



Exploitation of Child Labour, Educational and Health Issues

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Abstract

The main objective of this paper is to delve into the impact of child labor, on the education and health of children in developing nations. To achieve this a comprehensive review was conducted, utilizing articles reports from organizations like the International Labour Organization (ILO) well as data from national surveys and databases. The findings demonstrate that child labor has effects on both education and health. Working children face challenges such as access to resources, irregular attendance and early dropout rates ((ILO, 2018). Moreover, they are, at a risk of experiencing injuries, respiratory problems, malnutrition, and mental health issues. To address this pressing issue effectively a multifaceted approach is recommended which involves strengthening child protection policies and legislation promoting quality education and healthcare accessibility as providing support to families and communities (Duflo, 2023). The study also emphasizes the significance of raising awareness and implementing programs that challenge social norms contributing to child labor. By adopting an approach, we can eradicate the exploitation of children. Guarantee that they have the chance to flourish and progress in an environment that is secure and conducive to their wellbeing.

Keywords: Health; Nigeria; WASH; New Normal; COVID-19



Introduction

Child labor remains a pressing issue affecting millions of children worldwide. The International Labor Organization (ILO) reports that 152 million children are involved in labor situations, which has severe consequences, for their education and well-being perpetuating a cycle of poverty. This paper aims to explore the health challenges associated with child labor exploitation and propose strategies to address this problem.

Education is not a human right according to the United Nations (UN) declaration but also plays a pivotal role in breaking the cycle of poverty and promoting sustainable development. Unfortunately, child labor denies children access to education, which has long term implications, for their opportunities. Furthermore, child labor exposes these individuals to health risks as they are often forced to work under hazardous conditions that can result in physical injuries, illnesses or even fatalities. To address this issue, we need to adopt an approach that involves strengthening laws and policies to protect children from exploitation (ILO, 2021, United Nation 1989). It is crucial to ensure that they have access, to high quality education raise awareness about the problem implement social protection programs and encourage businesses to maintain labor standards. By giving priority to education and healthcare for children and eradicating child labor we can disrupt the cycle of poverty. Improve the well-being of children worldwide (Edmonds & Pavcnik, 2005).

Current discourse on child labour

Child labor presents an issue that affects the education and development of children especially in developing nations. The exploitation of children, in the labor market hinders their ability to reach their potential leading to access to education insufficient educational resources and high dropout rates. Children who work at an age face obstacle when it comes to obtaining an education. Poverty stands as a barrier preventing children from attending school since many households cannot afford the costs of textbooks, uniforms, and school fees. According to the International Labor Organization (2015) children from low-income families are more likely to engage in child labor, which poses challenges for them to consistently attend classes.

The impact of child labor on quality is negative. Working children often miss out on school resulting in achievement levels. Moreover, teachers may struggle to provide a quality education for students who're

frequently absent or work hours due to child labor. The International Labor Organization (ILO) (2015) has highlighted that child labor can lead to reduced levels making it harder for children to secure decent job prospects in the future.

Laws and regulations related to the safety of children play a role, in combating child labor and promoting access to education. Following the guidelines set by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) it is imperative that children are granted their rights to education protection from exploitation and access to necessities. To effectively enforce child protection laws and uphold these rights, governments and civil society organizations must work together in collaboration (ILO, n.d.; Edmonds & Pavcnik, 2005).

Child labor significantly hampers education by creating obstacles that hinder children's ability to receive an education limiting their learning opportunities and reducing their prospects for securing employment in the future. A comprehensive approach is necessary to tackle this issue. This includes strengthening laws and policies aimed at safeguarding children's well-being expanding opportunities conducting awareness campaigns for public knowledge enhancement well as fostering partnerships and collaborations, among various stakeholders (Adepoju & Afolayan, 2015). The only way to end the cycle of poverty and give children the chance to realize their full potential is to invest in their education ((Duflo, (2003).

