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SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH CHILD LABOUR IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Nigerian children are working under unhealthy condition due to the necessity that pushes them to labour. Therefore, this paper deals with the causes of child labour. The prevalent and prime reason for child labour in Nigeria is the economic poverty that is seriously confronting the majority of Nigerians to some degree. It is the rate of poverty in Nigeria which leads biological parents and guardians to allow their biological children to work in the streets as hawkers, prostitutes and traffickers. This work among others looked at the concept of child labour, the causes of child labour and effects. The use of doctrinal research was employed. This paper unravelled the fact that family size, family condition, poverty and unemployment are some of the causes of child labour. Its effects among others are perpetuation of poverty, injuries, disabilities and disease as well as drug addiction and sexual exploitation. The paper recommends There should be binding legislation against child labour, adequate measures to rehabilitate the victims when they are caught and inspection of school and pupils by teachers should be effective to know is in school or not.

Keywords: **Child, Child Labour, Poverty, Health, Northern Nigeria.**

Introduction

Child labour is one of the serious social problems confronting the world today as well as a major development issue, which is associated with child employment generally considered harmful or detrimental to those set of individuals employed, as it deprives them of their childhood and exposes them to harmful working conditions. Thus, over the past 30 years, child labour has attracted more attention in the global development agenda due to its high prevalence in most developing countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. According to Sally (2014), child labour gained more attention in the 1990s due to increased concern over the immediate wellbeing of millions of the world's poorer children, driven by media coverage on child-related issues and increased documentation on child work by governmental (e.g. UNICEF, World Bank, ILO) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). NGOs have helped in bringing child trafficking and forced labour to the public, similarly, several individual activists have help in bringing the issue of child labour to global attention.

Such activist include; the Indian child labour activist, Kailash Satyarthi who won the Nobel peace prize in 2014 after working for decades to free child bonded labourers, while striving to get rid of child slavery in India. Consequently as people become more conscious about the problem, child labour became a priority for global institutions concerned with human right, equity and civil society, thus child labour was declared as a major human right issue.

Child labour remains a persistent problem in the world today. The latest global estimates indicate that 160 million children – 63 million girls and 97 million boys – were in child labour globally at the beginning of 2020, accounting for almost 1 in 10 of all children worldwide. Seventy-nine million children – nearly half of all those in child labour – were in hazardous work that directly endangers their health, safety and moral development (ILO, 2020). Global progress against child labour has stagnated since 2016. The percentage of children in child labour remained unchanged over the four year period while the absolute number of children in child labour increased by over 8 million. Similarly, the percentage of children in hazardous work was almost unchanged but rose in absolute terms by 6.5 million children.

Child labour is much more common in rural areas. There are 122.7 million rural children in child labour compared to 37.3 million urban children. The prevalence of child labour in rural areas (13.9 per cent) is close to three times higher than in urban areas (4.7 per cent). Most child labour – for boys and girls alike – continues to occur in agriculture. Seventy per cent of all children in child labour, 112 million children in total, are in agriculture. Many are younger children, underscoring agriculture as an entry point to child labour. Over three quarters of all children aged 5 to 11 in child labour work in agriculture (ILO, 2020)

The global picture masks continued progress against child labour in Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean. In both regions, child labour trended downward over the last four years in percentage and absolute terms. Similar progress in sub-Saharan Africa has proven elusive. This region has seen an increase in both the number and percentage of children in child labour since 2012. There are now more children in child labour in sub-Saharan Africa than in the rest of the world combined.

Despite several measures to combat child labour, it continues to remain a great concern in Nigeria. The Child Rights Act which was passed into law in 2003 defines a child as one who is below the age of eighteen years and it categorically provides that such a child's best interests shall remain paramount in all considerations. Sixteen years after being incorporated into Nigerian law, the child labour situation has remained a major issue as millions of children are still engaged in child labour activities

A new public opinion poll conducted by NOIPolls in the week commencing June, 3rd, 2019 has revealed that most Nigerians (84 percent) believe that the issue of child labour is prevalent in the country. The poll further showed that 8 in 10 Nigerians claimed that they normally see children engage in various forms of labour in their respective localities. Data from International Labour Organization (ILO) reported that the number of working children under the age of 14 in Nigeria is estimated to be 15 million. According to the Country Director of the International Labour Organization (ILO), Dennis Zulu, during a two-day' workshop on ACCEL Africa on Friday May 3rd in Abuja, statistics revealed that about 43 percent of children in Nigeria aged between 5 to 10 years were involved in child labour. For instance, the poll

revealed that children are often seen engaged in street hawking (58 percent), domestic work (11 percent) and street begging (10 percent) amongst other labour activities within their localities. Perception on street hawking showed that it is most predominant in the Southern region (79 percent on the average) than in the Northern region (43 percent on the average). However, opinions revealed that street begging and domestic work are highest in the Northern region than in the Southern region.

