



## Impact of Child Labour on the Academic Performance and Socio-Economic Values of Students in Some Selected Junior Secondary Schools in Yobe State, Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

Children below the age of 18 are unfortunately observed engaging in child labour for various reasons, despite it being a situation that should ideally be prevented. This study aimed to assess the impact of child labour on the academic achievement of Junior Secondary School students in Yobe State, Nigeria. Twenty Junior Secondary Schools were selected for the study, and from each school, 50 students, evenly distributed between males and females, were sampled based on their 50% absenteeism rate, which indicated a possible association with child labour. The results revealed that out of the total 1000 students examined, the highest percentage (17.9%) of those engaged in child labour did so due to poverty. Following closely were factors such as lack of access to quality education (16.5%), peer group influence (15.9%), natural disasters and climate change (15.2%), conflicts and mass migration (15.0%), orphanhood or having sick parents (6.5%), inadequacies and weaknesses in the national educational systems (5.9%), limited understanding of child labour (5.6%), and household composition (1.0%). The least percentage (0.5%) of child labour was attributed to parent illiteracy. The study also highlighted some positive impacts of child labour, including the development of management or leadership skills, contributing to family upkeep, and meeting basic needs. However, it also revealed several negative consequences. A majority of respondents (56.4%) agreed that child labour led to an increase in out-of-school youths, poor academic performance, high dropout rates from secondary schools, elevated levels of illiteracy and low employability, a rise in criminality and drug abuse, physical and mental health issues, increased incidents of sexual harassment, and perpetuated intergenerational poverty. Additionally, child labour was found to accelerate premature aging. In conclusion, child labour has detrimental effects on the academic performance of students in Junior Secondary Schools. Therefore, it is imperative for the government at all levels and individuals in positions of authority in Yobe State to extend support to less privileged students and ensure they have access to quality education.

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### INTRODUCTION

Child work refers to any form of participation by students in paid or unpaid work

activities. According to some experts, child work begins to be described as 'child labour' when the work is likely to interfere with the child's education,

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health, physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development; or expose the child to an environment not conducive to his/her development (International Labour Organisation, 2017a). Child labour is a worldwide social problem, it is both widespread and pervasive especially in developing countries, the problem has stimulated a considerable concern in relationship to children's school performance, bearing in mind that students are the base of future national development. ILO (2017b) observed that: "in urban areas today, one finds students working in different sectors ranging from domestic work, street trade and brick making; washing and cleaning cars, selling food, selling newspapers, books and magazine, and repairing bicycles and cars. Some of these are self-employed and in some incidences parents send them to trade in the streets". According to Yap (2003), in some parts of Nigeria, children work as street beggars and shoe shiners, car washers and watchers, scavengers, and foot washers in public places and markets.

In the contemporary world with globalization and industrialization rapidly taking place, we face many challenges such as economic inequality, poverty, famine, malnutrition, and child labour. In a society with poor families, students are the most vulnerable because they become engaged in labour from a very young age in order to contribute to the household income where their participation is highly needed for survival. Child labour exists in many regions, the ILO estimated that 218 million students are found working in developing countries, with 122.3 million working in Asia-Pacific region, 49.3 million in Sub-Saharan Africa, and in Latin America and the Caribbean 5.7 million (ILO, 2017a&b).

Academic performance on the other hand is how pupils or students deal with their studies and how they cope with or accomplish their different task given to them by their teachers. Anumaka (2018) observed that for a pupil or student to be successful in his or her academic performance, the pupil has to be regular in school, face learning problems squarely, avoid late coming to school and he or she should consult with the teacher. Yap (2003) pointed out that a

child who attends school more frequently may influence the amount of knowledge he or she gains. However, the more the school attendance the less time a child has on labour activities.