Rationale for this Study

Child labour has overtime become a very concern issue affecting many parts of the world especially in Nigeria. This work seeks to identify and outline the implication of child labour in relationship to education and health prospect of a child. The rationale for this study is the compelling need to comprehensively understand and address the adverse consequences of child labour on the physical, mental, and social health of a child and also on the educational development of a child.

One issue with child labor is that it might keep families in poverty. Children who choose to work over attend school risk not developing the skills necessary to secure better employment in the future. This makes it difficult for them to escape poverty and establishes a cycle that lasts from one generation to the next.

Key Findings and Discussion

1. Health consequences: this includes physical injuries and accidents due to hazardous work environments, malnutrition as a result of

inadequate diet, psychological stress and depression, respiratory illness due to exposure of harmful substances and so many other illnesses.

2. Educational consequences: this include limited or no access to formal education due to time constraints, children that are involved most times become dropout because of impaired cognitive development affecting their academic performance and consequently reduce their future opportunities in the future due to lack education and skills.

Forms of child exploitation in Nigeria

In Nigeria, child labor is a major issue, as underaged children are frequently used for various purposes of exploitation (Adejuyigbe & Fagbeminiyi, 2012). In Nigeria, children are used as laborers in a variety of ways, including the following:

1. **Street hawking:** According to UNICEF, there are an estimated 15 million children in Nigeria that engage in street hawking, where they sell goods like water, snacks, and other things. Because it puts children at risk of abuse, exploitation and traffic accidents, this type of child labor is extremely dangerous (Ogunrinola, 2018).
2. **Domestic work:** Household chores such, as cleaning, cooking, and caring for siblings are often carried out by girls. This kind of work is hidden from the eye, thus making children vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.
3. **Farming and agriculture in dangerous conditions:** While it can be beneficial for children to learn about farming and agriculture at an age being forced to work hours in these industries as a source of cheap labor can expose them to harmful pesticides and chemicals. This type of labor may also hinder their education and overall development (Ajala, 2014; UNICEF, 2007).
4. **Mining:** According to a research report by Human Rights Watch in 2018 children young as 5 are involved in mining operations in Nigeria. They are tasked with demanding activities like carrying loads digging deep holes and handling hazardous chemicals putting them at risk of serious injuries or even death.
5. **Commercial sexual exploitation:** Commercial sexual exploitation encompasses activities, like prostitution and pornography that specifically target children. Based on research conducted by UNICEF in 2017 it has been found that Nigeria has an estimated number of, around 10,000 child prostitutes. Many of these children are forced into the industry due to poverty or human trafficking (Okonjo-lweala, 2003).



Consequences of child labour

Child labour leads to consequences that violate children's rights. Every child deserves a healthy upbringing, access to education and protection from abuse. It is crucial to address this issue by implementing and enforcing laws against child labour ensuring access to education for all children providing support to struggling families and raising awareness about the rights of children. By acting against child labour, Nigeria can create a future where children can grow up in a safe environment, receive quality education, and have opportunities for success.

Educational issues associated with child labour

The issue of child labor has implications for education in economically disadvantaged countries. In Nigeria for instance one major concern is that children who work are unable to attend school and complete their education. As a result, they miss out on knowledge that could benefit them in the future. Furthermore, when children prioritize work over school it also impacts the nation's economy (UNICEF, 2021). Without a good educational foundation these children may struggle to secure employment as adults, which could hinder the productivity and economic growth of the country.

There are concerns associated with child labour;

1. Limited access to education; Many young individuals who engage in labour find it challenging to attend school or end up dropping out due to their job responsibilities. According to a report by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2015 child labor acts as a barrier to education in developing countries. Denies numerous children their right to receive an education.
2. Adverse effects on performance; Children involved in labour may experience fatigue, stress and difficulty concentrating which can have an impact, on their academic achievements (Ogunrinola, 2018). The ILOs 2015 report highlights that child labor is associated with performance and increased dropout rates.
3. Insufficient development of skills; Child labor deprives children of the opportunities to acquire life skills, such, as literacy and numeracy which are vital for their future success. This lack of skill development can severely limit their prospects for finding employment and personal growth.
4. There are limited career opportunities, for children who are forced into child labour because they lack education and training. This

makes it difficult for them to escape the cycle of poverty and improve their living conditions.

