

CHILD LABOURING ACTIVITIES AND ACADEMIC INEFFICIENCY OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ILORIN METROPOLIS**BY****Hanafi, Alimat Yetunde: Muyideen College of Education, Kulende, Ilorin;
E-mail: yetundealimat38@gmail.com****Abdulrahman, Ibrahim: School of Basic and Remedial Studies, Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin; E-mail: ibrahimrahman1039@gmail.com****&****Yusuf, Habeeb: School Basic and Remedial Studies, Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin;
E-mail: opeyusuf@gmail.com****Abstract**

Child abuse is an act of inflicting serious, physical injury and emotional torture on a child or person, which is intentional or unintentional and could endanger the physical, health, emotional, social, moral and educational wellness of the child. The contributing factor of child abuse can be identified as poverty and ignorance on the part of the parents or guardians and others. Observing the alarming endless cry of students and those hurt in the process and maltreatment, the researcher was therefore interested in investigating child abuse as it affect the academic efficiency of secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis. To achieve this purpose three (3) research questions were formulated to guide the study. A sample of 150 respondents was randomly selected for the study. The selection was done through simple random sampling technique. The questionnaire was the main instrument used for data collection. The simple percentage distribution was used to analyze data collected through the administration of questionnaire. The result of the analysis revealed that child laboring activities greatly influence secondary school students' academic performance in Ilorin metropolis. Based on the findings recommendations were made on the need to educate and intensified campaigns, especially on creation of awareness on the menace of child laboring activities – physical and sexual abuse as they deaden the future of the child, family and society.

Keywords: Academic Inefficiency, Child laboring activities, Physical and Sexual abuse

Introduction

The terms child laboring activities can be seen as 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. According to Pinzo and Hofferth (2008), child laboring activities is a far reaching and complex problem in developing countries of the world of which Nigeria is among. It has existed in various forms of force labour, trafficking and street trading among others in different parts of the world since ancient time. The types of child laboring activities vary according to the country's culture, family culture, rural or urban residency, socio-economic condition and existing level of development among other factors.

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. Herrenkohl (2005) and Psachropoulo (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 laboring activities as those activities that involve 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.

Education is one of the imperative aspects that not only inculcates the essential skills, abilities and knowledge among the individuals, but also leads to overall growth and progress of the individuals, community and nation as a whole. An educated person is not only able to accomplish his desired goals and objectives, but is also able to render an efficient contribution towards the well-being of the community where he/she lives. The inculcation of academic knowledge, skills, abilities and proficiency among the individuals is enhanced through learning and academic efficiency. In secondary schools, there are numerous factors that contribute enormously in enhancing the academic efficiency and effectiveness of students. The academic efficiency determines the future goals and objectives of students. What subject they will specialize in colleges and universities, which educational institutions they will get enrolled into, what career opportunities they would take up and so forth. The said academic efficiency of the students can be hindered if such students involve in severe child laboring activities.

The determinants of academic efficiency and effectiveness of the students include socio-economic status of the student's parents, child rearing practice (parenting styles) of the parents, class participation, class assignments, home-work assignments, tests, examinations, and participation in competitions or other events. The major area of concern is on child rearing practice (parenting styles) of some parents that account for different kinds of child laboring activities within our society. Secondary school students' academic inefficiency could be viewed as their inability to cope with normal school programs in terms of curricular and extra-curricular activities of the school as stipulated in the curriculum. Due to the fact that some secondary school students were not able to meet the required standard of the school, some may have to be repeated, withdraw from certain classes (e.g from science class to commercial or art class) and even dropped out of school at times.

Statement of the Problem

Child laboring activities (child abuse) is not just a social problem; it is rather an intellectual and economic problem which is evident in the performance of students in various schools. In a situation where over seventy percent (70%) of students that write WAEC and NECO cannot boast of five credits pass including Mathematics and English Language, then educational sector need to be looked into. A common feature of Nigerians in the twenty-first century is to treat children the way they want and not the way they ought to be treated. The cultural traditional system continues to relegate the position of the children to the background without giving them their fundamental human right with dignity and capability of growing and developing to adulthood (Kolade, 2004).

