

Socio-Economic Factors Influencing Child Labour in Nsukka Local Government Area, Enugu State.

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Abstract

This study investigated factors that cause child labour in Nsukka local government area, Enugu State. Two purposes with two corresponding research questions generated guided the study. The study was survey. The population was 401974 parents. A sample of 2000 parents was randomly selected for the study. Questionnaire was used for data collection. Mean was used for the analysis of data. Findings revealed that both economic and social factors cause child labour in the area of study. The factors include high level of poverty, high unemployment opportunities, low income among parents, marital challenges including separation and divorce among others. Recommendations were made base on the findings, including that job opportunities and awareness on the right of child should be created by the government, non-governmental organizations should open skill acquisition centres to train children especially the orphans and the less privileged in the area of study.

Keywords: Poverty, Unemployment, Divorce, Social and Economic Factor

Introduction

Childhood may be regarded as the period between birth and the attainment of adulthood. United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child (2013) defined a child as any human being below the age of eighteen years, unless the age maturity is attained earlier under a state's own

deniotic legislation. The United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child thus stipulates that each country can determine the age limit of childhood. This concept may be right because what is expected of a child depends very much on the environment and cultural context in the place a child lives. A child is

therefore referred to as a person younger than the age of maturity. Eke (2004) noted that a child is a human being up to the age of eighteen years. Onwuzurike (2006) opined that a child is an individual under the age of sixteen years of age. He maintained that in formal education, the term 'a child' is someone who is within the primary and secondary school which is between six and sixteen years old. It is the stage of life where a child is free from most tensions, fear and worries of responsibilities in life (Onwuzurike, 2006). For the purpose of this study, a child is a person within the age limit of sixteen years whose feeding, clothing, education and general care are dependent on the parents or guardians. It is unfortunate to observe that some children in the area of study are responsible for their welfare and even contribute immensely in the caring of other members of their family. The children in Nsukka Local Government Area are involved in various labours such as hawking of commodities along the streets and motor parks, working in restaurants for cheap pay and pushing barrow to carry loads for traders. This is child labour. International Labour Organization (2006) defined child labour as work that deprive a child his privilege to attend school or combine school attendance with heavy work. Child labour is work that is mentally, socially and physically harmful to children's development (Okafor, 2007) Okafor also noted that child labour is the participation of children in productive labour for the purpose of

earning money for the sustenance of self or family members. Child labour is therefore a challenging issue and widely spread in Nigeria and in Nsukka Local Government Area in particular. This situation is not uncommon in Nsukka Local Government Area. Children do shift work in bread industries, satchet water production factories and so on.

Nevertheless, child labour has been existing over many years in many countries International Labour Organization (ILO), (2006) reported that there were approximately 250 million child labourers globally. According to the report of age of the children involved in the child labour are between six and fourteen years. The report maintained that the largest number of child labourers come from Asia and Africa. Child labour was adopted by many individuals and industries worldwide. Azubuike (2011) noted that child labourers work in agriculture, home-based, factories, and mining and in services in Europe, and various colonies of European powers. Azubuike maintained that some of the child labourers use to work night shift lasting twelve hours. Unfortunately, neither the government nor the welfare agencies in Nigeria, have effectively involved in solving this pertinent situation. Laws for the protection of children in Nigeria are ineffective. Jordan and Sketchley (2009) opined that the laws designed to protect the right of children in Nigeria are seldom enforced. Child labour comes in various forms. According to Azubuike (2013), the

forms of child labour include; bounded child labour, migrant child labour; children on the street, abandoned or orphan and girl child labour. Brass (2004) noted that child labour is very visible because of poverty, inflation and unemployment. Children in Nsukka local government area are involved in all the forms of child labour. The 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. Child labour has a lot of negative effect on children's life. According to Annable and Mathew (2008), 1.6% of children enrolled in school were engaged in one economic activity or the other. 27.3% were engaged in various household works while 71.1% engages in neither. Aksit, Orazem and Sanchez in Azubuike (2013) observed that street work impart negativity on the child street labourer. Child labour results to child's poverty due to poor education, Niels (2010) noted that education is the base of wealth and power, and that a child without adequate education is poor. Agu (2013) stated that child labour exposes children to sexual and physical abuse. In view of these abnormalities, this study investigated the factors that influence child labour in Nsukka Local Government Area, Enugu Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of this study was to find out the socio-economic factors that influence child labour in Nsukka

Local Government Area (LGA). Specifically, the study determined:

1. The social factors that influence child labour in Nsukka L.G.A.
2. The economic factors that influence child labour in Nsukka L.G.A.

