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Child Labour, Schooling And Academic Achievement In Public Secondary Schools In Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract*: This study investigated the relationship between child labour, schooling and academic achievement in public secondary schools in Oyo West Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. The descriptive research design was adopted for the study. A total of 300 respondents were selected from six (6) public secondary schools within Oyo West Local Government Area of Oyo State using simple random sampling technique. The research instrument used was a four point modified Rensis Likert Rating Scale Questionnaire type. Three hypotheses were formulated and tested using Chi-square and independent t-test statistical tool at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed a significant negative relationship between child labour and both academic achievement (r = -0.48, p = 0.001) and school attendance (r = -0.52, p = 0.001), indicating that increased involvement in child labour is associated with lower academic performance and irregular school attendance. Additionally, a significant gender difference was observed in academic achievement (t = 4.92, p = 0.001), with female students being more adversely affected by child labour than their male counterparts. The study recommended that the Federal Government of Nigeria should work towards the eradication of poverty by providing employments to its citizens, which is the primary cause of child labour, parents and community should be mindful of age and sex of their children before exposing them to labour and that the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programmes should be fully implemented and monitored to take care of the sets of students exposed to menial works.*

Keywords: Academic Achievement, Child Labour, Schooling, Public Secondary Schools

Introduction

Parents inabilities to sufficiently provide for the needs of family members seems to make some put the heavy burden of life and labour on their children which causes academic set-back through withdrawal from school or dropout due to failure and shame. Due to high rate of unemployment, poor economic condition of many families in Nigeria, family background (step mother/ father, polygamous), it is so clear that there has been increase in the rate at which school children engage in trade activities. In other to increase income through high sale, production through high labour, some parent/ guardians engage their children in child labour. The involvement of school children in labour is an emerging trend in Nigeria and an issue of concern on their academic performance (International Labour Organisation [ILO], 2018).

Every child has the right to health and education. Yet each year, millions of under aged children around the world are engaged in remunerated or unremunerated work, leading to the impairment of their personal development and safety and often affecting their physical and mental well-being. Education is compulsory and a right of every Nigerian irrespective of gender, social status, religion, colour, ethnic background and any peculiar individual challenges (FRN, 2017). This philosophy of Nigeria education is based on the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and the provision of equal opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the basic, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system.

A student that takes time to study and prepare well for examination is likely to end up with good performance, meanwhile majority of children who engage in child labour will seem not to have enough time to study and prepare for examination, attend classes regularly or do assignment and read. Due to the tiredness (fatigue) some doze off and find it difficult to concentrate in class and at home when doing assignment, some did not usually do their assignment (Oluwatimilehin & Owoyele, 2018).

Child labour which is defined as the admission to employment of a child, who is still within the age of compulsory school education, still remains a huge global problem which has precipitated an intense debate in the past few decades (Dammert, 2019). The concept of child labour seems complex in its nature.

Child labour is defined as work that is hazardous, demands too many hours, or is performed by children who are too young. Child labour is sometimes the result of ingrained customs and traditions of a society or family. Even well-intended customs and traditions

can be harmful, such as: the view that work is good for children because it helps them to build character and develop skills, the tradition that children should follow their parents' footsteps and learn their trade at an early age. Most importantly, traditions that push poor families into debt, such as social occasions or religious events, which are paid off through engaging their children in child labour.

With regard to the conceptual and definitional problems concerning child labour there are two schools of thought. According to the first school known as abolitionist school, education should be made a fundamental human right of every child in between 5-14 age groups, and any child who is out of school should be treated as a potential working child (Dammert, 2019). They feel that elimination of child labour and attainment of compulsory basic education are two sides of the same coin and one cannot be achieved without achieving the other. According to them, the distinction between hazardous and non-hazardous work is immaterial (Pandiaraj, 2018). According to the second school known as reformist school, child labour is a harsh reality, which means, given the socio-economic conditions (like poverty, unemployment and illiteracy) it is impossible to root out the problem of child labour altogether. They feel that elimination of child labour should be viewed as a long-term goal to be achieved progressively. Hence, they advocate for a dual approach of prohibition of child labour in hazardous work and regulation of it in non-hazardous work (Laxmidhar, 2017). Child labour seems so widespread in Nigeria that it has been accepted by many as part of normal life. The practice is only an aberration which takes away the innocence of millions of children; it is a threat to the future of the country (Nwiro, 2019). Baland and Robison (2018) note that when parents are altruistic toward their children, have the ability to leave a bequest to their children, and have free access to capital markets, then investment in their children's education will be efficient.