The impact of such cruelty on educational development of the children cannot be overemphasized, such children if at all are provided with the opportunity to attend schools are bound to be failures, delinquent, lack conducive home, environment and conducive relationship with peer group in the school. Thus there is need to investigate the child laboring activities and academic inefficiency of secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis

Research Questions

The researchers formulate the following questions to know more about how child laboring activities contributed to secondary school students' academic inefficiency. To this end, answer shall be provided to the following research questions:

- i. Is there any influence of student's family background on the incidence of child laboring activities among secondary school students in Ilorin West Local Government Area?
- ii. Do child laboring activities affect academic effectiveness and efficiency of secondary school students in Ilorin West Local Government Area?

- iii. Do child laboring activities influences secondary school students' participation in extra-curricular activities with reference to Ilorin West Local Government Area?

Literature Review

Child abuse is usually caused but not limited to poverty and lack of parental care. Other factors include unemployment, marital conflicts and some problems in a polygamous home. According to Denga (2002), who also observed that child abuse is exposing children to painful and unwarranted suffering knowingly or unknowingly. She continues that both male and female children are abused in some cases by their parents, guardians, teachers, peers and the society in various forms. In Nigeria and other African countries children born with mental or physical challenges are seen as bad luck and shameful happening. The physical and mentally challenged children may be hidden or kept at the back of the house out of view of visitors. They are usually denied their freedom of access to school and play as well as being seen and interacted with like any other child in the home. It is a form of abuse, neglect and rejection of the child that cannot be bought from the market (Denga, 2007). Thus the physically challenged child is not only stigmatized and discriminated upon by society but also psychological and emotional depressed. Hence, the rusty occasioned by parent-child conflicts in the family, the economic situation, characterized by the entrenched poverty of the vast majority of people has affected the well-being of the Nigeria child in his/her development, protection and participation in communal growth.

Child abuse also poses ethical concerns related to confidentiality, as victims may be physically or psychologically unable to report abuse to authorities. Here, medical professionals including doctors, therapist and other mental health workers typically owe a duty of confidentiality to their patients and clients, either by law and by the standards or professional ethics and cannot disclose personal information without the consent of the individual concerned. Thus this duty conflict with an ethical obligation to protect children from preventable harm (National Centre for Youth Law 2011-12-29). There are untold stories of varieties of abuse against children, such as female genital mutilation, child murder and rituals, child torture, infanticide, child solderism, child trafficking, child suicide bombers and other forms of cruelty (Denga, 2002). It has also been observed that many malnourished, weak and unkempt children are traded away by parents for economic purposes or as a sheer means of getting rid of them.

Concept of Child Laboring Activities

According to 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 laboring activities 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 Tanzanian 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 it 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 (i.e age of 18 years and above) on the basis of the fact that this 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 laboring activities as follows.

- i Agricultural labourers.
- ii Domestic labourers.
- iii Street laboureres 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 laboring activities involves the following: Child work or children’s work is a general term covering the entire spectrum of work and related tasks performed by children; child labour refers to the subset of children’s work that is injurious to children and that should be targeted for elimination; hazardous work refers to physical, psychological or sexual abuse and 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”.

Grootaert and Kanbur (2005) and 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.

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.

Causes of Child Labouring Activities

The causes of child laboring activities can be categorized as follow:

