

Child labour and its implications to students' academic performance in Nigeria

Introduction

Child Labour is the involvement of young people below the age of fifteen years in the production of goods and services where they contribute their physical and mental energy mostly against their wish as well as the detriment effect on their health and educational pursue.

This chapter status the outcome of relevant literature reviewed on the child labour under the following heading.

2.2 Nature of Child Labour in Nigeria.

2.3 Causes of Child Labour in Other Areas.

2.4 General Effects of Child Labour on Children Education.

2.5 Suggested Measure on Child Labour.

2.2 Nature of Child Labour in Nigeria

Safiya Danitye et al; (2004) considered child labour as a form of child abuse where parents and others adults force children into slavery over work, exploitation or deprivation of their rights to normal and happy childhood which is detrimental of their physical, mental, psychological, spiritual and social development. Also Umar G.A(1992) defined child labour as employment of young people in works for selfish gains in a way that deprive them of their fundamental human rights, food, health and education.

In 1998, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that 24.6 percent of children between the ages of 10 and 14 in Nigeria were working. In 1994, the United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) reported that approximately 24 percent (12 million) of all children under the ages of 16 worked. Child Labour is predominantly found in the formal sector, in rural areas, children are found working in agriculture and family farm in cottage industries and mechanical workshop, children work as apprentices in various craft or trades such as weaving, tailoring, hairdressing and auto repair. In urban areas and towns children work on streets as vendors, car washers, beggars, head load carriers, feet washers and bus conductors.

In 1996, the child welfare league reported that in Lagos alone there were about 100,000 boys and girls living and working on the streets. In Northern Nigeria children known as "almajirais" are found on the street begging, children in prostitution and trafficking are reported in Nigeria. Trafficked children are employed in agriculture and heading as domestic servants, drug peddlers, hawkers, petty traders, beggars, car washers and bus conductors.

According to the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute of Statistics country report, Nigeria (Paris 2000) Gross primary school enrollment declined in Nigeria approximately 86.2 percent in 1993 to 70.3 percent in 1996. Dropout rates for both male and female in primary school remained high around 10 to 15 percent between 1994 for each level of education. Only 64 percent of students in primary school completed and only 45.5 percent continued in the Junior secondary school.

In the North, girls are often withdrawing from school because of marriage, domestic agricultural and commercial activities such as trading and street vending. According to the International Labour Organization (1993), Nigeria has 12 million child workers.

2.3 Causes of Child Labour

Child traffickers take advantage of a cultural tradition of "fostering" where a poor usually rural family sends a child to live with a family in an urban area for education and employment purposes. In most cases children in these situations do not receive any formal education, instead they force to serve as domestic servant, street hawkers or engage in other activities and many of them are vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse by their guardians. There are also credible reports that poor families send their daughters into forced marriage as a means of supplementing their income. Ebigbo (1989) attribute the problem of child labour in most parts of Nigeria to poverty, he stated that adverse economic environment cause neglect of children by parents. Ebigbo discovered that parent who cannot the payment of school fees often engaged children in works that would bring money to support and sustain the family.

GIL (1989) shared the above view when he stated that lack of occupational opportunities is a major causes of child labour which inhibits the development of children. The report further stated that the rigid and uninspiring approach to education as well as underfunding as well as irrelevant curriculum which is remote from children lives contribute to child labour and students drop out from school. The report added that tradition and entrenched social pattern also play a part in propelling children into hazardous labour. Danli (1992) noticed that ignorance on the part of parents and others members of the societies lead to child neglect and exploitation.

Mutazu (1988) stated that parented profession and occupation has great influence on children and their education. Singh and Sochuh (1986) stated that children in developing countries tend to be of economic value as a result they become desirable assets for struggling parents. The International Labour Organization (ILO) report (1992), was of the view that many children seek employment simply because there was no access for them to school, lack of means of schooling as well as distance to school were said to be other reasons. Where

these reasons are not tenable, the report stated further that schools in many developing countries suffered from problem such as overcrowding, poor sanitation, poor motivated teachers which account for the withdrawal of children from school and their retention at home to trade, hawk and farm.

2.4 General Effects of Child Labour on Children Education

The United Nations International Children Emergency Fund reported that child labour affect children's:

- a. Physical development including their overall health coordination, strength, vision and hearing are impaired.
- b. Children's cognitive development including literacy, numeracy and acquisition of knowledge necessary for normal life are Jeopardize by child labour.
- c. Children's emotional development including self-esteem, family attachment, feeling of love and acceptance are often negatively affected.
- d. Children social and moral development including a sense of group identify, the ability to co-operate with other and capacity to distinguish right from wrong are usually affected.

Fatima (1992) observed that child labour especially hawking exposes the female child to a lot of danger such as theft, reaping, fornication, drunkenness, unwanted pregnancies and general diseases.

She further stated that child labour will contributes to children academic backwardness as in ordinate desire for money.

2.5 Suggested Measure on Child Labour

Katung (1996), said that since education is considered expensive, it needs to be subsidized by the government of today. He added that since government itself cannot shoulder the cost of education all alone her effort should be philanthropic individuals.

Fatima (1992) suggested that schools should be built in rural and urban communities. She continued by stating further that a wide orientation and awareness programme about the evil of child labour practices as well as the value of educating children should be embarked upon by the government and non-governmental organization.

In 1994, there was a legal measure on child labour act which prohibit the employment of children under the age of 12 to work in commerce and industries. The labour act of 1974 stipulated that children may not be employed in agricultural or domestic works for more than eight hours per day and that children under the age of 12 cannot be required to lift loads that are likely to harm their physical development. The acts prohibit force labour.

Inadequate inspectors by ministry of labour and productivity inspection department made it difficult for them to fulfill their responsibility; the inspection was only based on the formal sector while the informal sector was left. On August 8th 2000, the government of Nigeria signed a memorandum of understanding with the International Labour Organization (ILO) as a member of the elimination of child labour.

As part of effect to address child labour problem in the country, the government of Nigeria and International Programme on elimination of child labour with funding support of the United States Department of Labour (USDOL), have launched a country programme and established a National Steering Committee that includes Representative from the government, labour industries and Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs). The Steering Committee was responsible for developing and overseeing implementation of a National Plan of Action on child labour. United Nations International Child Emergency Fund (UNICEF) has established

series of programme for street children in Nigeria and launched a collaborative project with (ILO-IPEC) especially aiding the Almajirai.

According to the United States National Institutes for Occupational Safety and Health report of August (1997) some actions that are urgently needed against child labour are:

a. Provision of free and compulsory education: Government must budget the necessary resources for this purpose with donors ensuring resources from existing development and budget.

b. Education system must teach useful skills that are relevant to children and their parents circumstances, get girls into school, raise the quality and status of teachers and for the family, school bill should be removed, the cost of books supplies, uniform, transportation and other cost that impact disproportionately on the poor.

c. Wider legal protection: Law on child labour and education should be consistent in purpose and implement in a mutually supportive way, such legislation must encompass the vast majority of child work in the informal sector of economy.

d. There should be birth registration of all children: registration is said to be essential to permit the exercise of the right of the child, such as access to education, health care and other services as well as to provide the necessary amenities.

e. That there should be free trade as part of the solution to eradicating child labour, this is because a free trade regime promotes development worldwide, as country develops the incidence of child labour decrease substantially.