Concept of Child Labour

Nwiro (2019), defined Child Labour as work engaged in by children which deprives them of their childhood, their potential and dignity as children. In Nigeria, it is not uncommon to see children working as street vendors, beggars, car washers, heavy load carries especially in markets in towns and cities while in the villages, children are engaged in tedious farm activities, carrying of heavy loads and gallons of water for long distances, auto repairs etc. In the words of Onah in Nnabuchi (2018), in Northern Nigeria, the Almajiris (street beggars) are children who beg to survive; about 8 million Nigerian children are trafficked in various parts of the country. Girls are trafficked for forced prostitution to Italy, Spain and France and are also trafficked as domestic helps. The International Labour Organization (2017) defines child labour as an economic activity performed by a person of less than fifteen (15) years of age, excluding some part time work performed by children more than twelve years old. Child labour is an inhumane practice which exposes the child to many dangers and even stigmatization. It is the employment of children in any work that deprives them of their childhood, interferes with their ability to attend regular school and is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful (Stephen & Rossi, 2019).

African historical practice reveals that parents in traditional communities usually had many children and often times engaged them in working to be able to support the family especially on the farms. In the words of Oloko (2018); child labour was considered as part of the social organization in which all members worked together to produce for the group's sustenance. Hence; child labour formed part of the socialization process of the child. Today, this practice has taken a new dimension and is seen in towns and cities with children hawking on the streets especially at traffic lights during school hours. Child labour is an abuse of the rights of the child and it is in opposition to justice. Aristotle in Aminigo,(2020) affirms that "injustice arises when equals are treated unequally and unequals equally". Child labour denies the right of the child to get a sound education like other children who have access to education without barriers and dehumanizes the child thereby leading him into modern day slavery, making him prone to robbery and sometimes even ending in death, (Okon 2019).

Statistics of the Population Reference Bureau (2017) in Stephen & Rossi, 2019) reveal that 45% of over 140 million Nigeria's total population are children under the age of 15years and 15 million children under the age of 14 are engaged in one form of labour or the other in Nigeria. This is a very disturbing trend as the future of the country is at stake. Child labour includes hawking wares on the streets by children in order to gain monetary returns, human trafficking especially of children who are made to become child prostitutes or even forceful recruitment of child soldiers as could be seen in Somali at the time of their war, (Jacoby, 2018). Children who are exposed to fending for themselves and their families or care takers more often than not lose their childhood, dignity and pride and become victims of the harsh circumstances of the environment they become exposed to on a daily basis. Child labour usually arises due to poverty and social exclusion. The poverty index continues to rise in Nigeria and this has forced many parents/ guardians to have no other alternative than sending their children/wards to the streets. This is more widely spread among poorer families in the country.

Statement of the Problem

The irregular school attendance and poor academic achievement of secondary school students are big problems hindering the achievement of our National Educational Goals. There are increases in the rate of secondary school dropouts, examination malpractice and unskilled labour force in Nigeria, (Onomodeke, 2019). There are factors according to different studies that may be

responsible for this national problem, which are examination malpractice, school environment, truancy, family background, poor funding of educational system, poor teacher's motivation, among others. However, another factor that needs our consideration to solve the problem of irregular school attendance and poor academic performance is child labour. Most children are engaged in child labour with some working exclusively while others combine schooling with child labour. In addition to being hazardous and harmful to children health, child labour interferes with education. The failure of children to attend school and perform better academically is of concern to the researchers due to their inability to combine school attendance with income generation activities. International Labour Organization (ILO, 2017) stated that about twenty six percent (26 %) of children aged ten to fourteen (10-14) years in Nigeria were engaged in economic activities. Hence, the magnitude of children's labour force participation in Nigeria served as a compelling reason to investigate the effects of child labour on schooling and academic achievement in Oyo West Local Government Area of Oyo State.

Objectives of the study

The specific objectives for this study are:

1. To determine the level of academic achievement of students exposed to child labour in Oyo West Local Government Area of Oyo State.
2. To examine the effects of low school attendance by students on their academic achievement in Oyo West Local Government Area of Oyo State.
3. To determine the difference between the academic achievement of male and female students exposed to child labour in Oyo West Local Government Area of Oyo State.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are formulated for this study:

HO_1: There is no significant relationship between students' exposure to child labour and academic achievement of Senior Secondary School Students in Oyo West Local Government Area of Oyo State.

