

Analysis of Child Labour and School attendance in Nigeria: The present and future implications

Being a conference paper

By

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Abstract

Child labour acts as a major hurdle for ensuring free, quality education for all children. Over 246 million girls and boys around the World are working instead of attending school and enjoying their childhood of which Nigeria account for about 6.1 %(15million). This paper investigated the motivating factors into child labour in Nigeria, examined Nigerian government efforts at reduction and improvement of child labour and school attendant rates. The result showed that child labours are predominantly found in the informal sector of Nigeria with family characteristics as a very important determining factor of children's educational attainment and labour in Nigeria. The future implication of the exploitation of child labour will not only damages the children concerned but also inhibits the emergence of a skilled workforce, but will force Nigeria into a cycle of impoverishment. It will lead to high child mortality rate as a result of working too young, for too many hours, and in hazardous conditions. By the time such children reach adulthood they are often damaged physically, emotionally, morally and intellectually and would have lost the opportunity for an education that would open up a better futures and the amount of schooling in children today determines the wage they command as adult tomorrow. Government should not only emphasis the need for a reduction in family size but also enforce the law on the ban of child labour and compulsory education and give parent who want to educate their child access to market credit

Keywords: *Child labours, school attendance, present implications, future implications and Nigeria*

Introductory background

The issue of child labour has attracted increasing attention in the past decade from policy makers, advocates and researchers. Child labour is a persistent problem, found throughout most of the developing world, and to a lesser extent in developed countries. The availability of detailed and reliable child labour statistics and their analysis on a continuing basis are particularly important for establishing policy priorities and targets, formulating and implementing interventions, and monitoring policies, regulations and programs aimed not only at the minimization of the negative consequences of child labour in the short term, but most importantly at the eventual elimination of the practice

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. This is especially prevalent in rural areas where the capacity to enforce minimum age requirements for schooling and work is lacking. Children work for a variety of reasons, the most important being poverty and the induced pressure upon them to escape from this plight. Though children are not well paid, they still serve as major contributors to family income in developing countries. Schooling problems also contribute to child labour, whether it is the inaccessibility of schools or the lack of quality education which spurs parents to enter their children in more profitable pursuits. Traditional factors such as rigid cultural and social roles in certain countries further limit educational attainment and increase child labour. The gender roles that a society assigns to its children will have a determining effect on their future: their access to food and education; their labour force participation; their status in relationships; and their physical and psychological health. According to the report from the Bureau of Statistics of the International Labour Organization (1995) at least 120 million of the world's children between the ages of 5 and 14 years did full-time, paid work (ILO, 1996; Ashagrie, 1998). Many of them worked under hazardous and unhygienic conditions and for more than 10 hours a day.

There is therefore an urgent need to pay more attention to the early years of children's lives. Against this background, this paper critically examined child labour and school attendance in Nigeria and spelt out the implication both now and in the future.

Theoretical / conceptual framework

Child labour is a widespread phenomenon in the world's economies and has been for generations. It encompasses numerous complexities which call for elaboration and clarification for better understanding of the concept. It is often confused with child work, but in recent time it has been put in the spotlight by activists, politicians and economists alike. Most of the popular discussion has centred on the harmful effects of child labour and ways to curtail its incidence. Much of the recent theoretical literature in economics (see Basu, 1999, for a useful survey of the both the theoretical and empirical literature) has focused attention on how child labour is most likely a household decision. Most of the previous empirical literature has focused solely on isolating the determinants of child labour using survey data (Ray, 2000, 1999; Jensen and Neilsen, 1997; Patrinos and Psacharopoulos, 1997; Psacharopoulos, 1997; and Grootaert and Kanbur, 1995). The Nigeria children and young person's law bears a reasonable definition of who a child is. A "child" is usually defined as a person who is dependent upon other individuals (parents, relatives, or government officials) for his or her livelihood. The exact ages of "childhood" differ by country and time period. According to Ikenga Metuh (1995), the children and young person's law (Cap. 19) Laws of Eastern Nigeria, (1963), a child as any person who has not attained the age of fourteen (14) years. Young persons on the other hand, refer to persons who have attained the age of fourteen (14) years, but are less than seventeen (17) years. To corroborate this fact, section 4a of Article 28, chapter 3 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999 p.16) recognizes a person of eighteen years and above as having attained 'full age' or

