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CHILD LABOUR IN NIGERIA; CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Child Labour is a great concern in many Africa countries, Nigeria inclusive in spite of legislative measures. Child labour eradication has also been recognised as a necessity for the achievement of sustainable development.

The paper reviews the factors that influence the use of child labour. The paper which argues that, at the heart of the problematic of the Child Labour is Poverty, also explains the health consequences of child labour in Nigerian children.

The paper reveals the various types of child labour, which Nigerian children engaged in. The findings also identified; illiteracy, unemployment, polygamy and others as some of the causes of child labour in Nigeria. This study underscores the need for government at all levels and development stakeholders to mainstream child labour consideration in relevant development and management policies, strategies to effectively tackle child labour and create a pathway for the elimination of child labour.

Keywords: *Poverty, Child Labour, Poverty, Illiteracy, Unemployment, Greed, Health*

INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of child labour is one of the most important socio-economic problems confronting the world at large, especially developing countries such as Nigeria. (Worst Forms of Child Labour in Nigeria: An Appraisal of International and Local Legal Regimes Anthony N. Nwazuokwe, Chinedu A. Igwe published 25 March 2016) Child Labour is defined as work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children and deprives them of opportunities for schooling and development. According to the 2019 International Labour Organization report, there are over 168 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 working when they should not. 15 million of them are in Nigeria, which has the highest rate of working children in West Africa. In many cases, child labour is necessitated by economic compulsions of the parents. Many appalling realities like poverty, greed illiteracy, unemployment, low wages, ignorance and social prejudices. It is very common in Nigeria to see underage children engaged in manual labour in order to support their families.

Child Labour in Nigeria is the employment of children under the age of 18 in a manner that restrict or prevent them from basic education and development. (FAO, 2013) Child labour is pervasive in every state of the country. In 2006, the number of child workers was estimated at 15 million.

The U.S Department of Labour in its 2010 report claims Nigeria is witnessing the worst forms of child labour, particularly in agriculture, and domestic service. In rural areas, most children work in agriculture of products such as cassava, cocoa and tobacco. These children typically work long hours and for little pay, with their families.

The report claims some children are exposed to pesticides and chemical fertilizers in cocoa and tobacco fields because of archaic family practices and some were deployed as forced labour without protective gear.

Additionally, street children work as porters and scavengers, and a growing number of them engage in begging. The report also claims commercial sexual exploitation of children especially girls, is also occurring in some Nigerian cities, including Port Harcourt and Lagos.



THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF CHILD LABOUR

There are many types of labour the children engage in Nigeria. They are : Agriculture, begging, transportation of heavy loads, manual Labour, begging in the streets Domestic works and Street Trading.

Child Labourers In Agriculture

Worldwide, 60% of all child labourers in the age group 5-17 years work in agriculture, including: farming, fishing, aquaculture, forestry and livestock. Agriculture provides an early entry into work, sometimes between 5 and 7 years of age, it remains one of the dangerous sectors in terms of work-related fatalities, non-fatal accidents and occupational diseases. About 59% of all children in hazardous work aged 5-17 are in agriculture.

Almajiri Begging System

This is a type of begging for alms that is prevalent in the northern Nigeria and practiced specifically by muslim children. In that region, muslim families send their children from their homes into major towns and cities to live with and receive quranic education from Islamic teachers called 'Malams'. These children are known as 'almajiris' has been estimated by Ministerial Committee on Madasar education in December 2010, that Nigeria has about 9.5 million almajiris.

It appears the northern states of Nigeria have a monopoly of 'bara'; young children have taken to streets, on a permanent basis, legitimizing begging on socio-economic and religious basis.

Hawking

Hawking is one of the popular ways for Nigerian children to earn money. Many children have to travel extremely long distances for their age in order to find their buyers. In busy metropolitan places like ; Lagos, Ibadan and Port Harcourt children usually seize the opportunity of the traffic congestion to hawk nylon pure waters, snacks and drinks to travellers.

