

# CHILD LABOUR IN NIGERIA AND ITS ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS-A CASE STUDY OF CALABAR MUNICIPALITY

BASSEY ENYA NDEM (Ph.D IN VIEW)

Department of Economics  
University of Calabar,  
P.MB. 1115 Calabar, Nigeria  
E-mail: [polibas@yahoo.com](mailto:polibas@yahoo.com)

BAGHEBO MICHAEL(Ph.D Economics)

Department of Economics  
Niger Delta University

OTU CHRIS AWA

Department of Economics  
University of Calabar, Calabar  
Nigeria

## ABSTRACT

This study, “Child Labour in Nigeria, and its economic implication”, is aimed at investigating the existence of child labour, its causes, constraints and economic implications and how to eradicate it with particular interest in Calabar Municipality, Cross River State, Nigeria. Calabar Municipality is a tourist center and has witnessed massive population growth since 1999. This increase in population has forced many families to be engaged in inhuman activities to avoid destitution, scavenge for existence that could best be described as child labour. A stratified random sampling method was carried out in 500 respondents who are found to be involved in child labour through interviews, issuance of questionnaires and focused group discussions. The data obtained from the field were analyzed using Simple Percentages (%) and Chi-square ( $X^2$ ) to test the level of significant difference. The analyses revealed that 52% child labour is currently practiced in Calabar Municipality. The study also showed that there is a significant relationship between child labour and the following variables; poverty, unemployment and school dropout at 0.05 level of significant. This indicates a negative effect on economic growth in Nigeria as the future of the country is at risk. I therefore recommend that government should come up with legislations that will tackle the problem of poverty and unemployment in Nigeria, effective implementation of policy that would outlaw all forms of child labour, establish a compulsory, quantitative and qualitative free or minimal cost education for all Nigerians and finally, the National, State and Local Government Orientation Agencies should be mobilized to carryout extensive inspections in schools to reduce the number of school drop-out.

**Keywords:** Child Labour, Child Abuse, Calabar Municipality and Economic Growth.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The specter of small children toiling long hours under dehumanizing conditions have precipitated an intense debate among scholars, policy makers and human right activists over the past two decades. In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, industrial revolution, policy makers and the public have attempted to come to grip with the causes and consequences of child labour. Coordination of policy response has revealed the complexity and moral ambiguity of the phenomenon of working children (Bass, 2004). Although child labour has been in existence through history, the difficult conditions under which children work occasionally has become more evident. In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, child labour became more visible because children were forced into industrial work. Currently, child labour has become more visible because of the increase in the number of children producing goods for export (Bass, 2004). In most developing

countries due to rapid population growth, high rates of unemployment, inflation, poverty, malnutrition, bad leadership, corruption and low wages (Bass, 2004). Furthermore, globalization which tends to manifest itself in the proliferation of industries in many less developed countries has been cited as a cause of child labour (Cigno and Guarcello, 2002). Apparently aware of the dangers of child labours, the United Nations General Assembly on November 20, 1989 came out with a convention on the Rights of a Child, which 198 countries including Nigeria endorsed. Earlier before 1973, the United Nations through its organ, the International Labour Organization in convention C138, had advised State parties to ensure a minimum age of employment, which usually should correspond to the age of leaving primary school. Again in 1999, the International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted a more comprehensive measure by banning the use of children in what it referred to as the “worst forms” of child labour and stipulating penalties for violation (ILO, 1996). This was as a result of high level of child abuse that existed within this period. They lost confidence in most parent and most care givers which led Nandana (1988) to remark, that, when you look into a child’s eyes you expect to see hope, trust, and innocence, but these signs of childhood are replaced by betrayal, hunger, fear, and suspicion. That, we need to take a serious stock for ourselves and the society we have created.