5. The involvement of children in labor at an age can have consequences, such as reduced self esteem feelings of guilt and a sense of hopelessness. These factors can greatly hinder their ability to learn and grow.

6. Juggling work responsibilities with schoolwork becomes a challenge for working children resulting in difficulties in achieving grades and maintaining performance as stated by a report from the United Nations Childrens Fund (UNICEF) in 2018.

7. Working children often experience prejudice and discrimination from their peers, teachers and neighbors due to their involvement in labor activities. This treatment negatively impacts their self confidence and sense of belonging in the school environment leading to decreased motivation and disinterest, in learning.

8. Attendance; Children engaged in work may struggle with attending school or even end up skipping it altogether. These irregular patterns of attendance can hinder their progress by making it difficult to keep up with coursework and impacting their interactions with both teachers and classmates. They might also face challenges accessing resources like textbooks, computers and other learning materials. This lack of access can hinder their ability to learn and succeed academically.

9. Dropout; Child labor significantly contributes to dropout rates among children limiting opportunities for them and potentially trapping them in a cycle of poverty. According to a 2017 report by the International Labour Organization (ILO) child labor was found to be a factor leading to school abandonment in developing countries.

Health issues associated with child labour

In addition to its impact on education child labour can also have effects, on children's health. Working under conditions puts them at risk of harm and illness (Ajala, 2014). These negative health consequences can persist into adulthood affecting their being and ability to work effectively. Moreover, child labour robs children of the chance to engage in play establish friendships and develop skills. The absence of a childhood experience can hinder their growth and overall happiness. It is important to acknowledge that child labor has long term implications, for the health of these workers.



Certain health issues are associated with child labour;

- i. Physical injuries: Children who partake in labor are at risk of injuries such as amputations, cuts, bruises, fractures and other harm resulting from exposure to machinery cutting tools and heavy loads.
- ii. Respiratory problems; Children involved in industries like mining, quarrying and agriculture may experience health issues such as asthma, bronchitis and even lung cancer due to exposure to dust particles, chemicals, and other pollutants.
- iii. Malnutrition; Child labor often leads to access to food and a balanced diet which can result in growth malnutrition related problems along with various health concerns. A 2018 report by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) highlighted that developed countries particularly face challenges related to malnutrition due to child labor.
- iv. Mental Health; Child labor can have effects, on children's well-being by causing stress levels to rise leading to feelings of anxiety and despair.
- v. Occupational Diseases; Children employed in industries such as mining and manufacturing where they come into contact with substances like lead, asbestos and mercury can be exposed to diseases like lead poisoning, silicosis and mercury poisoning. Furthermore, children working in sectors like waste management and mining, livestock and farming without good sanitation and hygiene increases the likelihood of disease transmission and other health risks.
- vi. Reproductive Health Issues; Children engaged in labor are at risk of experiencing health concerns such as transmitted diseases (STDs) unintended pregnancies and related issues.
- vii. Musculoskeletal problems; Furthermore, if children are involved in tasks or jobs that require positions or repetitive movements over time they may be prone to issues such as back discomfort, neck pain or carpal tunnel syndrome.
- ix. Fatigue and sleep disorders; Extended periods of work under stress can have effects on children. Long working hours can lead to fatigue and sleep disturbances, which can negatively impact their health. Inadequate sleep may also result in decreased performance and difficulties in learning while attending school.
- ix. Vision problems; Children working in industries, like textiles and electronics might encounter lights and glare that could cause eye strain, headaches, and vision problems.