Research Questions

The study sought answers to the following research questions.

1. What are the social factors that influence child labour in Nsukka Local Government Area?
2. What are the economic factors that influence child labour in Nsukka local government area?

Methodology

Design of the study: The design of the study was survey design. The survey was considered suitable for this study because it will enable information to be gathered from fairly large population.

Area of the study: The area of the study is Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State. It is made up of twenty communities. The study focused on the area of study. Many of these children involve in various forms of child labour such as street working as hawkers, beggars and other dangerous forms of labour.

Population for the study: The, population for the study is 401974 (National Population Census projection, 2015). This population included all the adults, parents and guardians in Nsukka Local Government Area. The parents formed the population for the study.

Sample for the study: Sample for the study was obtained using multiple techniques. Yaro Yameni technique was used to obtain 400 from the entire population. Simple random method was used to select ten parents from each of twenty communities in Nsukka Local Government Area. This comes out to 200 which is the sample size for the study.

Instrument for data collection: The instrument for data collection was questionnaire. The instrument was divided into A and B sections. Section A sought information on the socio factors that influence child labour while section B sought information on the economic factors that influence child labour in the area of study. The instrument was validated by 3 lecturers in Technology and

Vocational Education in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.

Data Collection and Analysis Technique: Two hundred copies of the questionnaire were administered to the parents by the researchers and two research assistants. One hundred and ninety-four copies were collected and used for analysis. Mean was used to analyse the data collected.

Findings of the study: The following findings were made;

1. Eight social factors influence child labour in the area of study. These are shown in table 1.
2. Ten economic factors influence child labour in the area of study. These are shown in table 2.

Social factors that influence child labour

Table 1: Mean response on the social factors that influence child labour (N = 194).

S/No.	Social Factors	Mean (\bar{x})	Remarks
1	Cuts in social spending particularly in education make children work at early stage of life.	3.50	Agree
2	Polygamy and over population within a family lead children to street labourers.	3.81	Agree
3	Peer pressure lure children to hawk goods.	2.34	Disagree
4	Marriage separation and divorce make children to become labourers.	3.80	Agree
5	Parents/guardians expose children to child labour through family socialization	3.74	Agree
6	Gender inequality lead to child labour	2.05	Disagree
7	Death of parents/guardians can lead to child labour.	3.37	Agree
8	High cost of health care and lack of attention to health services from parents	3.65	Agree
9	Poor interaction with other families especially in time of hardship.	3.11	Agree
10	Unawareness and lack of knowledge on the issue of child labour by parents/guardians	3.80	Agree

\bar{x} = Mean

Table 1 reveals eight social factors that influence child labour in the area of study. The mean value of the eight items ranges from 3.11 to 3.81 which are above the bench mark of 2.50 set for the study. The mean value of two

items. Item 3 and 6 were 2.34 and 2.05 respectively are below cut off point of 2.5 set for the study.

Economic factors that influence child labour

Table 2: Mean response on the economic factors that influence child labour (N = 194).

S/NO	Economic factors	Mean (\bar{x})	Remarks
1	High level of poverty in most families	3.31	Agree
2	Low income among parents/guardians	3.65	Agree
3	High rate of unemployment opportunities.	3.74	Agree
4	Low purchasing power by family members.	3.38	Agree
5	Employers often justify the use of children as a source of cheap labour	3.70	Agree
6	Inequality of income and inflation	3.74	Agree
7	Increase in food prices and food crises.	3.49	Agree
8	Placement of great value on child prostitution by international sex trade	3.21	Agree
9	Children are sent into hazardous jobs to favour their parents who cannot afford the time or old to become injured.	3.27	Agree
10	Children eager to become rich at early stage of life	3.58	Agree

\bar{x} = Mean

Table 2 shows that all the factors influence child labour in Nsukka Local Government Area, Enugu State. The results indicate that high level of poverty, unemployment, inequality of income and inflation among others are economic factors that influence child labour. The items have mean responses ranging from 3.21 to 3.74 which are above 2.5 cut-off point for the study.

