AN EXPLORATION INTO DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILD LABOURERS IN ILORIN METROPOLIS, KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Children are wonderful creation, an image of what we use to be (childhood). Children are foetus form from the union of male sperm and female egg. Children moved through all the stages in pre natal and gradually become an adult who are responsible and fully aware of their actions. Before reaching this stage, they are vulnerable and depend on external factors for their growth and development. Engaging these young children in any activities that affect their development or prevent them from attending school is called child labour. This study investigated the characteristics of the child labourer, result indicates that children were all of school age; some of the children were living with their parent while others were living with guardian, masters and distance relatives. Children from less educated parents and with low income background form the majority of the child labourers.

Keywords; Child labour, Street hawking and begging, Exploratory studies, Demographic factors

INTRODUCTION

Child labour is all forms of work that harms children, or keeps them from attending school. Around the world, growing gaps between rich and poor in recent decades have forced millions of young children out of school and into work, this is supported by the report of International Labour Organization which estimates that 215 million children between the ages of 5 and 17 currently work under conditions that are considered illegal, hazardous, or extremely exploitative, underage children work at all sorts of jobs around the world, usually because they and their families are extremely poor. Large numbers of children work in commercial agriculture, fishing, manufacturing, mining, and domestic service. Some children work in illicit activities like the drug trade and prostitution or other traumatic activities such as serving as soldiers (The Child Labour Public Education Project of the University of Iowa Labour Center and Center for Human Rights, 2011). Also, child labour can be refers to the employment of children in any work that deprives children of their childhood, interferes with their ability to attend regular school, and that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful. This practice is considered exploitative by many international organisations. Legislation across the world prohibits child labour. These laws do not consider all work by children as child labour; exceptions include work by child artists, family duties, supervised training. For the purpose of this paper, child labour is refers to such activities like street hawking, street begging, and employment of under age children.

What is child labour?

Children do a variety of work in widely divergent conditions. But age limits differ from activity to activity and from country to country. Many societies, especially poor rural ones, do not necessarily view child work as 'bad', even at an age of eight or nine years. This is partly due to the fact that, in many societies, an apprentice of eight or nine years is not considered as a child (Franziska, 2009). Veerman (1992) in Franziska (2009) explains that

ideas concerning the rights of children are dependent on the prevailing image of childhood, and when that image changes, the ideas about the rights of the child also change.

At this juncture, it is important to stress that the belief and full image of child labour varies from country to country, and in the same country, it is perceived differently from places to places. This is to stress that cultural and tribe beliefs to some level shape the meaning of child labour. Having said that, it is important to discuss some definition of child labour and the meaning of demographic characteristics.

Organisation for economic co-operation and development (OECD, 2003) in their report on combating child labour, adopt the definition of international labour organization (ILO) Conventions 138 and 182. To includes; all economic activities done by children until age 11, all economic activity done by children aged 12 to 14, excluding permitted "light work" in the sense of Convention 138; all economic activity carried out under hazardous conditions by children aged 15 to 17, and "the worst forms" of child labour carried out under age 18. They further explain that children in economic activity are those working in market and nonmarket production (including the production of goods for own use) during a reference period, both in the formal and the informal sector. Their explanation on child labour definition includes also the domestic work carried out for a third party, but excludes the domestic chores carried out in their own household. With this understanding of what child labour means and what qualifies a child labourer, it is important to look at the situation in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria.

Demographic characteristic is the statistical data collected on a population, especially those showing average age, income, education. These are attribute that shows the structure, sizes, dynamism, and distribution about a population.

The common child labour practice in Ilorin metropolis range from Retail and Service; (sales girls/boy) these are children employed by any business outfit, be it shop, restaurant, or small scale business owners. Children hired are involved in all sorts of activities which may affect their growing up. Domestic work; house helps; Children in domestic service are among the most exploited of all. Many of them work in almost total isolation for up to fifteen hours per day, frequently unpaid. They are often subjected to physical, emotional and sexual abuse. Tourism labour; children from another country; these are the migrant children from neighbouring countries like Niger, they are found along the street begging for money with their parents. This exposes them to the risk of sexual assault.

Street child are children living and working on the street, they are typically involved in the following activities: vending food and small consumer goods, shining shoes, scavenging and rag picking, begging and pottering. The hazards of their work stem from both the work itself and more importantly from the environment, such as traffic, exposure to the elements, insecurity, harassment and violence. Homeless child; these are children living in the street without a shelter. They do not have parent to take care of them, they are commonly found in and around motor parks. Street begging; this in on high increase around city, these are children from the locality asking for help of all kind (money, food, cloth and others), they at time offer to render a form of service. Farming; these are children involved in farm activities instead of attending school. Street hawking; this is the act of involving children in trade activities which require moving from one location to another during, before or after school hours (Bipolar, 2013).