adulthood The ILO Convention No. 138 specifies 15 years as the age above which, in normal circumstances, a person may participate in economic activity. Following this, a child is classified as a "labourer" if the child is "economically active" (Ashagrie, 1998) Governments and international organizations usually treat a person as economically active or "gainfully employed" if the person does work on a regular basis for which he or she is remunerated or which results in output destined for the market. While child work is used when describing the activities that children actually undertake, but this is not very satisfactory. Amma et al (2000) have tried specifically to look at child work in a more detailed way. To them child work covers tasks and activities that are undertaken by children to assist their parents. In particular, such jobs as cooking, washing dishes, weeding, planting, harvesting crops, fetching water and firewood, herding cattle, and baby sitting. In this case child work simply aims at tasks and activities which are geared towards the socialisation process. Child work is therefore taken and viewed as part of the upbringing process. Child labour refers to 'work carried out to the detriment and endangerment of the child, mentally, physically, socially and morally'. It is characterised 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 working environment, heavy work regardless of age and sex; and so on. Bonded labour or debt bondage on the other hand is "the status or condition arising from a pledge by a debtor of his personal services or those of a person under his control as security for a debt".

Bonded labour typically occurs when a person needing a loan and having no security to offer, pledges his/her labour, or that of someone under his/her control, as a security for a loan. The interest on the loan may be so high that it cannot be paid, or the labourer may be deemed to repay the interest on the loan but not the capital. Thus, the loan is inherited and perpetuated, and becomes an inter-generational debt. Bonded labour is identified as one of the worst forms of child labour in ILO Convention 182. Children may be exploited for sexual work the termed which is referred to as "Commercial sexual exploitation of children" (CSEC). According to U.S Embassy Stockholm (1996) is the inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity; the exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices; or the exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.

Worst Forms of Labour according to ILO convention 182 (1999) as ratified in (2003) is defined as: all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom 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 international treaties; work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

Empirical evidences of causes of low human capital formation and high child labour in different countries of the World

In teasing out the role of parental education empirically, parental education positively correlates with human capital investment in their children because the parents have higher future income and a smaller number of children, or because they have a deeper understanding of the value of education? Education, particularly of the mother, has a secondary impact on human capital formation. Child mortality is lower for educated mothers, thus requiring fewer costly births to achieve the targeted family size. More resources are therefore left to invest in surviving children. Parents who receive what they believe to be a temporary windfall are likely to invest some of it in having more children. These additional children then provide additional income in the future when household income returns to a more typical level. As a consequence, income surprises that ultimately prove to be permanent can produce some curious empirical results. Families that have persistently high income that is unexpected are likely to have a larger family size and less human capital formation than we would normally expect. Thus, income growth will more slowly reduce family size when it is unexpected. The decision to educate one's children has an inter-temporal aspect, as discussed by many authors, most notably Becker (1974). Baland and Robison (2000) make a particularly direct connection of human capital formation to child labour when evaluating the efficiency characteristics of household decisions. They 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. Problems with inefficient child labour arise when families are credit-constrained, as noted by Laitner (1997), Parsons and Goldin (1989), and Jacoby and Skoufias (1997), and as analyzed by Baland and Robinson. For example, if parents expect family income to be rising over time, then they may find it optimal to borrow against the future so as to smooth consumption across time. That is, it is optimal for savings to be negative when children are young. However, if parents do not have access to credit markets, then they have to rely on internal assets. In the child-labour scenario, parents borrow from the future by putting their children to work rather than investing in human capital that will make their children more productive in the future. Such a strategy, while optimal for the family in this constrained situation, is not efficient. The present discounted value of another hour of schooling is greater than the return to another hour of work. There is an abundance of indirect empirical evidence, concerning the role of credit constraints and educational attainment. However, Dehejia and Gatti (2002) test the hypothesis directly. They estimate a basic model of child labour determination for a panel of 172 countries for the years 1950-60, 1970, 1980, and 1995. They find that a one standard deviation increase in the share of credit in GDP is associated with a 10 percent standard deviation decrease in child labour. They conclude that families with access to credit are considerably less likely to put children to work during a period of economic volatility than parents without access to credit. Similarly, Jacoby and Skoufias (1997) study the effects of incomplete financial markets on child labour through their analysis of time allocation of children ages 5 to 18 included in the Village Level

Studies Survey, 1975-1978, of ten villages in semi-arid India. Jacoby and Skoufias found that parents make significant use of child labour to self-insure

