E-ISSN: 1115 - 8425 P-ISSN: 3027-012X
MPRI-JAEE | INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION IN EDU.
VOL. 03 NO. 8 – JANUARY. 2024

CHILD LABOUR AS A FACTOR AFFECTING EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN JALINGO LOCAL GOVERNMENT, TARABA STATE: IMPLICATION FOR COUNSELLING

AZUAGA, BECKY N.
Department of Educational Psychology, College of Education, Zing, Taraba State.
azuachia2011@yahoo.com

Abstract

The study identified the major causes of child labour to include rapid population growth, high rates of unemployment, inflation, poverty, malnutrition, bad leadership, corruption and low wages. The major problems associated with child labour according to the study include various diseases such as respiratory problems, injuries and accidents, physical and sexual abuse such as rape and molestation, malnourishment, extortion of income, police harassment participation in harmful or delinquent activities. In the same vein, several factors have being attributed to affect child education in Jalingo Local Government area of Taraba State, especially the rate of drop out. Such factors include poverty and economic issues; early marriage and teenage pregnancy, inadequate school infrastructure, cultural and religious biases, socio-economic [redacted] status of the parents largely affects the child's education in Nigeria. It was recommended that government should provide educational facilities according to the needs of either normal, disabled or even gifted children. Similarly, parents were advised to pay more attention to the needs and welfare of their children.

Keywords: Child Labour, Educational Opportunities, Counselling, Population Growth, Poverty

Introduction

Education is a veritable tool for achieving human development and alleviating poverty for the people and the nation at large. Education inform the people about the opportunities that are abounds within their

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. A.I. Mteiye [MALAWI]

environment which when properly tapped can bring about self-sufficiency and economic development. Nwokoro (2011) stated that education enhances individual and collective capabilities, and brings the society to a higher level of awareness in respect of its opportunities as well as possibilities. Education can equally be described as a light that shines to provide clear direction to all manner of persons hence the need for all and sundry to have equal access to education especially the formal education. According to the National Policy on Education, Section 1, Article 4 (c), 4th Edition states that:

> *"Every Nigerian child shall have a right to equal educational opportunities irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities each according to his or her ability. Furthermore article 5(c) reiterates the provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system".*

Similarly, Olutola as cited in Alhassan (2006) opined that the implication of the clause "equal educational opportunities for all citizens" connotes that all Nigerian children will have equal education opportunities so that each can develop according to his/her own ability, aptitude and interest.

However, in Nigeria today, most of the children, both in urban and rural areas don't have access to equal educational opportunities. This can be attributed to a lot of factors with child labour standing tall among the other factors. According to Nwokoro (2011) the phenomenon of Child Labour is arguably the tallest of the challenges to the attainment of Goal 2 of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as it impacts directly on school enrolment, attendance, completion rates as well as health rest, leisure and the general disposition of children. Child labour is the act of engaging children in works for the purpose of sustaining themselves and their families. These works engaged in by the children could either have positive or negative impact on their physical, social and mental development.

According to a UNICEF report (2006), many children are exposed to long hours of work in dangerous and unhealthy environments, carrying too much responsibility for their age with little food, small pay, no education and no medical care thereby establishing a cycle of child rights violations. The above assertion corroborates the position of International Labour Organisation (ILO) as cited Osment (2014) that the largest numbers of child labourers are working in hazardous work and the total number of child workers is increasing, even though it is forbidden by law.

Bakari in Alhassan (2006) is of the opinion that what constitute child labour does not encompass all form of work done by the child but only exploitative or destructive work that can interfere with schooling, recreation and rest.

However, some authors are of the opinion that, child labour does not necessary constitute a potential threat to the development and wellbeing of the Togunde and Carter (2008) regard children as workers from legitimate households who assist their parents by contributing financially to the sustenance of the households where they live and come from. This study is however concerned with the alarming rate in the prevalence of child labour and its attendant negative consequences on both the child and the future of this nation.

This study is aimed at counselling people on the effect of child labour on the educational attainment of the child with special attention to the causes of child labour, its negative consequences on the education of the Nigerian child and its remedies.