In northern Nigeria, many families send children from rural to urban areas to live with Islamic teachers and receive a Koranic education. These children may receive lessons, but teachers often force them to beg on the streets and surrender the money they collect. Furthermore, these children are highly vulnerable to recruitment by Boko Haram, which continued to forcibly recruit and use child soldiers in combat and support roles, as well as suicide bombers and concubines

Defining Child Labour

Child labour takes many forms, from paid work in factories to street selling in the informal economy, which are particularly characteristic in cities, to unwaged labour in the household or on the land. Child labour still evades a universally agreed definition, not least because the common description of an adult worker as 'someone who sells their labour power' does not apply to children working alongside their parents within the household (Wells, 2009:99).
According to Sally, (2014) majority of child labour definitions focused on how damaging or disadvantageous work is on a child's wellbeing, while other discourse focus on the differences between child labour (usually waged) and child work (unwaged), i.e. socialization carried out in everyday life. The definition of a child is key to providing a definition of child labour. A child is universally defined as an individual who is yet to enter adulthood, thus the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child; and the Child Rights Act (CRC) 1989, define a child as any individual or person below the age of 18. The ILO (2011) defines child labour as any form of work carried out by children who are below the minimum specified legal age for that work which is believed to be harmful and disadvantageous for the child and therefore is prohibited. In other words child labour is the employment of children under the age of 18 (the age might varies in other societies) in a manner that restrict or prevent them basic education and development. However, in many societies cultural and social factors play a role in defining who a child is and what constitute child labour or child work. Household work done by children is seen as a process of socialization.

ILO argues that child labour is difficult to define. It depends on the type of the job and, if the age is under eighteen and if the job intervenes with the children's education and development (ILO: 2004) Although there is growing acceptance that excessive work is bad for the under 12s, as it harms their social development and prevents them from attending school, the decision to exclude domestic chores from some child labour classifications has been widely criticized due to the excessive working hours and conditions experienced by many children.

According to Edmonds and Pavcnik (2005) child labour is viewed as a form of child labour abuse, when children work in bad conditions and hazardous occupations. According to Suda (2011) the term child labour refers to when children is working in any type of work that is

dangerous and harmful to children's health or the work hinders their education. For Moyi (2011) child labour refers to low wages, long hours, physical and sexual abuse.

Bhat (2010) asserts that the definition of child labour is not simple because it includes three difficult concepts to define, which are "child", "work" and "labour". He claims that the term of childhood can be defined by age but in some societies, people cease to be a child at different ages. The onset of puberty occurs at different ages for different people. Therefore in the Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 (No. 182) defines a child who is under the age of eighteen years (Bhat, 2011). The definition of child labour differs among societies, for example in Africa and Asia they do not consider the work of fifteen years old person as a child labour; they view child labour as a good task that children learn skills from work. They distinguish between child labour and child work, where child work is considered to be a part of the children's training to be responsible adults while child labour is thought to be exploitative (Omokhodion&Odusote, 2006). Also Aqil (2012) assumes that not all work that children do can harm their health or considered as exploitative but it depends on what kind of work they are involved in and how many hours they work. It also depends on work conditions, or environment. However Weston (2005) argues that any work children do, can be damaging to their health because the work can be abusive, exploitative or hazardous and it can influence their health. Omokhodion and Odusote (2006) argued that any work that children does outside home is classified as child labour. According to them working outside home is usually exposed to environmental hazards which may affect their health and safety.

Theoretical Framework of the paper

This paper is anchored on the Culture of Poverty Theory and The Functionalist Theory

The Culture of Poverty Theory

The theory of culture of poverty explains child labour from the perspective of poverty. The idea of a culture of poverty was introduced in the late 1950s by an American Anthropologist, Oscar Lewis. He developed the concept from his fieldwork among the urban poor in Mexico and Puerto Rico. He contends that every where poverty is found to exist makes people in those places exhibit feelings of marginality, helplessness, inferiority and dependence. In Nigeria, the poor often develop various strategies by which they cope with their conditions in form of doing things their own ways.