Lifting and Carrying Of Loads

Lifting and carrying of heavy loads by children is a kind of child labour if such loads are too heavy for such children. However, many children take the job of carrying or lifting heavy loads such as; concrete, water, bags of cement and other building materials. Others do, the same factories and even at home where children lift and carry water containers for family use.

In some Nigerian tertiary institutions, children carry luggage for students to their hostels and houses respectively for a fee. The child labour is spread all over the country.

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE SUPPLY OF CHILD LABOUR

Despite Nigeria's signing of The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1999 and The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in 2001, the rights of most Nigerian children are not respected because of the following reasons:

Poverty

In many Africa countries, agriculture accounts for a large. Poverty is a major factor that drives child labour in Nigeria. In poor families, child labour is a major source of income for family. Nigeria is a poor nation as many of her citizens are dying due to the poverty in the country which is caused by bad and corrupt leadership. The Nigeria child is therefore a victim of the bad government. Children born in poor families are trapped in bad conditions , their parents cannot afford the school fees in schools which make them to being sent away from their homes to work and live somewhere else. The Northern part of Nigeria has the high level of poverty in the country.

Country Report-Nigeria (2011). United States Department of Labor, ILO; (2010)Accelerating action against child labour- Global Report under the follow up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Geneva. Aliyu A.A 2015



Many children find themselves in a catastrophic situation and condition due to the low income of their parents. The rate of poverty in Nigeria is alarming where many children are not able to eat well. Due to that, children flock into the labour market to survive and also help their family. The Nigerian government is the root cause of the poverty in Nigeria due to their self interest.

High Demand For Cheap And Submissive Child Labour

It has become the culture and attitude of employers to gain huge profits at a low cost. According to Jerome Davis, employers prefer to employ children in large numbers to labour for them in place of adults for an excessive numbers of hours. This causes many children to work under unhealthy conditions with low payment because adult wages are higher than a child's wages.

Illiteracy And Ignorance

Illiteracy and ignorance contribute significantly to the causes of child labour in Nigeria due to the attitude of parents towards their children's education because labour deprives their children's education because labour deprives their children of educational opportunities simply because of what they will earn from their wages. The reason is that many of these parents are also illiterate and their illiteracy does not give them any insight into or awareness of the importance of education. Their illiteracy also influences their way of life and the number of wives and children they have. A family with a low income and wages should plan the number of children they will have in order to provide adequate maintenance for the children.

Polygamy

Polygamy has been practiced since the pre-islamic age and it is legally permitted under the one condition of being able to maintain the wives and their children. The marriage might be unlawful, if the husband is incapable of properly taking care of his wife and also children unless the government or family gives monetary assistance to the spouses in order to relieve and ease their experiences. However, many Nigerian men go beyond their capacity and limits without following the rules and regulations .in such situation, in any sudden natural death or disaster.

Death

Death can also be visualized as one of the causes of child labour in some countries such as Nigeria. After, the death of a biological parent, the father or mother, in some cases both at the same time. In such, a situation, children find themselves helpless organs in the family; due to the wickedness of those who are left in charge of their parents' estates. This ugly and unkind practice is rampant in some families due to their greed and the poverty which they are fighting.

EFFECTS OF CHILD LABOUR IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

It has been proved and widely acceptable that children must not do any work that deprives them of educational, normal, social and emotional development. One of the consequences of child labour is in health, and low intellectual development and increases in illiteracy rate. This reduces the output per person as consequence and has been able to retard National Development. Child labour also has different effect in the following areas;

Health

The healthy development of children is very crucial to the future well-being of any society. Children's welfare and well-being should prevail over any activities that could endanger the child's earth such as: diseases, malnutrition, and poverty that threaten the future of children and the nation at large. Health problems are one of the major problems that are seriously and significantly affecting Nigerian children. Child labour causes health problems for the children due to the lack of a conducive environment, nutrition, clean

<https://www.dol.gov/worst-form-of-child-labour-in-nigeria>.
Catholic Diocese of Nsukka (2009). The Nigerian child; Any hope for the future . Justice, Development and Peace /Caritas Commission, Nsukka.
Nasir Ahmad Shah, (1992). Child Labour , Anmol Publications
Nasir Ahmad Shah, (1992). Child Labour , Anmol Publications



water and hygienic accommodation for the children who sleep in any place or in congested places especially Nigerian children.