Statement of the Problem

In recent times, child labour has been one of the greatest obstacles to the physical and social development of the Nigerian child. The continued prevalence of child labour has compelled many children to miss their basic childhood amenities thereby exposing them to series of dangers ranging from malnutrition, sexual abuse among many others. Efforts by successive governments in Nigeria have yielded little or minimal results hence the need for more proactive efforts in terms of research and application. This study therefore seeks to identify the common causes of child labour, its effects and the workable preventive measures, Effective eradication of child labour will indeed give the Nigerian child a sense of belonging and security. To this end, this study aimed at appraising the effect of child labour on the educational attainment of the Nigerian child

Concept of Child Labour

Child Labour is the act of engaging children below the age of 14 years in any work that is essentially exploitative and hazardous to their physical, social and mental development thereby interfering with their normal childhood wellbeing.

According to Osment (2014) Child labour refers to children whe miss their childhood and are not able to have the basic amenities which a child should have. Ajakaye as cited in Osment (2014) reported that the prevalence of child labour is very high in sub-Saharan Africa especially in Nigeria as about 48 million child

labourers across sub-Saharan Africa, including 15 million in Nigeria engaged in child labour. According to Obayelu and Okoruwa (2005) child labour refers to work carried out to the detriment and endangerment of the child, mentally, physically, socially and morally.

It is characterized by denial of the right of children to education and other opportunities, children's separation from their families; and poor working conditions that include among others long working hours, poor environment, heavy work regardless of age and sex. He further defined child labour as:

> *"all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict, the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances, the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant treaties, works which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children" (Obayelu and Okoruwa, 2005).*

According to Nwokoro (2011) has to do with a child engaging in a work to sustain self and or support family.

Causes of Child Labour

The prevalence of child labour in Nigeria can be attributed to various factors. One of the greatest of which is the poverty nature of the parents, Even though education stands to be one of the ways of addressing child labour, many parents cannot afford it. This is in line with Osment (2014) who stated that not every family can afford to send their children to school or, even if they enrolled, afford to keep them attending the school.

According to Ploch as cited in Osment (2014), Nigeria remains highly underdeveloped with poor governance and corruption limiting infrastructure development and social service delivery and slowing economic growth keeping much of the population suffers from extreme poverty. UNICEF (2006) reported that, the end of the oil boom in the late 1970s coupled with mounting poverty has driven millions of children into labour.

Nwokoro (2011) stated that factors such as poverty, ignorance, culture, corruption, ineffective laws and the lack of will to enforce them, are some causes of child labour. Bass in Bassey, Baghebo and Out (2012) reported that in most

developing countries, child labour is caused due to rapid population growth, high rates of unemployment, inflation, poverty, malnutrition, bad leadership, corruption and low wages. Cigno and Guarcello as cited in Bassey er al. (2012) opined that globalisation which tends to manifest itself in the proliferation of industries in many less developed countries has been cited as a cause of child labour.

Problems associated with Child labour

Child labour has a lot of consequences on both the individual and the community. Togunde and Carter (2008) stated that physical consequences that range from malnourishment, diseases, musculo-skeletal disorders from heavy labour, physical and sexual abuse, to injuries, exposure to toxic agents, and prolonged working in cramped and hazardous conditions. According to Das and Sekhar, Gulrajani, Hasan and Debnath as cited in Togunde and Carter (2008) opined that children engaged in hazardous industries have been observed to suffer from oral abuse from their employers, consistent fear of job termination, low self-esteem, and a loss of imagination and future direction in life.

International Labour Organisation (ILO) as cited in Osment (2014) estimated that there are around 215 million children between the ages of five to fourteen who works worldwide. They are often mistreated and work for prolonged hours, in very bad conditions. This can affect their health physically, mentally and emotionally.

Togunde and Carter (2008) stipulated that child workers suffer from various diseases such as respiratory problems, injuries and accidents, physical and sexual abuse such as rape and molestation, malnourishment, extortion of income, police harassment, and participation in harmful or delinquent activities. UNICEF (2006) reported that hazardous work in fields, quarries, private households and on the streets exposes children to abuse and exploitation and poses serious threats to their health and development.