HO_2: There is no significant relationship between students' exposure to child labour and school attendance of Senior Secondary School Students in Oyo West Local Government Area of Oyo State.

HO_3: There is no significant difference in the academic achievement of male and female students exposed to child labour in Oyo West Local Government Area of Oyo State.

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted in this paper. The population of the study comprises of 1,125 students in public senior secondary schools in Oyo West Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. The sample size comprises of three hundred (300) respondents. The respondents were selected in their classes when the researchers visited their schools through stratified and simple random sampling technique. The ages of the respondents are between 12 and 20, all the sample schools are mixed school comprising of both male and female students. The sample was selected by means of the simple random sampling technique. A self-developed questionnaire titled **CHILD LABOUR, SCHOOLING AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE** (CLSAAQ) was used as research instruments to collect the needed information from the respondents regarding the effect of child labour on schooling and academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Oyo West Local Government Area of Oyo State. The questionnaire was divided into sections A and B. Section A presents information relating to demographic data of the respondents. Section B presents items that seek to test the research hypotheses formulated and the respondents were instructed to tick the item that is most appropriate. Four Likert scale types of rating, which are Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Strongly Disagreed (SD) and Disagreed (D) was the format of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was personally administered to the respondents by the researchers so as to provide additional information and explanation where needed. The face, construct and content of the instrument was ensured, reliability of the instrument was established through a pilot study, using Cronbach and the reliability coefficient yielded 0.79. The data collected was used to develop a frequency distribution table for analysis. Inferential statistics of chi-square ($X2$) statistical tools was used in testing hypotheses 1 and 2 while independent t-test was used in testing hypotheses 3 at 0.05 level of significance. Chi-square was chosen because it is a statistics, which determine the relationship between two variables (the observed and the expected frequencies). Independents t-test on the other hand is an inferential statistical test that determines whether there is a statistically significant difference between the means in two unrelated groups. The t-test as a statistical was used in this regard to help to unravel difference between academic achievements of students exposed to child labour based on gender.

Results of Findings

HO1: There is no significant relationship between students' exposure to child labour and academic achievement of Senior Secondary School Students in Oyo West Local Government Area of Oyo State.

Table 1: Summary of PPMC showing the relationship between students' exposure to child labour and academic achievement of Senior Secondary School Students

Variable	N	Mean	SD	r	Sig	Remark
Exposure to Child Labour	300	3.25	0.85			
				0.48	0.001	Significant
Academic Achievement	300	2.90	0.90			

The results in table 1 shows a moderate positive correlation (r = 0.48, p = 0.001) between students' exposure to child labour and academic achievement. The p-value is less than 0.05, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant. This suggests that higher levels of child labour exposure are associated with lower academic achievement, meaning that students who spend more time on work-related activities tend to perform poorly in school.

HO2: There is no significant relationship between students' exposure to child labour and school attendance of Senior Secondary School Students in Oyo West Local Government Area of Oyo State.

Table 2: Summary of PPMC Showing the relationship between students' exposure to child labour and school attendance

Variable	N	Mean	SD	r	Sig	Remark
Exposure to Child Labour	300	3.40	0.88			
				-0.52	0.001	Significant
School Attendance	300	2.95	0.92			

The result in table 2 shows a moderate negative correlation (r = -0.52, p = 0.001) between students' exposure to child labour and school attendance. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the relationship is statistically significant. This indicates that as students' involvement in child labour increases, their school attendance decreases, suggesting that child labour interferes with regular school attendance among senior secondary school students in Oyo West Local Government Area.

HO3: There is no significant difference in the academic achievement of male and female students exposed to child labour in Oyo West Local Government Area of Oyo State.

Table 3: Summary of T-test showing the difference between the academic achievement of Male and Female

Students' exposure to Child Labour

Variables	*N*	*Mean*	*Standard Deviation*	*Df*	*T*	*Sig.*	*Remark*
Male	103	3.05	0.85				
				298	4.92	0.001	Significant
Female	197	2.70	0.88				

The result in table 3 shows a significant difference in academic achievement between male and female students exposed to child labour, with female students (Mean = 2.70) performing worse than male students (Mean = 3.05). The t-value of 4.92 and p-value of 0.001 confirm that the difference is significant. This implies that female students are more adversely affected academically by child labour than male students in Oyo West Local Government Area.