UNICEF (2018) indicated that students, regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, or ethnicity- lose out when they have poor attendance, and their achievement is affected. Therefore, it requires a successful partnership between the school and its families to address these wider issues. According to Anumaka (2012) parents are primarily responsible for getting students to school every day, schools and their communities have a role to play in recognizing and addressing the barriers and challenges that affect school attendance by individuals and groups of students.

According to UNICEF (2018) estimated that 246 million students age of 5-17 years currently work under conditions that are considered illegal, hazardous, or extremely exploitative. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions 138 and 182, child labourers are all persons under 18 years engaged in labour market or household activities that may interfere with their development. The ILO criteria for identifying any given work as child labour include: a child under 12 who participated in an economic activity for at least one hour per week, a child aged 12 to 14 who participated for at least 14 hours per week (two hours per day), and a child aged 15 to 17 who participated for at least 43 hours per week. Underage students work at all sorts of jobs around the world, usually because they and their families are extremely poor. Large numbers of students work in commercial agriculture, fishing, manufacturing, mining and domestic services. Some students work in illicit activities like drug trade and prostitution or other traumatic activities such as serving soldiers. Students' involvement in child labor is a violation of nation's Minimum Age Law and prevents them from school thereby undermining labor standards and threatens students' physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. Involves them into labor abuse such as slavery, child trafficking, debt bondage, forced labor and illicit activities.

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### Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study was to examine the impact of child labour on the academic performances and socio-economic values of students in some selected Junior Secondary Schools in Yobe State, Nigeria

Specifically, other objectives of this study included

1. Determining the causes of child labour
2. Determining the positive impact of child labour in some selected Junior Secondary Schools in Yobe State
3. Determining the negative impact of child labour in some selected Junior Secondary Schools in Yobe State
4. Suggesting way out to reduce child labour

### Research questions

The following research questions will be answered in this study:

1. What are the causes of child labour
2. What are the positive impact of child labour
3. What are the negative impact of child labour
4. What are some suggestions to combating child labour.

### METHODOLOGY

A survey research design was used for this study. This research design is one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group (Anumaka, 2012).

The targeted population size of this study was comprised of twenty (20) Junior

Secondary School students in Yobe state Nigeria who were working while still attending school, particularly absenteeism of more than 50 percent of learning days in the term.

As it was not possible to collect data from all the students from the entire junior secondary schools in Yobe State, sample was drawn from the population as follows: students were selected from twenty junior secondary schools, fifty from each school. In each school, class attendance registers were used to select students who had missed many classes in the second term of the 2022/2023 academic year (January to April). These students were traced in their homes, where questionnaires were administered to them. A total of 1000 students was used, 500 girls (50%) and 500 boys (50%), were identified.

The researcher collected the data through questionnaires; the instruments used had previously been developed and piloted in two Junior Secondary Schools, in Bauchi State, Nigeria. As regards validity and reliability of the instruments, the questionnaire, were written in English language and translated in Hausa language to the respondents. Furthermore, a pilot study was conducted prior administering the questionnaire. This was done to find out whether any of the items were ambiguous to ascertain applicability, relevance and usefulness of research tools. The pilot study also served as a means to find out the internal consistency or validity as well as the reliability of the questionnaire. The data collected in this study was expressed in descriptive statistics using simple percentage.

### RESULTS

**Table 1:** Reasons (%) behind child labour among Junior Secondary School Students

| Reasons                               | Number of respondents | %    |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|------|
| Poverty                               | 179                   | 17.9 |
| Orphan/ Sick parents                  | 65                    | 6.5  |
| Lack of access to quality education   | 165                   | 16.5 |
| Limited understanding of child labour | 56                    | 5.6  |
| Natural disasters & climate change    | 152                   | 15.2 |

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| Reasons   | Number of respondents | %          |
|---|-----------------------|------------|
| Conflicts & mass migration                                  | 150                   | 15.0       |
| Inadequacies and weaknesses in national educational systems | 59                    | 5.9        |
| Peer group influenced                                       | 159                   | 15.9       |
| Household composition                                       | 10                    | 1.0        |
| Parent illiteracy   | 5                     | 0.5        |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>1000</b>           | <b>100</b> |