Methodology

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa is located approximately between Latitudes 4° and 14° North of the Equator and between Longitudes 2° 2' and 14° 30' East of the Greenwich Meridian. To the North, it is bordered by the Republics of Niger and Chad, to the East by the Republic of Cameroon, to the South by the Atlantic Ocean and to the West by the Republic of Benin. The surface area of the country is approximately 923,770 m². About 35% of this land mass is believed to be arable while 15% is said to be used as pastures, 10% as forest reserve, 10% for settlements and the remaining 30% is considered uncultivable, for one reason or the other. However, another estimate puts the surface area as 91.07 million hectares, 57% of which is believed to be either under crops, or pastures while the remaining 43% is divided among forest, water bodies and other uses (Cleaver and Shreiber, 1994). Its domestic economy is dominated by agriculture, which accounts for about 40% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and two-thirds of the labour force. Agriculture supplies food, raw materials and generates household income for the majority of the people. The external sector is dominated by petroleum, which generates about 95% of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings while agriculture contributes less than 5%. Trade imports are dominated by capital goods, raw materials and food. It has two distinct climatic zones. Along the coast the equatorial maritime air mass influences the climate, which is characterized by high humidity and heavy rainfall. To the north the tropical continental air mass brings dry, dusty winds (harmattan) from the Sahara; the temperature varies considerably with the season. Despite a sizeable natural resource base and financial resources accruing from the oil sector, Nigeria is still considered poor with a low per capita income and a ranking quite low according to her Human Development Index (HDI). The 1995 UNDP Human development report estimated that the life expectancy in the country is about 50 and that the human development index is 0.406 which ranks Nigeria as number 141 out of 174 countries in the world. The situation has been aggravated during the last decade by attempts to restructure the economy. Consequently, about 40 per cent of the population are estimated to be living in absolute poverty with approximately 80 per cent of them living in the rural areas. Nigeria has abundant human as well as natural resources to address its problems if economically managed. Data relevant to this study come mainly from a secondary source and were analysed descriptively

Results and Discussion of findings

Distribution of child labour in Nigeria

Child labour is found predominately in the informal sector in Nigeria. In rural areas, children are found working in agriculture, herding and on family farms. They are seldom employed by state-owned commercial agriculture plantations, which are responsible for much of the agricultural production for export (U.S Embassy- Lagos, 1995). In cottage industries and mechanical workshops, children work as apprentices in various crafts or trades such as: carpentering, barbing, metal work weaving, tailoring, catering,

hairdressing, and auto repair. In urban areas and towns children work on the streets as vendors, shoe-shine boy, car washers, scavengers, beggars, head-load carriers, feet-washers and bus conductors (U.S Embassy-Lagos, 2000). In 1996, the Child Welfare League reported that in Lagos alone there were 100,000 boys and girls living and working on the streets (Country wise Data, 2000). In northern Nigeria, children, known as the *almajirai*, survive on the street by begging. Some of the children are trafficked and used as domestic servants, sex workers (country reports 2000), drug peddlers, hawkers, petty traders, (ILO-IPEC, 1999). FOS/ILO (2003) National Child Labour Survey estimates that there are 15 million children engaged in child labour in Nigeria. These children are also vulnerable to being forced into prostitution, or, in many instances, are trafficked internationally (UNICEF Report, 2005).

Various regulations in Nigeria on child labour and school attendance

Nigerian government has both in the past and in the present promulgated several laws on child education, and child labour and on related issues such as child trafficking. Section 31 of the children and young person's Laws of Nigeria considers the giving out of a child (male or female) for any purpose to any other person than the grandparents of the child as criminal. Having not attained adulthood or 'full age', the child cannot be said to be able to take rational decisions that demand his/her full consent. The Nigeria Labour Act sets the minimum age at 12 years for employment and apprenticeships, except for light agricultural or domestic work performed for the family. The law prohibits children less than 12 years from lifting or carrying any load likely to inhibit physical development, and establishes a minimum age of 15 years for industrial work and maritime employment. The law prohibits children less than 16 years from working underground, on machines, at night, more than 4 consecutive hours, or more than 8 hours a day. The law also prohibits children less than 18 years from any employment that is dangerous or immoral. The law does not apply to domestic service (ILO- IPEC 2000). In July 2003, a comprehensive anti-trafficking and child labour law called "Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF) initiated by Titi Abubakar, known as the Law Enforcement and Administration Act, was passed, which established a national agency to enforce the Act and coordinate counter-trafficking work. Section 11 of the Act stipulates life prison terms for any persons who traffic children into or out of Nigeria. The Ministry of Employment, Labour and Productivity's Inspections Department is responsible for enforcing legal provisions regarding work conditions and protection of workers. However, there are fewer than 50 inspectors for the entire country, making it difficult for them to fulfil these responsibilities (EFA 2000). Inspections are conducted only in the formal business sector where there are few occurrences of child labour.