These feelings compel them to take actions and engage in many activities that will ensure a quick escape from the realities of poverty, one of which is child labour. It is seen as a normal way since it is common among them. According to Lewis (1996), the "culture of poverty" theory has the following elements on; the level of individual, the parents, care givers and guardians who experience the above feelings suffer from weak ego structures, lack impulse control and show little ability to defer gratification, have a sense of resignation, fatalism and an unstable family structure. These qualities therefore make them to believe that the only source for hope is by giving out their children to labour with a view to earning extra income for the upkeep of the family (Ering, 2000). Lewis was of the opinion that, these people show a great deal of self-perpetuating patterns and echoes of poverty which succeeding generations could imbibe and exhibit as life styles, beliefs and values that are not simply an adjustment to low income. Even the children themselves may in subsequent times compel their own children

to embrace child labour so that they do likewise as they did and this will continue with succeeding generations.

The theory is criticized for its inability to show the area in which the poor are found to be egoistically weak. It tends to paint a picture of generic poverty, which in reality shows distinct and unique characteristics. It has also been criticized on the grounds that it does not apply to Western societies and even research in Africa shows that there is a high level of community action by engaging in self help projects like the Esusu Thrift Contribution (Okolo, 2002). Family heads are getting involved in political activities; engage themselves in private practice to augment their finances.

The Functionalist Theory

Durkheim (1858-1917) is most closely associated with functionalism, since he often employs analogies with biology. The most prominent is his organic analogy, in which society is seen as an organic whole with each of its constituent parts working to maintain the others, just as parts of the body also work to maintain each other. This idea is basic to his concept of organic solidarity and distinguished between functional and historical explanations and recognized the need for both (Marshall, 1994). To Durkheim, a functional explanation accounts for the existence of a phenomenon or the carrying out of an action in terms of its consequences and contribution to maintaining a stable social whole(Marshall, 1994).Similarly, religious institutions serve to generate and maintain social solidarity. Historical explanations are on account of the chronological development of the same phenomenon of actions. A new form of modified functionalism is now undergoing revival in studying societies; these modern functionalisms are usually associated with the works of Parsons (1902-1979) and Merton (1910). Merton, in his work distinguishes between manifest functions (intended consequences or consequences of which the participants are aware) and latent functions (unintended consequences of which the participants are unaware). To the functionalist theorists, societies and individuals exist and work to sustain each other in an organic matter. The functionalist views each part of the society as performing a function that keeps and sustain the entire society. That failure in the performance of one result's to a breakdown of the entire society. This implies that every part (no matter how small) has a vital role to play if the sustenance and unity of the whole is desired.

Child labour therefore results from the inability of the society to function well by not being able to provide for the poor families the adequate socialization, education, incentives, responsiveness to human problems, equality of access to the resources and opportunities, infrastructure as well as the necessities and provisions needed for decent or optimal standard of living. The functionalists also believe that there is child labour because the poor families have equally failed in their function and responsibilities as parents and are therefore responsible for the existence and prevalence of child labour in the society. They equally maintain that child labour also arise as a natural phenomenon and as a way of life because of the resources which accrue from child labour to these poor families.

Factors Associated with Child Labour

Poverty: There are several circumstances that affect child labour. Studies have demonstrated that the most notable reason being poverty (Bhat& Rather, 2009). Decisions about child labour and schooling are generally made by parents. If the family live below the poverty line, parents

see children as part of contributor in their family income. Basu (1998) used a theoretical model of child labour, where he showed the only reason parents send children to labour is because of their low income. Consequently poor parents cannot afford schooling for their children. Thus, mainly poor households are to send forced their children to labour instead of sending to school. Rena (2009) shows that that poverty and underdevelopment drives child labour. She found that the high prevalence of poverty amongst countries, including India, China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Papua New Guinea, Ethiopia, Uganda, Mozambique, Malawi, Sudan, and Chad increases the child labour. Therefore, child labour is widespread throughout Africa, and Asia. According to the studies of Edmonds and Pavcnik (2005); O'Donnell et al. (2005) and Akarro and Mtweve (2011) they assume that tackling poverty can be a perfect solution to reduce child labour. Beside poverty, many factors influence the incidence of child labour which can be listed in the following points.

Family size: Indeed, large poor households usually have more children involved in child labour than children from smaller households, which demonstrates family size have an effect on child labour. Parents oblige their children to work because they are not able to manage the demands of a large size family. There are also gender differences among household size. Not everyone and of all age in the family are working as child labour, which depends on the child's age and gender, for example boys are more likely to attended to school than girls. Older siblings often contribute more to the family income (Ahamd, 2012; Boyden J and Myers, 1998). Okpukpara et al., (2006) found that in Nigeria, younger children, where are more likely to go to school than older children, where mostly boys attend schools than girls.