Child labour remains a major source of concern in Nigeria, in spite of legislative measures taken by the government at various levels. In 1998, the international labour organization (ILO) estimated that 24.6 percent of children between the ages 10-14 in Nigeria were working (World Development Indicators, 2000). Earlier before that time in 1994, the United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) reported that approximately 24 percent (12 million) of all children under the age of 15 worked (UNICEF/FOS, 1995). It is a ridiculous sight in most big cities, as well as rural villages today, to see children of school age, trading food on the streets, herding animals, tanning and drying raw leather products, fetching water for commercial purposes, washing dishes at restaurants, serving as domestic hands, selling wares at kiosks, collecting firewood for business, harvesting crops in family farms or commercial plantations, amongst other activities (Ajah, 1990).

In a report issued by the International Labour Organization (2002), the global figure of child labourers was put at approximately 250 million. The report adds that the ages of the children range between 4 and 14 years with 120 million of them working full time. In another report, issued in 2002, the International Labour Organization maintains that the largest absolute number of working children between the ages of 5 and 14 live in Asia and Africa. A total of 107 million or 60% of the world comes from the Asia Pacific region; 48 million or 23% comes from Sub-Sahara Africa; a total of 17 million or 8% live in the Caribbean’s; 13 million or 6% are found in the Middle East and North Africa and 2 million or 1% is found in the advanced industrialized countries. From this distribution, it can be inferred that though child labour is found in all regions of the world, it is overwhelmingly a developing – country phenomenon. What is disturbing is the revelation by the International Labour Organization that “41% of all children between 5 and 14 years old are involved in economic activity in Africa as against 21% of all children in Asia, and 17% in Latin America”. Because child labour in Sub-Saharan Africa is more in proportion to the population, this prompted the researcher to investigate the economic implications, taking Calabar Municipality as a case study, on the basis to reduce it.

**1.1 THE PATTERN OF CHILD LABOUR IN NIGERIA BY ZONE TABLE 1**

SOUTH WEST	SOUTH EAST	NORTH WEST	NORTH EAST
Street trading	Street trading	Street trading	Street trading
Apprenticeships	Apprenticeships	Herding	Herding
Domestic service	Domestic service	Farming	Kiosk operating
Hotel attendants	Factory work	Shoe shinning	Shoe shinning
Vending	Vending	Begging	Begging
Car washing	Car washing	Garage boys	Garage boys
Hawking	Hawking	Hawking	Hawking
Vulcanizers	Vulcanizers	Vulcanizers	
Bus conducting	Bus conducting	Erating	
Prostitution	Prostitution		
Potage			
Weaving,			

(Bonnet, 1993).

It is disturbing that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, and the Third World Nations, child labour situation seems to have been in the increase. Calabar Municipality is not left out because we notice a daily rise in the number of children who litter the streets in search for a living since the Council Area was created in 1991. Its attendant consequences have resulted in an increase in social vices such as drug addictions, robbery, rape, thurgery, prostitution and alcoholism (ILO, 1993).

### 1.2 Research Questions

The study shall answer the following questions:

- i What is the relationship between child labour and poverty and how does it affect the economic life of the child in Calabar Municipality.
- ii. Does child labour emanate as a result of unemployment among parents in Calabar Municipality?
- iii. Is there any relationship between child labour and poor academic performance of children in Calabar Municipality?

### 1.3 Research Hypotheses

To answer the questions above, the following hypotheses enunciated in null form;

- i. There is no significant relationship between child labour and poverty in Calabar Municipality.
- ii. There is no significant relationship between child labour and unemployment in Calabar Municipality.
- iii. There is no significant relationship between child labour and school drop-outs in Calabar Municipality.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL ISSUES

### 2.1 Literature review

Before the 18th century industrial revolution in Europe, children with their parents usually engage in work-related activities which were mostly domestic, family establishments. Such activities were seen as normal, being part of the child's socialization process. Today, all that has changed. Fyfe (1989) captured this change in cultural attitude by saying: Child labour was once common and considered morally acceptable in many industrializing societies. Attitudes about work and childhood have undergone a great transformation since the late 18th century however, in many countries; the notion that children should work has been rejected. Within the developing world where child labour often remains prevalent, such attitudes about childhood and child labour often still persists. Fyfe, (1989).