- 1. Primary causes:** International Labour Organization (ILO) suggests poverty is the greatest single cause behind child labour. For impoverished households, income from a child's work is usually crucial for his/her own survival or for that of household. Income from working children, even if small, may be between 25 and 40% of the household income. Other scholars such as Harsch on African child labour, and Edmonds on global child labour have reached the same conclusion. Lack of meaningful alternatives, such as affordable schools and quality education, according to ILO, is another major factor driving children to harmful labour. Children work because they have nothing better to do. Many communities, particularly rural areas where between 60-70% of child labour is prevalent, do not possess adequate school facilities. Even when schools are sometimes available, they are too far away, difficult to reach, unaffordable or the quality of education is so poor that parents wonder if going to school is really worth it.
- 2. Cultural causes:** In European history when child labour was common, as well as in contemporary child labour of modern world, certain cultural beliefs have rationalized child labour and thereby encouraged it. Some views that work is good for the character-building and skill development of children. In many cultures, particularly where the informal economy and small household businesses thrive, the cultural tradition is that children follow their parents' footsteps; child labour then is a means to learn and practice that trade from a very early age. Similarly, in many cultures the education of girls is less valued or girls are simply not expected to need formal schooling, and these girls pushed into child labour such as providing domestic services.
- 3. Macroeconomic causes:** Biggeri and Mehrotra have studied the macroeconomic factors that encourage child labour. They focus their study on five Asian nations including India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Thailand and Philippines. They suggest that child labour is a serious problem in all five, but it is not a new problem. Macroeconomic causes encouraged widespread child labour across the world, over most of human history. They suggest that the causes for child labour include both the demand and supply side. While poverty and unavailability of good schools explain the child labour supply side, they suggest that the growth of low-paying informal economy rather than higher paying formal economy is amongst the causes of the demand side. Other scholars too suggest that inflexible labour market, size of informal economy, inability of industries to scale up and lack of modern manufacturing technologies are major macroeconomic factors affecting demand and acceptability of child laboring activities

Consequences of Child Labouring Activities

The negative impact on the physiological and psychological levels of children includes specific concerns of child labour and its consequences on mental health. It is worth noting that one-third of children of the developing countries of the world are failing to complete even 4 years of education. The analysis of the factors leading to engagement of children in hazardous factors elucidated socioeconomic factors as one of the important determinants. Poverty is considered as one of the contributory factors in child laboring activities. Mental wellbeing is less frequently researched in child labour. A retrospective cohort study in Nigeria randomly examined 200 children working in the handicraft sector and found a high prevalence of respiratory, digestive and skin conditions, as well as mental health presentation such as migraines, insomnia, irritability, enuresis and asthenia.

In a cross sectional survey, urban Lebanese children aged 10-17, working full-time in small industrial shops, were compared with non-working matched school children. Majority of them had poor physical health, predominantly marked with skin lesions or ear complaints and social care needs. Similarly, authors aimed to find out consequences in children in labour exposed to solvents, and found significantly higher rates of lightheadedness, fatigue, impaired memory and depression compared with a non-exposed group.

Child Laboring Activities and Students' Academic Inefficiency

A higher proportion of students who were not working achieved a superior score on the exams compared to students who worked. The result suggests by some research revealed that working and studying simultaneously can hinder the acquisition and development of knowledge. The worst achievement test scores are found for those students who work both inside the household and outside in the job market. The students who work only in the household or only outside the household have similar levels of academic achievement. Among the students who were working, those who worked both in the household and in the market are likely to show worse test performance in almost every school subjects assessment. In conclusion, children involve in child laboring activities have tendency to perform below the required standard as a result of the following factors:

1. Little or no attention to academic work as a result of many engaged activities.
2. Too much pressure on commercial/economic activities over the academic activities on the children by the parents. (i.e lack of parents' concern on academic program of the children)
3. Children labourers have been found of sleeping in the classroom while others are attentive, coming late to the school regularly, etc
4. There will be no time for personal study and/or extra classes for childrenlabourers at home as this could contribute towards their academic inefficiency.
5. Children involvement to child laboring activities is attributed to staying in a class for so many years than required and necessary. This can be justified with the fact that this category of child will not have time for reading at home during, before and even after examination.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was descriptive type. Descriptive survey method is a research design that enables a researcher to obtain the opinions of representative sample of a target population in order to draw inference from the entire population. Sample for the study comprised 150 secondary school students in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Nigeria. The instrument used for data collection is a questionnaire. In developing the questionnaire, items were drawn from relevant literature on the child laboring activities and academic inefficiency of secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical measures. Descriptive statistics of percentages were used to analyze the demographic data of the respondents.

Results

Research Question 1: Is there any influence of student's family background on the incidence of child laboring activities among secondary school students in Ilorin West Local Government Area?