Discussion of Findings

Hypothesis one stated that there is no significant relationship between students' exposure to child labour and academic achievement of Senior Secondary School Students in Oyo West Local Government Area of Oyo State. The result showed that there is significant relationship between students' exposure to child labour and academic achievement of Senior Secondary School Student, (r = ; P < 0.05). This implies that students that combined working with school have divided attention, lost focus and concentration and these have adverse effect on their academic achievement. This agreed with Heady (2017) that balancing the demands of work and education places physical and psycho-social strain on children and often leads to poor academic performance and dropping out. The result also corroborates Barone (2019) conclusion that younger students working long hours performed more poorly than did working older students. The findings concur with that which stated that pupils who do not engage in child labour activities have higher chances of obtaining good grades compared to those who engage in child labour activities. This finding concurs with that of UNICEF (2019) which stated that pupils who do not engage in child labour activities have higher chances of obtaining good grades compared to those who engage in child labour activities. Stern (2017) found that working more than fifteen (15) hours per week while in school led to lower grades, less time spent on homework, increased likelihood of dropout and lower likelihood of entering school education.

Hypothesis two states that there is no significant relationship between students' exposure to child labour and school attendance of Senior Secondary School Students in Oyo West Local Government Area of Oyo State. The result showed that there is significant relationship between students' exposure to child labour and school attendanc, (r = ; P<0.05). This implies that students involvement in child labour have negative effect on their school attendance. Most of the students that engage in work before and after school hours were perpetual late comer. The finding is in line with the findings of Ray and Lancaster (2019) which investigated the effect of work on the school attendance and performance of children in the 12-14 year age group in seven countries in terms of the relationship between hours of work and school attendance and performance in which they concluded that hours spent at work had a negative impact on education variables, with the marginal impact weakening at the higher levels of work hours. The result also corroborated with the study carried out by Kvalsving (2019), who found that poor school attendance was caused by the requirements parents place on children to be economically active which resulted in the children going to school late or having interruptions in their schooling because of seasonal agricultural activities. The significant effect of child labour may be because these children, who combine work with schooling, seem suffer fatigue and stress which may cause irregular school attendance especially for those that hawk before going to school and those that work late at night. Again even when they attend school, they seem not to be actively participating in school activities. Also, the fatigue and stress caused by child labour may lead to irregular school attendance and lack of participation in school attendance may contribute to poor academic achievement of these children who were exposed to work and study.

Hypothesis 3 states that there is no significant difference in the academic achievement of male and female students exposed to child labour. The results revealed that there is significant difference in the academic achievement of male and female students exposed to child labour, (t = 0.12; df = 298; p < .05). The finding revealed that male pupils exposed to labour with a mean score of 11.02 while their female counterparts had 19.32. This result therefore confirmed that there is significant difference in the academic achievement of male and female children exposed to labour activities. The findings was one of the reasons that necessitated the researcher to carry out the study. The result of the finding revealed significant difference exists in the academic achievement of male and female children exposed to labour. The findings is in line with Ray and Lancaster (2019) that extensive damage is done by labour on female child's education than her male counterpart right from her point of entry to school to the child's labour market.

Conclusion

This study investigated the effects of child labour on school attendance and academic achievement of secondary school students in Oyo West Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. This study has revealed the crucial effects of child labour on students' attendance and academic achievement. The study showed that combined unstructured and unregulated work with schooling will negatively affect students' punctuality, attendance, study habit and academic achievement of students. Based on the result from the findings of this study, it was concluded that there was a significant effect of students' exposure to child labour on the school

attendance, academic achievement and study habit of public senior secondary school students in Oyo West Local Government Area of Oyo State. Also, there is significant difference in the academic achievement of male and female students exposed to labour.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were put forward:.

1. Parents and community should be mindful of age and sex of their children before exposing them to labour.
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2. The Government and community should develop positive strategies to labour reduction towards a fruitful fulfillment of children's school attendance and academic performance, such as: introducing more subsidies such as free meal tickets and reduced school bills.
3. Government agencies should strengthen the enforcement of child labour laws and integrate grnder considerations into child protection and educational policies.
4. Extra free classes should be introduced to students exposed to labour by the curriculum planners, with special preference to the female pupils exposed to labour.

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