On August 8, 2000, the Nigerian Government and the International Labour Organization signed a Memorandum of Understanding to establish a national program to eliminate the worst forms of child labour in Nigeria. The initiative was funded by the United States Department of Labour, with the committed of \$718,928 for the National Program to Eliminate Child Labour in Nigeria and \$282,613 for a statistical program aimed at generating reliable data on child labour in Nigeria.

On school attendance, education in Nigeria is compulsory for a child that is 9 years old. The National policy on Education (NPE 1998) revised three years after the 1995 Beijing declaration and PFA, clearly states in sub-section 4c of section 1(NPE p 7) that there is need for equality of educational opportunities to all Nigerian children irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities each according to his or her ability. Against this background in September 1999, the president of Nigeria launched the new Universal Basic Education plan that requires the first nine years of schooling to be free and compulsory (EFA 2001) The plan aims to improve the relevance, efficiency, and quality of schools and to create programs to address the basic education needs of nomadic and out-of-school children, youth and adults (Felix, 1999). In its 2000 budget, the Government of Nigeria also budgeted 46 billion naira (US\$460 million) to support this plan (EFA 2000)

Analysis of reports on Nigeria in child labour and school attendance

Despite the child trafficking, the child labour laws and educational enforcement provisions that are in force in Nigeria, many are still violating them. As of November 2002, no recent child labour inspections had resulted in fines, penalties, or convictions. Investigations of child trafficking are hampered by corruption among government officials and commercial sexual exploitation of children is still very common in many cities in Nigeria. The country is found not only a source, and transit but a destination country for trafficking in children. Children are trafficked to and from Cameroon, Gabon, Benin, Equatorial Guinea, Togo and other West African countries to work in agricultural enterprises, as domestic servants, prostitutes or in other forced labour conditions and at time girls are sometimes sold into marriage. This has been particularly pronounced in eastern Nigeria and in some southern states. There are also reports of trafficking of children to non-African countries, such as to the United States and Europe (country Reports 2000). Even though, recent school attendance rates are unavailable for Nigeria but while enrolment rates indicate a level of commitment to education, they do not always reflect a child's participation in school (country Reports 2000). Gross primary school enrolment declined in Nigeria from approximately 86.2 percent in 1993 to 70.3 percent in 1996 [UNESCO (2000)] and the ratio increased in 2000-2004 to about 118.5 (see table 1). Also shown in the table is that the gross and net school enrolment and attendance in Nigeria .Dropout rates for both males and females in primary school remained high, around 10 to 15 percent between 1990 and 1994 for each level of education. Only 64 percent of the students in primary school completed grade five, and only 43.5 percent continued on to junior secondary school (Country Reports 2000). Also there are reports of a bias against girls' education, particularly in rural and northern areas of Nigeria that only 42 percent of rural girls are enrolled in school compared with 72 percent of urban girls and that in the north, girls are often withdrawn from school and placed into early marriages, domestic and agricultural labour, or commercial activities such as trading and street vending.

Table 1: Statistics of school attendance in Nigeria at a glance

Basic indicator	Number
Primary school enrolment ratio (2000-2004) gross male	132
Primary school enrolment ratio (2000-2004) gross female	107
Primary school enrolment ratio (2000-2004) net male	74
Primary school enrolment ratio (2000-2004) net female	60
Primary school attendance ratio (1996-2004) net male	58
Primary school attendance ratio(1996-2004) net female	66
Secondary school enrolment ratio(2000-2004) gross female	32
Secondary school enrolment ratio(2000-2004) gross male	40
Secondary school enrolment ratio (2000-2004) net female	26
Secondary school enrolment ratio (2000-2004) net male	32
Secondary school attendance ratio(1996-2004) net male	38
Secondary school attendance ratio(1996-2004)net female	33

Source: UNICEF (2005): Nigeria- Statistics at glance

Determinants of child labour and school attendance in Nigeria

A recent UNICEF study of 18 sub-Saharan African countries has cast light on the relative importance of child labour as a constraint to children's school participation (UNICEF 2005). It shows that overall 60 per cent of children are attending school, while 38 per cent are engaged in child labour. There is significant overlap between the two half of the children that work also attending school.