The Aston, 1989 in an article monitored in the web put this in a better perspective. He said 'to overcome labour shortage, factory owners had to find other ways of obtaining workers. One solution to the problem was to buy children from the orphanages and work houses. The children became pauper apprentices. This involved the children signing contracts that virtually made them the property of the factory owners', Aston, (1989).

The implication of the above statement is that in Europe, child labour came about as a response to the increasing demand for labour occasioned by the industrial revolution. With the development of industries, children were subjected to employment terms, some of which they could hardly comprehend, leaving them to the mercy of their employers. Similar developments are today true of the surge in the number of child labourers in Asia.

Lopez, (2001) in an attempt to investigate the relationship between child labour and agriculture in Mexico revealed that 'the practice is growing under the impact of the country's successive economic crisis and the rise in export-oriented agriculture. Joint ventures between Mexican and U.S, European, and Japanese markets are achieving greater Competitiveness at the cost of children working in the fields'. According to him, in an attempt to meet with the growing rate of industrialization, especially in developing countries like Asia and Latin America, they found it expedient to engage children in labour. Wright, 1996, expressed a similar view in his article "The Littlest Victims of Global Progress". He comments that the drive by Thailand to join the Newly Industrializing Countries (NICS) of Asia impacts heavily on the children. He further reiterates that "becoming an NIC destroys the social fabric of this society, and the kids are paying the highest price". This view lends credence to Basu (1999), when he said 'economic growth over the past seven years has had a negative impact on the social system, particularly family structure. Children now

are part of the productive process, and are treated as economic goods rather than society's future'. In the publication 'Save the Childhood', the South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude, 1989, (SACCS) defined "labour" as a set-up where an employee (labour) sells his/her labour to an employer with certain work related conditions, such as wages, amenities bargaining power, rights and legal safe-guards. ILO, (1989). This means for a child to be adjudged to be in labour, there must be conditions of employment, stipulating work-related benefits, and sanctions. It also implies that not all work performed by children can be termed child labour. In some studies, children labourer are regarded as "street children" or "children of the street" who run away from parental or guardian abuse, leaving them to eke out a living on their own (Aderinto, 2000). This name 'street children' paralyzed them from thinking ahead thus rendering them economically useless and hopeless. Most times they go through physical and health consequences such as respiratory problems, injuries accidents, physical and sexual abuse such as rape and molestation, malnourishment, extortion of income, police harassment, and participation in harmful or delinquent activities (Okeahialam, 1984). In other studies, child laborers face robbery, inadequate sleep due to fatigue and long hours on the job, and confinement in juvenile homes (Aderinto, 2000; Charles and Charles, 2004).

Most times they suffer from mental related sickness such as; stigmatization from the press and public, feelings of disheartenment, stress and irritability, personality disorders and anti-social behavior, and alienation and isolation from their family. (Amin, 1994; Grier, 2004).

It also has a significant negative effect upon the level of education, school attendance, grades, literacy, leisure time, and overall human capital formation of the child worker Arends-Kuenning, 2009

From the ongoing, a child labourer is totally annihilated from contribution to total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) given the general population of those involved. Also, the economic future of the country will be in danger with the numbers of school drop-out. This will further encourage youth restiveness which is very dangerous as it will scare away investors from coming into the country to invest. That is, when there is low productivity, output will drop, cost of living will be high, the economy environment will be unstable and unemployment level will be high.

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## **2.2 THEORETICAL ISSUES**

The theoretical issues are based on two fundamental theories, such as:

- a) The Culture of Poverty Theory
- b) The Functionalist Theory

#### **a) 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.

#### **b) 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.

### **3.0 ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS**

Working children are the epitome of abuse and exploitation. They are often the victims of their employers and sometimes, even their parents. A childhood earmarked by nature for fun and frolic, education and enlightenment, is ruined by the compulsion to earn money.