The effects of child labour on the future of a country

There is no doubting the negative effects or impacts the child labour could have on the future of a country's economy. The followings are just some of the few consequences.

1. **Lack of Skill Development:** Children who work as children frequently are unable to develop the information and abilities, they will need in the future to find employment. They may only be able to find low-skilled employment without the required education and training, which limits their ability to improve both personally and economically.

2. **Lack of Creativity and reduced Productivity:** Young children may not be able to fully realize their potential for Creativity and Innovation if they are forced to work. By denying them educational chances, the nation loses out on the innovative thoughts, viewpoints, and contributions that could advance and increase production.

3. **Growing Economic Inequality:** Child labour contributes to growing income inequality in the society. Because they frequently come from underprivileged families, children who work often have lower pay and less mobility in society as adults due to their lack of education and skills. The gap between the rich and the poor is further widened as a result.

4. **Harmful Effects on Sustainable Development:** Sustainable development seeks to satisfy existing needs without endangering the capacity of future generations to satisfy their own. By obstructing future generations' access to education and welfare, slowing down social advancement, and threatening long-term economic stability, child labour compromises sustainable development.

5. **Social Services under Pressure:** The involvement of children in labour puts a strain on services and government funding. To address the psychological impacts faced by child laborers it may be necessary for the government to allocate funds for healthcare, rehabilitation, and social support.

6. **Strained International Relations:** Countries with a history of child labor issues may face perceptions internationally which can harm their reputation and strain ties. These negative perceptions can have effects on trade relations, collaborations and foreign investments potentially limiting opportunities for growth and prosperity.

To effectively tackle the issue of child labor a comprehensive strategy is required. This strategy should encompass the formulation and implementation of policies specifically targeting child labour, strengthened law enforcement efforts, educational reforms to improve access to education for all children, poverty reduction initiatives, public awareness campaigns as well as fostering collaboration among various stakeholders. By investing in the health

and education of its youth population Nigeria can ensure a future for its people while promoting development (ILO, 2021; Ajala, 2014).

Conclusion

In conclusion the issue of child labour persists in developing countries. It has implications, for the health and education of the children. After reviewing literature it becomes evident that child labour is closely linked to educational obstacles, including limited access to educational resources, inconsistent attendance patterns and early dropout rates. Furthermore child labour is associated with health problems such as injuries, respiratory disorders, malnutrition and mental health concerns. Therefore it is crucial for all stakeholders involved to collaborate and take actions towards eradicating child labour while prioritizing the well being of children. A comprehensive approach is necessary to address this issue. This entails improving laws and policies related to child protection, ensuring access to high quality healthcare and education, providing support to families and communities, raising awareness through initiatives and fostering partnerships. By working and adopting such an approach we can ensure that children have a safe and nurturing environment, for their growth and development. It is crucial that every child receives the education they deserve while being safeguarded from any form of exploitation including child labor.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study it is recommended that the following actions be taken to address the issue of child labour's impact on education and health in developing countries.

- Governments should enact laws that prohibit child labour while safeguarding children's rights to receive education and healthcare. To ensure the enforcement of child labor laws and deter those who exploit children for labor it is crucial to implement measures.
- Governments and international organizations should collaborate to promote access to quality education and healthcare services for every child regardless of their socio-economic background. This can be achieved through initiatives such as providing affordable education and healthcare facilities, improving the existing services quality and establishing healthcare centres in remote areas.



- Addressing the root causes of child labour requires providing assistance to families and communities. This entails implementing initiatives that enhance household income, improve access to services, and establish social protection programs for families. Additionally raising awareness about the risks associated with child labour while emphasizing the importance of education and health for children is crucial.
- Governments and international organizations should develop awareness campaigns aimed at parents, employers and communities in order to address norms that perpetuate child labour. These campaigns can play a role in shifting attitudes towards eradicating child labour practices.
- Governments should give priority to efforts that guarantee sustainable, healthy food supply to its teeming population as a way of curbing malnutrition and Child workers.

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