Table 1 shows the reasons behind child labour among on Junior Secondary School Students. Of the total number of students assessed, those that engaged in child labour due to poverty formed the highest (17.9%), followed by lack of access to quality education (16.5%), peer group influenced (15.9%), natural disasters and

climate change (15.2%), conflicts & mass migration (15.0%), orphan/ sick parents (6.5%), inadequacies and weaknesses in national educational systems (5.9%), limited understanding of child labour (5.6%), household composition (1.0%) while those due to parent illiteracy were the least (0.5%).

**Table 2:** Positive impacts (%) of child labour among junior secondary school students

| Parameters                           | Agreed (%) | Strongly agreed (%) | Disagree (%) | Strongly disagreed (%) |
|--------------------------------------|------------|---------------------|--------------|------------------------|
| Fund raising                         | 90         | 5                   | 4            | 1                      |
| Skill acquisition                    | 51         | 40                  | 5            | 4                      |
| Discipline                           | 91.5       | 4.5                 | 3            | 1                      |
| Civil obligation (norms and believe) | 60         | 30                  | 4            | 6                      |
| Saving culture                       | 80         | 9                   | 5            | 6                      |
| Independent                          | 61.8       | 32.2                | 3            | 3                      |
| Management/leadership skills         | 67         | 20                  | 7            | 6                      |
| Contribution to family upkeep        | 66.1       | 27.9                | 3            | 3                      |
| Provision of Basic needs             | 20.8       | 77.2                | 1            | 1                      |

Table 2 shows the positive impact (%) of child labour on Junior Secondary School Students. Highest (90%) agreed that child labour helped them to raise fund while lowest (1%) strongly disagreed. Also, highest (51%) agreed that child labour was a mean of acquiring skills while lest (4%) strongly disagreed. Again, highest (91.5%) agreed that child labour instill discipline while lest (1%) strongly disagreed. Again, most (60%) agreed that child labor helped them to learn civil values while few (4%) disagreed. It was also observed that many (80%) attested that n child

labour helped them to learn saving culture while only 5% disagreed. Also highest (61.8%) agreed that child labour made them to be independent while only 3% disagreed. Also, highest (67%) agreed it helped them to learn management or leadership skills while lest (6%) disagreed. In like manner, 66.1% agreed that child labour helped them to contribute to family upkeep while lest (3%) strongly disagreed. Lastly, most (77.2%) strongly agreed that child labour helped them met some basic needs while few (1% each) disagreed and strongly disagreed.

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**Table 3:** Negative impact (%) of child labour on Junior Secondary School Students

| Parameters                                     | Agreed (%) | Strongly agreed (%) | Disagree (%) | Strongly disagreed (%) |
|--|------------|---------------------|--------------|------------------------|
| Increase in out of school youths               | 56.4       | 35.6                | 5            | 3                      |
| Poor academic performance                      | 71.1       | 11                  | 9            | 8.9                    |
| High rate of dropping out of secondary schools | 88.7       | 5                   | 3            | 3.3                    |
| High rate of illiteracy/low employability rate | 88.1       | 5                   | 3.9          | 3                      |
| High rate of criminality/drug abuse            | 40.8       | 49.2                | 3            | 7                      |
| Physical and mental sleekness                  | 65.9       | 24.1                | 2            | 8                      |
| Sexual harassment                              | 80.5       | 16.5                | 1            | 2                      |
| Re-enforces intergenerational poverty          | 79.9       | 15.1                | 1            | 2                      |
| Depression /untimely death                     | 35.9       | 54.1                | 6            | 4                      |
| Premature ageing                               | 35         | 54                  | 6            | 5                      |