In some cases, they are rendered crippled, unhealthy, and, most importantly, uneducated. This will lead to low productivity. Many child laborers will have died before reaching the age of 18, and not even have made any impact on the world's future. These child laborers will certainly affect the world's economy – in a bad way – because job positions that require an education may go unfilled, and manual labour jobs may also see vacancies due to the fact the new workers are already crippled.

The Boko Haram issue founded by Muhammed Yusuf in 2002 which culminated as a result of stringent Islamist belief The Almagery is an offshoot of Child Labour has devastated the Nigerian economy to a great extent. Over 1000 persons have been killed between 2002 till now. More than 20 manufacturing industries has been destroyed, causing a slow down on most industrial output. Most electrical infrastructure was destroyed causing serious halt in productive activities. Roads and communication lines are also being destroyed day by day. Most children are left orphans as parents are being killed causing a multiplier effects.

Economic environment are highly devastated as most investors are living the country on daily basis. Hence, most investors outside are not attracted to come into the country to invest. The resultant effects are a lean economic future which does not tell well for Nigeria.

While child labourers may not have much of an effect now on the world's economy, they will play a role in shaping the world when they grow up. This is a key reason why we should try to solve the challenge of child labour now. In order to have educated, healthy, contributing members to the world's economy later, it is necessary to eliminate child labor now, before the economic effects start to show up.

#### **4.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The researcher shall be using the ex-post facto research. Ex-post facto research, is a systematic empirical study in which the researcher does not in any way manipulate or control independent variables because the situation for study has already taken place or already exists (Nwagbara, 2001; Ndem, 2005).

The researcher selected 500 respondents from four strata within the municipality, that is, 125 respondents each from the four sections identified. Data were collected through structured questionnaire and focus group discussion as well as interaction with the child worker and their parents/guardians. The questions were made up of both open-ended and closed-ended. The researcher and her enumerators personally interviewed the respondents and recorded the responses themselves. Simple percentages and Chi-Square ( $X^2$ ) method was used to analyze the degree of child labour. Data was analyzed hypothesis by hypothesis for lucid discussion of findings in the study. The data are presented in tables using simple percentage (%).

#### **5.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

It was then discovered that the number of the girls engaged in hawking represent 33% of the number of child hawkers surveyed as against 21% of boys. The estimate for age shows that children between 10-15 represented by 65.6% or 328 engaged in child labour activities more than children within the age range of 5-9 which represents 34.4% or 172. The distribution equally showed that in each age range, the number of girls was more than that of boys.

The research discovered a positive correlation between a child's participation in child labour and the financial capability of the parents/guardians. 17% of child workers were orphans. 43.4% of the children are those whose parents are not meaningfully employed. 3.2% of the parents are bed-ridden due to life threaten sickness, making the responsibility of fending for the family to fall on the young shoulders of the children.

The figures show that 29.6% of the child workers sampled combine child labour with education. Out of this number, 12.6% are boys while 17% are girls. 8% of the respondents admitted that they have never been in school before. Out of this number, 4.6% are boys while 3.4% are girls. A greater percentage of the respondents were those whose education

had to stop because their sponsors could no longer cope, 34.6% were girls while 27.8% were boys out of the 62.4% respondents who dropped out of school to work.

The study also shows that child labour impacts negatively on the child health. Also, 22.6% of the respondents cannot remember having had any health related sickness in the course of their work in the last six months. However, 9.6% cannot say if they have or have not fallen sick in the cause of their work. The few, who understand the full import of their activities representing 67.8%, however wished their conditions were better so they would not have to struggle like their adult parents.

For the first hypothesis, the result reveals that the calculated  $X^2$ -value of 8.93 is higher than the critical  $X^2$ -value of 3.84 at 0.05 level of significant at 1 degree of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. This result therefore implies that poverty has a significant relationship with child labour.

However, the second shows that the calculated  $X^2$ -value of 6.88 is higher than the critical  $X^2$ -value of 3.84 at .05 level of significant, with 1 degree of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that child labour has a significant relationship with unemployment in Nigeria.