Child Labour as it affects equal educational opportunities of the Nigerian child

According to Robson as cited in Togunde and Carter (2008) stated that in the region of Africa, particularly in rural Nigeria, it has been detected that child workers engaged in farming have lower school attendance compared to their urban working peers. Similarly, according to Hasan and Debnath, Weiner as cited in Togunde and Carter (2008) stated that prevalence of illiteracy, low school

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. A.I. Mteiye [MALAWI]

attendance, and low enrolment has been attributed to children's economic participation.

Furthermore, about six million working children in Nigeria, equally split between boys and girls do not attend school at all, while one million children are forced to drop out due to poverty or because of parents demands to contribute to the family income (UNICEF, 2006).

According to Obayelu and Okoruwa (2005), child labour and low school attendance is a pervasive problem throughout the world, especially in developing countries. Africa and Asia together account for over 90 percent of total child employment. They further stated that, traditional factors such as rigid cultural and social roles in certain countries further limit educational attainment and increase child labour.

Bassey et al. (2012) posited that, it is a ridiculous sight in most big cities, as well as rural villages today, to see child of school age, trading food on the streets, herding animals, tanning and dying raw leather products, fetching water for commercial purposes, washing dishes at restaurants, serving as domestic hands, selling wares at kiosks, collecting firewood for business, harvesting crops in family farms or commercial plantation, amongst other activities.

Major findings

The study identified the major causes of child labour to include rapid population growth, high rates of unemployment, inflation, poverty, malnutrition, bad leadership, corruption and low wages.

The major problems associated with child labour according to the study include various diseases such as respiratory problems, injuries and accidents, physical and sexual abuse such as rape and molestation, malnourishment, of income, police harassment, and participation in harmful or delinquent activities.

In the same vein, several factors have being attributed to affect child education in Jalingo Local Government area of Taraba State, especially the rate of drop out. Such factors includes poverty and economic issues; early marriage and teenage pregnancy, inadequate school infrastructure; cultural and religious biases, socio-economic status of the parents largely affects the child's education in Nigeria

Conclusion

It has being established in this paper that, child labour is a factor working against the concrete realization of equal educational opportunity for all, professed by the

National Policy of Education However, the dream of its actualization can be achieved if the inhibiting factors including child labour can be properly tackled as addressed in this study

Recommendations

i. Government should provide adequate educational facilities according to the needs of either normal, disabled or even gifted children while areas of weakness be identified and then remedied to enable them maximize their potentials and performance.

ii. Government should equally provide welfare packages such as free health-care facilities and free meal for children. This will relieve parents of another burden that might compel them to engage children in acts of child labour.

iii. Parents should also pay more attention to the needs of their children.

References

Alhassan, J.S. (2006) Poverty and Child Labour: The Bane of Equal Educational Opportunities in Nigeria. *The Belt Journal of Education in Nigeria.* 1(1), 100-107

Bassey, E.N., Baghebo, M. & Otu, C.A. (2012). Child Labour in Nigeria and its Economic Implications A Case Study of Calabar Municipality. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*. 2(9).

National Policy on Education (2004) 4th Edition.

Nwokoro, C.N. (2011). The Challenge of Child Labour to the Achievement of MDG 2: Case Study of South-East Nigeria. An Unpublished Masters Thesis submitted to the Department of Economics, Universita' Degli Studi "Roma Tre"

Obayelu, A. E & Okoruwa, V. (2005). Analysis of Child Labour and School Attendance in Nigeria: The Present and Future Implications. Being a conference paper presented at University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

Osment, L. (2014). Child Labour, The Effect on Child, Causes and Remedies to the Revolving Menace. Department of Human Geography, University of Lund, Sweden.

Togunde, D. & Carter, A. (2008). In their own words: Consequences of Child Labour in Urban Nigeria. *J. Soc. Sci.* 16(2), 173-181

UNICEF (2006). Unicef Information Sheet Child Labour UNICEF Nigeria

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. A.I. Mteiye [MALAWI]