Family condition: A growing number of children who have either lost one or both the parents and those impacted by HIV/ADIS in the family, are forced to work in order to support themselves and their siblings. The numbers of orphaned children are increasing particularly in sub Saharan Africa, many whom become street children, and live in very different circumstances (Vandenberg, 2007).

Traditional or cultural factor: Culture is another factor which is driving children into labour market. Different cultures of many societies make children start work at very young age which are related to traditions and cultural factors. They assumed that children need to learn skills that can be good for their future. According to Tauson (2009) in rural Guatemala; parents prefer their children to work because they consider it beneficial for them as they learn work skills. Obinna E and Osita-Oleribe (2007) assume that many families in Africa want their children to help in contributing towards family income.

Corruption: Corruption is the one of main reason for abusing resources, wherever there is poverty; there is also corruption (Murphy,2005). According to United Nations Development Programme(UNDP) (2012), "*Corruption exacerbates poverty and inequality, undermines human development and stability, encourages and sustains conflict, violates human rights, and erodes the democratic functioning of countries."* Onyemachi (2010) points out that corruption among government officials is another reason that hinders social and economic growth and increases poverty. Corruption can have hugely negative effect on children's right that deprives basic services such as health care, education and infrastructure. Corruption can diminish children's ability to escape poverty. For example in many countries employers corrupt labour inspectors

to hire underage children such as India, where the incidence of large number of child labourers indicates towards corruption (United Nations Development Programm, 2012).

Urban migration: Many rural families migrate to urban areas because of rural push and urban pull factors. As a consequence of that, they are often forced to live and work in the street as they lack access to basic requirements such as food, shelter etc. and these children become street workers as vendors. Mostly street workers are vulnerable to violence and become more susceptible to illegal works, such as stealing, trafficking drugs and prostitution (Yadav&Sengupta, 2009). These children live in urban poverty, many child labourers live in unhealthy poor conditions slum areas and work in poor environment such as domestic work, or work in hotels and restaurants etc. (Serwadda-Luwaga, 2005).

Many cities in developing countries have experienced rapid urbanization. This means that the population is increasing in cities due to immigration and natural growth. Urban poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon. Urban poverty in developing countries faces many challenges in their daily lives. Many poor people living under great hardship, due to unemployment, housing shortages, violence and unhealthy environments. The problem of poverty can have weaknesses in the economy and lack of equity to the provision of services (Shitole 2005:129). Poverty refers to a function of social, economic and political structures and processes that creates unequal distribution of resources, both within and in the global context between communities(Lister 2004:51). Increased urbanization has resulted in poverty in the cities. Urban poverty raises slums. These areas are characterized by high unemployment, poor sanitation, inadequate access to clean drinking water and inadequate housing. According to Dash (2013) many poor rural areas migrates to Delhi, where migrant families and their children are forced to work for survival and economic opportunities

Globalization: is another cause of child labour. Globalization has positive and negative impacts, nevertheless; globalization might give developing countries the opportunity to increase their gross domestic production (GDP) per capita via new trade possibilities and ascend their foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows. Globalization also has brought adverse impacts on child labour in developing countries. In recent years, many international companies moved their production abroad. These companies often indulge in hiring children as cheap labours as they are endurable, and carry out commands given by their employers even if they're abused and exploited (Mapaure, 2009). Mishra(2012) claims that in India, globalization has obliged more children to work in hazardous occupations like brick kiln , motor garage, hotels, shops, transportations, manual loading work etc.

Some studies suggest that higher income and higher standard of living can reduce the potential problem which resulted from the increasing child labour of globalization (Congdon Fors, 2012). Other argues that globalization will increase the opportunity of exploiting cheap labour especially from low income countries. For example countries like Vietnam, Mexico and Thailand have provided evidence that child labour declines due to globalization, but countries like Bolivia and Zambia have showed a decline in schooling and an increase in child labour (Mishra, 2012).

Effects of Child Labour

Injuries, Disabilities and Deaths: Children who are hired as agricultural workers frequently suffer cuts from sharp knives and other objects and run the risk of back injuries from hauling heavy loads of produce. These children often work in freshly sprayed field and sometimes work while pesticides are being sprayed. Consequently, some of them suffer headache, fever, dizziness, nausea, rashes, diarrhea etc and sometimes death. (Human Rights Watch, 2007)

Perpetuation of Poverty: There is no doubt that children engaged in certain types of child labour such as hawking, agricultural work and bus conducting contribute financially to their families. It is noteworthy however that child labour can also ruin a family's purse and push the family deeper into poverty if the child labourer sustains serious injuries (Flekhoy, 1992).