The third result reveals that the calculated  $X^2$ -value of 4.05 is higher than the critical  $X^2$ -value of 3.84 at .05 level of significant with 1 degree of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. This result therefore means that school dropout has a significance relationship with child labour.

## 6.0 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 follow up measures should be in place to check excess truancy.

## 7.0 Conclusion

This study has proved that child labour persist in Calabar Municipality not because of shortage of man power as was the case of Europe and North America, but because the socio-economic environment. It has also proved that the poor are most vulnerable due to low income to sustain their very large family. The effects are the high rate of insecurity in the country infested by this group of people; rape; drugs and thurgery. Such hopeless population will yield into any kind of vices that could affect the economy situation of this country dearly. The likes of Boko Haram Set, this has greatly posed a very serious threat to investment in Nigeria.

Government in their part has not lived up to expectation, by failing in their political mandates. These are inability to provide jobs; poor infrastructure; low standard education; corruption and so on. They are on their own bids pushing children into the streets.

This situation will lead loss of or a reduction in the national income, productivity will also drop and the investment climate will not be friendly for investors. The overall economy will be heading toward recession. It is therefore beckoned on government to apply the recommendation above in order to sustain and improve her economy.

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## APPENDIX

**TABLE 1**

**Chi-square ( $X^2$ ) statistical analysis of the relationship between child labour and poverty (N=500)**

Variables	Responses		Total	$X^2$ -value
	Yes	No		
Child labour	155 (140)	45 (60)	200	
Poverty	195 (210)	105 (90)	300	8.93
Total	350	150	500	

Significant at .05 level, critical  $X^2 = 3.84$ ,  $df = 1$

O	E	O-E	(O-E) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$
155	140	15	225	1.61
45	60	-15	225	3.75
195	210	-15	225	1.07
105	90	15	225	2.5

$X^2 = 8.93$

$$\begin{aligned}
 df &= (c - 1)(r - 1) \\
 &= (2 - 1)(2 - 1) \\
 &= 1 \times 1 \\
 &= 1
 \end{aligned}$$

**TABLE 2**

**Chi-square( $X^2$ ) statistical analysis of the relationship between child labour and unemployment (N=500)**

Variables	Responses		Total	$X^2$ -value
	Yes	No		
Child labour	120 (134.2)	100 (85.8)	220	6.88
Unemployment	185 (170.8)	95 (109.2)	280	
Total	305	195	500	

Significant at .05 level, critical  $X^2 = 3.84$ ,  $df = 1$

O	E	(O-E)	(O-E) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$
120	134.2	-14.2	201.54	1.50
100	85.8	14.2	201.54	2.35
185	170.8	14.2	201.54	1.18
95	109.2	-14.2	201.54	1.85

$X^2 = 6.88$

$$\begin{aligned}
 df &= (c - 1)(r - 1) \\
 &= (2 - 1)(2 - 1) \\
 &= 1 \times 1 \\
 &= 1
 \end{aligned}$$

**TABLE 3**

**Chi-square( $\chi^2$ ) Analysis of the Relationship between Child Labour and School Dropout (N500)**

Variable	Responses		Total	$\chi^2$ -value
	Yes	No		
Child labour	131 (142.1)	114 (102.9)	245	
School dropout	159 (147.9)	96 (107.1)	255	4.05
Total	290	210	500	

Significant at .05 level, critical  $\chi^2 = 3.84$ ,  $df = 1$

O	E	O-E	(O-E) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$
131	142.1	-11.1	123.21	0.87
114	102.9	11.1	123.21	1.20
159	147.9	11.1	123.21	0.83
96	107.1	-11.1	123.21	1.15

$\chi^2 = 4.05$

$$\begin{aligned}
 df &= (c - 1)(r - 1) \\
 &= (2 - 1)(2 - 1) \\
 &= 1 \times 1 \\
 &= 1
 \end{aligned}$$

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