous studies of learning tell us that it is cognitive achievement or highest grade attained that matter for learning’s not time spent in school perse

II. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between child labour and academic performance among Junior

Secondary School (JSS III) students in Ogoja education zone of Cross River State, Nigeria.

III. RESEARCH QUESTION

What is the relationship between child labour and academic performance among Junior Secondary School (JSS III) students in Ogoja education zone of Cross River State, Nigeria?

IV. STATEMENT OF HYPOTHESIS

HO: There is no significant relationship between child labour and academic performance among Junior Secondary School (JSS III) students in Ogoja education zone of Cross River State, Nigeria.

V. METHDOLOGY

Ex post-Facto research design was adopted. A 30-item questionnaire and a 40-item achievement test were the instruments used to gather data for the study. Simple sampling technique method was applied. Six hundred and ten (610) students were randomly selected from the 74 public secondary schools in the zone using two schools each from a Local Government Area in the zone for the study. Data gathered were subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The result of the analysis revealed negative significant relationship between child labour, and academic performance of upper basic students in Ogoja education zone of Cross River State, Nigeria

VI. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

From table 1 below, it can be discerned that with 606 subject, the $\sum x$, $\sum y$ were 2349, 881 and $\sum x^2$, $\sum y^2$ of 4321 and 2119 respectively. The sum of product for $\sum y$ is 5816 with a mean of 21.95 and 8.39. Their population standard deviation is 2.94 and 1.45. At 0.5 level of significance the calculated r-value was found to be -0.94 with 604 degrees of freedom, the r cri value is 0.195. Since the r cri value was less that than the r calculated value of -0.94 the null hypothesis that states “there is no significant relationship between child labour and students’ academic performance, is rejected. This implies that the more the child is labored, the lesser the academic performance. Aptly puts there is indeed a statistical negative relationship between child labour and students’ academic performance.

TABLE 1

Result of Pearson’s product moment correlation coefficient of child labour and students’ academic performance

N = 606

Variables	$\sum X$	$\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum Y^2$	$\sum xy$	X	SD	LS	r.cal
Child labour (x)	2349		4321		5816	21.95	2.94	0.05	-0.94
Students academic performance (y)		881		2119			8.39	1.45	

* Significant @ .05 df 604 r-cri 0.195

VII. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The correlational statistical analysis with child labour and students' academic performance shows that there is indeed an inverse relationship between child labour and students' academic performance. This implies that the nature of treatment that a child is subjected to is significantly related to the child performance in school. This finding is in consonance with the finding of convention on the right of the child (CRC 2007) who described child labour as paid and unpaid work that occurs in any sector including domestic and Agricultural sector that are harmful to children's mental, physical, social or moral development of the child. The findings of this study is also in agreement to Robinson (2009) who observed that the phenomenon of child labour is arguably the tallest challenges that impacts directly on school enrolment, attendance, academic performance, completion rate as well as health rest, leisure and the general psychological disposition of children. Rosati and Rossi (2003) attending school and working are decision that are usually considered simultaneously as a family. Conversely, these authors also posit that the number of hours the child devotes to work is one of the fundamental variables for evaluating the child performance in school.

The above finding also corresponds to Moses (2005) who lamented that child labour still remain a serious problem in many parts of the world even when the United Nations conventions on the Right of the child (UNCRC) states clearly that "government should recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitations and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or harmful to the child's development or to interfere with the child's education. Also, the ministry of social welfare in it 2014 reports after it advocacy visit to schools in Cross States gave child abuse as major bane to students academics.

However studies by Jenson and Nelen, (2007) contradict the present study as they found that among child labour in Nigeria, only 2 percent participants mentioned labour as the reason for abandoning studies. The authors look at other variables that could affect academic work and not just labour. e.g gender, income level of parent, subject etc.

The gap that previous studies have not been able to fill which the present study is concerned is that, while other studies considered primary pupils with fewer sample size. The present study is concerned with secondary school students with larger sample size.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The study established that child labour is very common and noticed among secondary school students in Ogoja education zone of Cross River State. It will not be an overstatement to say that child labour is one of the 21st century's greatest challenges to socioeconomic development. As already noted, the phenomenon has traumatized many and is denying a vast number of children in the developing world access to schooling, thus making education for all (EFA) by the year 2015 more of a mirage than a reality. And for the children who manage to enrol in school find it very difficult to compete favourably with their counterpart who are not involved or exposed to child abuse. The

result of this study specifically reveals that poor performance are unavoidable characteristic of child labour., as children who are victims have limited period of academic concentration.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study and in order to promote students' academic performances, child labour should be avoided and parents, community leaders, and young people should be sensitized on the dangers that child labour pose to an individual and the entire nation.

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