Table 3 shows the negative impacts (%) of child labour among junior secondary school students. Highest number of respondents (56.4%) agreed that child labour increased out of school youths while the lowest (3%) strongly disagreed. Also, highest number of respondents (71.1%) agreed that child labour influenced poor academic performance, whereas lowest (8.9%) strongly disagreed. Also, highest number of respondents (88.7%) agreed that child labour influenced high rate of dropping out of secondary schools while lowest (3%) disagreed. Again, highest number of respondents (88.1%) agreed that child labour influenced high rate of illiteracy/low employability rate while lowest (3%) strongly disagreed. Highest number of respondents (49.2%) strongly agreed that child labour influenced high rate of criminality/drug abuse while lowest (3%) disagreed.

Again, highest number of respondents (65.9%) agreed that child labour caused physical and sleekness of junior school students while lowest (2%) disagreed. Again, highest number of respondents (80.5%) agreed that child labour increased sexual harassment while lowest (1%) disagreed. In like manner, highest number of respondents (79.9%) agreed that child labour re-enforces intergenerational poverty while lowest (1%) disagreed. Highest percent (54.1%) strongly agreed that child labour influenced depression

and untimely death while lowest (4%) strongly disagreed. Again, highest percent (54%) strongly agreed that child labour influenced premature ageing while lowest (5%) strongly disagreed.

## DISCUSSION

### *Reason behind Child Labour*

The highest percentage of child labour due to the reason of raising fund agrees with the report by ILO (2017) that children work because their survival and that of their families depend on it, and in many cases because unscrupulous adults take advantage of their vulnerability. Similarly, children that were Orphan or their parents were sick took child labour also to raise money with ILO (2017a&b) that less privilege as result of death of parents certainly the greatest single force driving children into the workplace. This organization reiterated that the income from a child's work is felt to be crucial for his/her own survival or for that of the household. The reason due to lack of access to quality education agrees with ILO (2017a&b) that many communities do not possess adequate school facilities. To some of the students they engaged in child labour because their parents were illiterate and had limited understanding of child labour and parent illiteracy and to this reasons ILO (2017a&b) observed that many communities do not possess adequate school facilities, even where schools exist the

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education provided is often not perceived by children or their parents to be a viable alternative to work. Even when it is "free" it involves a perceived opportunity cost of the income foregone when a child is at school rather than at work. Also ILO (2017a&b) reported that natural disasters and climate change forced youngsters out of home to look for means of survival. Inadequacies and weaknesses in national educational systems discovered in this study as a reason to child labour agrees with ILO (2017a&b) and Woldehanna and Hagos (2012) that the education provided in most developing is frequently of poor quality, and/or perceived by the parents and the children themselves to be irrelevant to local needs and conditions. It is hardly surprising therefore that they see no point in attending school. Peer group influenced as another reason is in support of Islam and Choe (2009) that child labour may be so deeply ingrained in local customs and habits that neither the parents nor the children themselves realize that it is against the interests of children and illegal. As due to household composition collaborates is in line with many child labour to include household composition (Cockburn and Dostie 2007), gender the reports of Woldehanna and Hagos (2012), Islam and Choe (2009), and (Galiano, 2009)

#### **Positive effects**

According to Kumari (2020), all work done by children should not be classified as child labour, that is to be battered for eradication. Children's or youngsters' involvement in work that does not affect their health and personal expansion or delay with their schooling, is generally observed as being something positive. This author reiterated that this includes happenings such as helping their parents everywhere in the home, supporting in a family business, or producing pocket money outside school hours and during school breaks. These kinds of activities underwrite children's development and the well-being of their families; they provide them with assistance and experience and help to prepare them to be creative members of society during their adult life. Child labour is defined as the work is done by the children that

deprive them of their childhood, dignity as a child, their potential, and that harms them in many manners

According to ILO (2017a&b) over 8 million children attend school and work at the same time. These children labor in their leisure time to pay for their education, and they frequently miss lessons as a result of high demand at their workplaces. Furthermore, every member of the family would be required to pitch in and contribute financially in a bid to keep the wolf away from the door.