Table 1: Influence of student's family background on the incidence of child laboring activities

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	REMARK
1	Poor socio-economic status of the parents often resulted to child laboring activities	74	58	8	10	Agree
2	The incident of child laboring activities is associated with literacy level of the parents	49	67	14	20	Agree
3	Lack of parental concern to student's academic program resulted to child laboring activities	77	54	8	11	Agree
4	Death of either parent or even both often leads to child laboring activities	69	58	10	13	Agree
	TOTAL	269	237	40	54	

From the table 4, the responses to the items indicate that the student's family background influences the incidence of child laboring activities among secondary school students in Ilorin Metropolis.

Research Question 2: Do child laboring activities affect academic effectiveness and efficiency of secondary school students in Ilorin West Local Government Area?

Table 2: Child laboring activities affect academic effectiveness and efficiency

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	REMARK
1	Child labourers are found of scoring lower score/grade in examination/test	67	49	16	18	Agree
2	Child labourers usually sleep in the class during the classroom teaching and learning activities	69	48	18	15	Agree
3	Students involve in child labouring activities lack personal interest in teaching and learning discussions	75	43	15	17	Agree
4	Students involve in laboring activities see themselves as inferior to their counterparts as regards academic excellent	59	45	18	28	Agree
	TOTAL	270	185	67	78	

From the table 5 shown, the responses to the items indicate that child laboring activities affect academic effectiveness and efficiency of secondary students in Ilorin Metropolis.

Research Question 3: Do child laboring activities influences secondary school students' participation in extra-curricular activities with reference to Ilorin West Local Government Area?

Table 3: Child laboring activities influences secondary school students' participation in extra-curricular activities with reference

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	REMARK
1	Child labourers are found of coming late to the school regularly	76	47	10	17	Agree
2	Child labourers show little or no concern to the school activities	59	48	18	25	Agree
3	Participating in school co-curricular activities is considered as waste of time for commercial activities by child labourers	78	44	11	17	Agree

4	Child labourers are not usually involve in school activities like sport, quiz and debate competition, etc	59	45	18	28	Agree
	TOTAL	272	184	57	87	

From the table 6 shown, the responses to the items indicate that child laboring activities affect the students' level of participation in the school extra-curricular activities in Ilorin West Local Government Area.

Discussion of the Findings

The study established that child labour greatly influence the academic inefficiency of secondary school students in Ilorin Metropolis. This support the statement of Alison (2019) that child labour is one of the 21st century's greatest challenges to educational 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 enroll in school find it very difficult to compete favourably with their counterpart who are not involved or exposed to child laboring activities/abuse.

The result of this study specifically reveals that secondary students' poor academic performances are unavoidable characteristic of child laboring activities, as children who are victims have limited period for academic concentration. And corroborate the view of Moses (2005) that, students who are victims of child labour/abuse participate minimal in the school curricular and extra-curricular activities as they have little time for academic purpose.

Conclusion

The study established that child labour greatly influence the academic inefficiency of secondary school students in Ilorin Metropolis. The result of this study specifically reveals that secondary students' poor academic performances are unavoidable characteristic of child laboring activities, as children who are victims have limited period for academic concentration.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the following are suggested for recommendation on the need to identify the impact of child laboring activities on the academic inefficiency of secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis.

1. 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.
2. Counselors, in conjunction with parents, caregivers, government and entire society should adopt good parental care, love and concern for their children, and mention good societal values, morals and norms, which should be subject to change. The cry of school dropout, gangsterism, unemployment should be redress and jobs created for youth to enable the young ones achieved their goals focus and dreams of a better tomorrow.
3. The family and society in general should be more security conscious on the whereabouts of the child, be interested in their welfare, dialogue issues of conflict, giving room for peace and harmony to reign at home, school and society.
4. Government and non-governmental agencies should constant implement rules and regulation of child abuse and create awareness campaign exercise to discourage parents from leasing out their children for housekeeping, prostitution, early marriage, or any other reason for money making. Also the government should make sure that perpetrators of these vices are punished according to the law enacted for offenders and used as examples for others whose cases may not be reported; as many of these incidents are under close.

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