Drug Addiction and Sexual Exploitation: Many children are involved in smoking, drugs, and sexual exploitation which is the consequence of child labour in society. Many Nigerian child labourers are smoking and dealing in drugs, either selling or consuming drugs, which is very risky to their health and life. Such habits and attitudes are a threat to society and the community because if the child becomes intoxicated he or she can cause harm to himself or another victim. Likewise, he or she may influence badly other children in society. (Bernard 2000) Children who have been sexually abused suffer severe adjustment problems such as depression, low self esteem, mistrust of adults, anger and hostility. Younger children might, in addition, have sleep difficulty, loss of appetite, fear and anxiety. A sexually abused child may become infected with sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV. She may become pregnant, which in turn may lead to child abandonment, abortion or complications associated with childbirth by under-aged children.(Children's and Women's Rights in Nigeria,2007)

Ethical and Moral Decline in Society: Moral deterioration is another effect of child labour in society because a child develops the bad habits and behaviour he or she has learnt from the master who employed them. (Peowet all, 2007) Since the master lacks morals and good conduct in his way of dealing with the children under his charge, it is easy for the children to emulate and copy their master's attitude and behaviour as an example for them. A master who engages in monotonous, low pay, ill-treatment and corruption will also influence the lives of child employees. So, children will develop immora act

Health Problem: Child labour has a physical health impact on children who are working in factories, small workshops, on the roads, streets, in mining, and construction sites because they are engaging in hazardous work and risk their lives that can endanger their health. (Peow,2007) Children's development and physical ability are not suitable to work excessive hours under any circumstances because working under unhealthy and hazardous conditions results in different kinds of sickness and illness for children. Children's biological characteristics make them more susceptible to work in hazardous environments and unhealthy atmospheres. Children will be more exposed to accidents, diseases, and ergonomic hazards. (Fyefe, 1997). Some children are also exposed to chemicals, heavy machinery, noisy environments, and hard physical work. (2007).In many cases, children have minor injuries and cuts that need professional medical treatment, and stitches, to dry the wound quickly. Due to the informal job they are engaging in, it will be difficult to provide professional medical doctors and if a medical doctor is provided, children may not follow medical instructions as their main concern is making money. Too much squatting and bending of the back and legs

when working also affects a child's health and lack of medical attention and treatment will worsen the child's physical condition in the future.(Paola et al, 2016)

Prostitution: As a matter of fact, many children are abused sexually globally especially female children who experience early intercourse due to one reason or another. Prostitution is common and rampant among school going females as a result of the child labour that children find themselves (Lana 2014). This is because of their financial condition and situation. The employer takes advantage of them by using them as prostitutes in the employer's personal interest. Some females are exported to other countries for prostitution as a means of generating income.

Education: Child labour may also interfere with a child's education and consequently restrict his future earning capacity. This can also impoverish a country, depending on the number of her children whose education is affected, by restricting\its economic advancement (Glut, 1995).

As a result of child labour in Nigeria, children's education has been truncated and working children are lagging behind their peers educationally due to their being at work during school hours. Many working children do not know their rights, whom to go to for assistance, and if they are labouring till adulthood, there is a possibility that they will not be productive for Nigerian society unless a solution emerges in the interests of working children and the nation.(Marion, 2010)

Recommendations

1) Government should channel resources to people-oriented programmes such as poverty eradication, small and medium –scale loans scheme, subsidy on petroleum and agricultural products, as well as free, qualitative but compulsory education at all levels.
2) There should be binding legislation against child labour. This will help to check mate any perpetrator. Such persons must be apprehended for effective process.
3) There should also be adequate measures to rehabilitate these children when they are caught.
4) Inspection of school and pupils by teachers should be effective to know is in school or not. Adequate followup measures should be in place to check excess truancy.

Conclusion

This work has considered child labour especially it incidence in SubSaharan Africa and Nigeria in particular. It has also examined the historical trends of the menace, factors associated with it and it consequences. It therefore recommended that the government on it part should address poverty which is one of the major causes of poverty. Furthermore, the government in collaboration with the law enforcement agents should ensure that the law against child labour in the country is implemented to latest. In conclusion the family institution should be oriented and educated on the dangers and effects of child labour.

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