#### **Negative effects**

According to Kumari (2020) child labour has negative impact not only on individual but the country in every manner which include the overexploitation of population, decrease of resources, decrease in literacy, increase in poverty, an increase of unemployment, lack of schooling and daily wages or care failure of government & limited choice for the poor parents, etc. The effects of hazardous child labour vary from skin disease to asthma to fatal injuries.

In this study the observation of increase in out of school youths is in agreement with UNICEF (2016), Child labor lowers net primary enrollment ratios and most working children do not have the time, money, or energy to attend school. Also the generally poor academic performance observed is in agreement with Gunnarson *et al.* (2006) and Heady (2000) that low grades made by students involving in child labour. According to Abraka (2010) 22% of student's academic performance was influenced by attending classes in secondary schools. Emily and Claudia (2005) in their part asserted that hard work hinders students' active participation in school. That for children who manage to combine work and education, performance at school often suffers. As per high rate of dropping out of secondary schools it agrees with Beegle *et al.* (2003) that students that do child labour hardly continue in school and if they continue, they never finished school soon, they usually finished much latter than the contemporaries because of failures in examinations. High rate of illiteracy/low employability rate was also perceived by Beegle



*et al.* (2003) that a student who becomes a worker will not be able to have a normal life like education, or live their life like all other children and will be condemned to become an illiterate adult, having no possibility to grow up in his or her professional and social life as other do. As due to high rate of criminality/drug abuse this was earlier observed by Gunnarson *et al.* (2006) and Heady (2000). According to these authors child labour strips away the developmental phase of children and disrupts their development in all aspects – physically, because they lack proper nutrition, mentally, because they are deprived of sound education, and emotionally, as they are prone to parental neglect. The negative impact due to physical and mental sleekness was also observed by Anumaka (2018). This author reiterated that child labour is destructive to children's intellectual and physical development especially when a child work in a hazardous industry. Children are also kidnapped and then transferred across borders and then sold for hard labour in foreign countries. It is really very difficult for children to get out of this status quo and very tough for them to deal with what they have experienced physically and mentally. In like manner, the impact due to sexual harassment also agrees with Anumaka (2018) that child labour exposes children to much higher susceptibility of sexual abuse, and sexual assault. The impact on re-enforces intergenerational poverty backs the reports of Anumaka (2018) that poverty often pushes children to work, yet when children leave school early to enter the labor force they are more likely to end up in occupations that limit their chances of breaking out of poverty. Finally the impact due depression /premature ageing and/or untimely death supports ILO (2017a), that more than 85 million work in hazardous places predisposing them to depression /premature ageing and/or untimely death.

#### **Preventive measures**

This outlines ways to remove children from child labour particularly in its worst forms. Yobe state government and the country entire should re-enforcing programmes against child labour of the national government interventions for

eliminating or preventing child labour by promoting: child focused actions and right-based approach.

#### **CONCLUSION**

It was observed in this study that some students engaged in child labour because of high Poverty, orphan/ sick parents, lack of access to quality education, limited understanding of child labour, natural disasters and climate change, conflicts and mass migration, inadequacies and weaknesses in national educational systems, peer group influenced, household composition and parent illiteracy. The positive impact of child labour observed in this study to raise funds, acquire skills, discipline, civil values, saving culture, independent, management or leadership skills, contribution to family upkeep, and provision of basic needs. Negative effects included high increase in out of school youths, poor academic performance, high rate of dropping out of secondary schools, high rate of illiteracy/low employability rate, high rate of criminality/drug abuse, physical and mental sleekness, sexual harassment, re-enforces intergenerational poverty, depression /untimely death and premature ageing,

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The community should be sensitized about the value of education for children.
2. Set disciplinary actions against people subjecting students to child labour.
3. Education be made free for all children.

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