The relationship between child labour and education is a compound equation that is neither simple nor predictable: There are many factors that influence whether or not a child attends school, and the work they do is only one of them. Several factors have been attributed to affect child education in Nigeria 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 parent(s) largely affects the child's education. This is because even when tuition is free, uniforms, books, sandals, and transport fare have to be provided. With the high level of poverty and unemployment, the traditional discrimination as to which of the sexes benefits from education becomes a determining variable that can be employed negatively. Much of the literature on determinants of child labour treats school attendance as the only alternative to work (Jensen and Nielsen, 1997; Ray, 2000; Ravallion and Wodon, 2000). Most survey data show that a substantial fraction of children neither attend school nor participate in work outside the home. Three comparative static results applicable to them at India are also applicable to Nigerian. First, an increase in the cost of education decreases the number of children, decreases the probability of school attendance and increases the probability of work. Second, an increase in the returns to education increases the number of children, increases the probability of school attendance and decreases the probability of work conditional on the number of children. Finally, an increase in income or wealth causes

increases in the number of children and the likelihood of school attendance conditional on the number of children and decreases the likelihood on work. In each of these cases, the overall effects on school attendance and work are ambiguous because families with more children are less likely to send their children to school.(Cigno and Rosati 2002)

Survey studies that have been carried out in Nigeria have stated that the strongest determinants of school attendance are household wealth and mothers' education (UNICEF 2005). Parents played greater role in child labour and school attendance in Nigeria. They decide about the child's daily life, about the future, about work, chores and schooling. Some of the endogenous factors of parent that this study has found that influenced the development of a child include: education of mother and father; health status of father and mother; child growing up in single-parent home; demographic characteristics (size of household, its age structure). This is in line with Patrick et al (2000) who found a significant relationship between parent's child labour incidence and schooling, and those of their children. As part of there findings, children are more likely to be child labourers if their parents are not well to do and they attain higher levels of education if their parents are educated. They stressed that the educational attainment of grandparents does not directly affect the child's labour status, but there seems to be an indirect impact that is transmitted through the parents' education. Secondly, school attendance by a child is found to be so highly correlated with the family income (Ilon and Mook 1991, Rossana 2001). Some children in Nigeria embarked on child labour, dropped out from school or could not go to school as a result of their family's financial situation. Others are the exogenous factors affecting child education are: Basic services in the local area: safe water, sanitation, environmental quality; preventive and basic curative health services; schools, kindergarten (availability and quality); institutions (tradition, culture, religion); conflicts (of ethnic, religious or civil nature).

Correlates of working children in Nigeria

Children in Nigeria work for a variety of reasons. The most important is poverty. Children work to ensure the survival of their family and themselves even if not well paid. .Children is often prompted to work by their parents. The proportion of parent decision in Nigeria on child labour is similar to that of Pakistan which according Syed, et al. (1991), represent 62, while only 8 percent children make their own decisions to work at time. A possible reason that makes parents in Nigeria to make their children to work is because they believe that they can be profitable. Children in Nigeria contribute more time to their household than they deplete as compared to their counterparts in developed countries (Lindert 1976).

Conclusion and policy recommendations

From the series of literatures reviewed, the ratio of school enrolment (primary and secondary) and school attendance of male children are more than those of the female children in Nigeria. Children are withdrawn from school and put to work in order to span the economic downturn. Also revealed from past research studies conducted in Nigeria is that, whenever most families have some shocks female children are used in replacement of their mother's work in home production instead of going to school. Large proportion of

female Nigerian children are used as domestic servants by trafficking them into some neighbouring countries, some hawk for their parents or their masters without directly been paid. Empirical evidence very strongly suggests that parental education plays a persistent and significant role in lowering the incidence of child labour, above and beyond the impact on family income or family credit-constrained. There are several possible explanations. For example, educated parents have a greater appreciation for the value of an education, whereas uneducated parents may simply want to believe that the human-capital decisions made by their own parents were correct. Parents who have the financial ability to forgo the income from their children in most parts of Nigeria still do not choose schooling for their children.

Implications

Educated parents that send their children to school may have reduced need to insure against future poverty. Families that are liquidity constrained cannot spend the return on their investment in their children until they have entered the labour force. Also large family size translates into fewer resources for human capital investment and, thus, early entry into the labour force. Making a child to work at the age when he or she suppose to be in school will lowers the child's future income and, therefore, the transfer to the parent. Thus, the child can punish the parent for forcing them to work as a child by reducing the size of the transfer. The transfer will decline because child labour will make those children, once grown, less productive than they would have been had they gone to school. The country in general will have a reduce number of intellectual at the international scene, low technology and high rate of crime and unrest.

Government should therefore intensify their efforts at educating parent on the need for a small family size. Abusers of child labour laws and child trafficking in the country should be severely dealt with to serve as example for those in such business but have not been cut or intending to do so. Parent should be discouraged from giving their children for exchange or as servant in term of difficulty. This the Nigeria government can do by given parents that wish to send their children to school but without the mean access to credit

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