There are Inadequate health facilities such as: medicine, medical equipment and standard hospitals. The health and educational consequences of child labour in Nigeria cannot be over-estimated; children from 5-17 years old are economically and physically lured or even forced into performing certain tasks that are likely to harm and interfere with their health and education.

As a result of the constant fatigue, they usually suffer from lack of attention and are involved in car accidents, some of them are beaten , robbed , kidnapped and disciplined through malnutrition . Many working children are exposed to dangerous and unhealthy environments.

Child Labour therefore reinforces intergenerational cycles of poverty which undermines national economies and impedes achieving progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Social Effect

Many Nigerian child labourers are smoking and dealing in drugs: either selling or consuming drugs, which is risky to their life. Children who spends time doing labor instead of with peers in social play to learn the basis of interaction are at a higher risk to developing problematic social behaviours like drug abuse and aggression. This thereby affects the overall social development of children.

In addition, they also suffer isolation and depression which often prevents them from properly building these relationships, leading to insecure adults who are also at risk for other emotional problems.

Education

Education is an important tool for development of individuals and societies. Child ren as a part of education system and the adults of future are a vital importance. Child Labour lowers net primary enrollment ratios. There is a strong negative effect of child labour on school attendance.

CONCLUSION

The issues examined in this article raised fundamental concerns on poverty which is the major cause of child labour in Nigeria. The Nigeria government is implore to create strategies adopted by the poor to cope with poverty vary considerably between countries and also assist the children by providing free education, shelter, food, and stipends for the children. There is a need for a country –specific approach in order to address these problems effectively. There is a need to endorse explicitly the objectives of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 138 of 1973 concerning the Minimum Age for Admission to employment , in order to abolish effectively child labour and to raise progressively the minimum age for admission to employment or work to a level consistent with the full physical and mental development of young persons.

Social advocacy has a crucial role in raising awareness about child labour. Trade unions, the media and Non-governmental organizations have an important function in identifying and bringing to the public's attention problems of child exploitation , political will for action can be strengthened. There has been different advancement by Nigeria to make efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labour. In 2018, the government adopted the Edo State Trafficking in Persons Prohibition Law, which codified the Edo State Taskforce for implementation. Although, Nigeria made meaningful efforts in addressing child labour, it is still rampant.

Furthermore, the most important thing is to raise people out of poverty. In 2003, the UNO provided a Convention on the protection of the rights of children. The essence of the document was to forbid children under 18 to do any of the jobs that could do harm to their physical and mental heart, hurt them emotionally or



prevent their education. Many countries of the world agreed that it was a great idea to fight child labour with the help of these regulations.

Since that time, the state has tried to regulate the situation with the child labor in the country but with little success. Even providing poor families with money so that they can send their children to schools gave only a little effect.

It is also necessary to mention that out of the 36 states, only 24 have agreed to work on the problem and try to reduce the number of working children. There should be orientation for people to stop hiring children below the minimum age and to remove children from hazardous work.

There is therefore need to establish a tailored emergency response program to meeting such needs. This will include a preventive program, which would focus on safeguarding schools, communities and playgrounds such that the children are protected from child labour , the Almajiri system must be stopped, remodeled and integrated into their educational sector, the zakkah should be properly implemented to provide permanent solution . Through such a robust and holistic approach, the rights of a child to health, life, education, development, survival, recovery and reintegration, as guaranteed under international and national law, would be progressively realized and achieved in Nigeria.

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