Discussion of Findings

The findings in table one revealed that cuts in education, polygamy and over population, marriage separation and

divorce, death of parents and guardians among others are social factors that influence child labour in the area of study. Deutsch (2007) noted that lack of quality education has contributed to children's involvement in labour for survival. Olukoya (2013) also noted that children with little or no access to school are forced into employment at early age. Gelles and Strans in Ejikeonye and Anyakoha (2011) opined that child labourers have poor school performance. The finding revealed that parents and guardians

lure their children into child labour. This is in line with Bourdillon, Levison, 1yers and White (2010) that families often place their children for domestic and farm work. They argued that children labourer's work is completely unregulated; hence there are cases of physical and even sexual abuse among the children labourers in families. Karen (2015) noted that children cannot develop their personality, talent, mental and physical abilities to the fullest without education.

The findings revealed that death of parents, polygamy and over population influence child labour in the area of study. This is in line with Singh (2012) who noted that children from large families are used as labourer such as prostitutes and hawkers. Unawareness and lack of knowledge on the issue of child labour is a serious factor in the area of study. Chibuzor (2011) opined that child labour deprive children their childhood because parents and guardians are ignorant and uninformed on the rights of the child. He maintained that parents interpret child labour to be home training. Children hawk petty goods rather than school or learning a useful trade. He maintained that child abuse, maltreatment and neglect deprive children of the opportunity to develop their full potentials worldwide.

The findings of this study as in table two showed that the children in Nsukka local government area (LGA) agree that high level of poverty influence child labour. This agrees

with Guarcello, Lorenzo, Fabrizia and Furio (2008) that parents' inability to fund and care for their children due to poverty and hardship can make a child to begin work at early age. Guarcello *et al* also maintained that high poverty level as a result of economic crisis increases child labour practices. Olukoya (2013) noted that poverty is a dominant factor in the use of a child as a labourer in Africa. Families below the poverty level, particularly in the area of study force their children into work at early age to supplement their household's meager income. Ogbonna (2011) opined that children are predominantly employed by their parents rather than factories. He noted that agriculture is the largest employer of child labour in Nigeria hence, majority of the child labour occurs in rural settings. The finding showed that low income and inequality of income among parents are economic factor that influences child labour tremendously. This is in line with Vaknin (2009) who noted that low income earners often send their children to higher income families as maids and boy servants. Bennet and Shere (2010) also maintained 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's involvement in child labour

is a violation of childhood from parents and guardians. It is estimated that 15 million children in Nigeria are working in agriculture, as domestic servants, hawkers, beggars or trafficked through sex industry (International Labour Organization, 2006).

The finding revealed that increase in food prices and low purchasing power influences child labour. Agu (2013) noted that children involve in domestic child labour because of high cost of food items. He argued that children between the age of 9-15 years are seen working to eat in hotels, restaurants and agricultural farms. He maintained that children especially female child labourers engage in all types of work ranging from fetching of water and firewood, to washing dishes, preparing and cooking food to feed themselves and support their families to feed their siblings. The children also work to save for their future spending.

The finding also revealed that children are eager to become rich is one of the factors that influence child labour. This is in line with Ebigbo (2003) who noted that children labourers compromise education to Street hawking. The children according to Ehigbo abandoned education and ran to cities to work as cheap labourers. Smarika (2013) noted that children from low income families in developing countries are denied the entitlement to the enjoyment of parental care and protection.

Conclusion

The study has investigated the factors that cause child labour in Nsukka Local Government Area, Enugu State. The factors include economic and social factors. Based on the findings, child labour is influenced by poverty, high unemployment, loss of parents and guardians, separation and divorce, poor education background among others. Parents and guardians even expose their children to child labour. There is need therefore to create awareness on the right of a child. This will limit the rate of child labour in the area of study and in Nigeria in general.

Recommendations

1. Government should put in place practicable policies that will help families to survive on honest labour thus, discourage the practice of forced child employment.
2. Government should also create more job opportunities with recommendable salary to enable parents provide basic needs to their children.
3. Charitable organizations should help to train less privileged children in skillful trades.
4. Security men should be empowered by the government and charitable organizations to arrest child labourers, hawkers and beggars in the church and along the streets.

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