The practice of child labour in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara state, Nigeria, is of a great concern. It is alarming as child labourer and various form of child labour practice are almost at every corner of the state capital. Children are often seen on the streets expose to different types of hazardous condition. This practice is more common in some area than others, for example, areas like Post Office, Challenge, Maraba, Ipata and Oja-Oba are notorious for such activities. Also some restaurants, market places, and shop owners employ or engage minor in their business activities.

Mbakogu (2004) cited in Sulaiman (2013), opined that report from different parts of the country show that this ill is present in every state of the country. Lagos is the most hit because lot of people believe that in Lagos, opportunities to fend for one's self abound. For example people in the rural areas send their children to relative in Lagos to learn a trade or go to school. This relative often instead of sending them to school, engage the children in other activities that are detrimental to their being or existence.

Statement of the Problem

The level to which child labour is practiced in Ilorin metropolis is of a great concern. The situation and frequency of the practice is at an increasing rate, although similar studies have been conducted in other state, but not in this local to the best of the researcher knowledge. This study, therefore, find out the major characteristics of child labourers in Ilorin metropolis of Kwara state, and proffers probable solutions to the problem of engaging

children in other activities which affect their education and development in Ilorin metropolis in particular and Nigerian in general.

Research Questions

1. What are the demographic characteristics of child labourer in Ilorin metropolis of Kwara state?
2. Is religion the cause of child labour in Ilorin metropolis of Kwara state?

Methodology

This study used descriptive survey design. This involves a direct contact with a population or sample that has characteristics which are relevant to the study. The use of descriptive survey type enabled the researcher to collect relevant data which provided meaningful facts to answer the research questions. **Sample**: Three hundred (300) young children ranging from six to twelve (6-12) years of age was sampled using purposive sampling technique (because not all children in the metropolis are child labourers) from the three local governments in the metropolis. **Instrumentation:** Structured interview and questionnaire were used to collect data. The structured interview was divided into two parts-section 1 and 2. Section 1 deals with bio data information for example age, his address, school (if any), tribe; while section 2 deals with questions on demographic characteristics for example, parental background, socio-economic status, religion and Ethnic affiliation. The instrument was adapted from the study conducted by Sulaiman (2013) on exploration into the demographic characteristics of street begging children in ijebu ode, Ogun state, the instrument was validated by expert in the field of primary education studies, test retest reliability was used.

Procedure for data collection: The researcher employed the service of two university undergraduate students, two weeks of training was given to them which involved practical exercise of conducting the structured interview in order to suit the purpose of the study. It took the researcher and the research assistants three (3) weeks to conduct the structured interviews. The markets in the metropolis were first taken (Oja oba, mandate market, new market, ipata market), followed by popular commercial area like Post Office, Challenge, Maraba and also Taiwo road. The third categories were shops and restaurants that employed and engage young children. The researcher's familiarity with these areas and the

good use and command of the local dialect and that of the assistants made it easy for the general conduct of the interviews. In all, the researcher and the research assistants helped in interviewing three hundred (300) children of varying ages.

Results

1. Research question: What are the demographic characteristics of child labourer in Ilorin metropolis of Kwara state?
2. Is religion the cause of child labour in Ilorin metropolis of Kwara state?

Table 1: shows responders demographic characteristics of child labourers in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara state.

s/n	Item	Yes	%	N0	%	Not applicable no idea	%
1	Is your mother still alive?	196	65	96	32	8	3
2	Is your father still alive?	187	62	111	37	2	1
3	Is your mother living in the same house with your father	192	64	99	33	9	3
4	Do you have sisters?	245	82	49	16	6	2
5	Do you have brothers?	262	87	36	12	2	1
6	Are you living with you parents	57	19	238	79	5	2
7	Do your parents or guidance allow you to go to school every day?	108	36	190	63	2	1
8	Do your parents collect what you get from you?	281	94	19	8	0	0
9	Do your parents know that you are here working?	279	93	21	9	0	0
10	Are you the only child of your parent who is working?	54	18	237	79	9	3

Table 2: shows responders answer to religion as a cause of child labour in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara state

11	Do you go to church or mosque?	269	90	31	10	0	0

12	Do you pray in the house?	205	69	88	29	7	2
13	Do you ask question in the Sunday school or quranic school?	217	72	83	28	0	0
14	Do your parents or guardian go to church or mosque?	220	73	75	25	5	2

Discussion of findings

The results of this study showed that most of the respondents are not aware of the meaning or the implication of their activities. The understanding of the meaning may not have been clear to them because of their age and level of intelligent. The few who claimed to know the implication or the meaning of their activities just had shallow knowledge of what it meant to be a child labourer.

However, the characteristics of these children in labour market varied in nature. It was said earlier that in the section 1 of the structured interview, the age's children ranged from eight (8) to twelve (12) years. Some of them are not in formal school while some who are still attending formal school are not regular. Some, one hundred and ninety-six (196) said their mothers were alive; one hundred and eighty-seven (187) equally said that their fathers were alive. Apparently, some did not know whether their father or mothers were alive. This category lived with their relatives and masters. Most answered, that their parents were living together. Most of them also had other siblings.

Majority of the children were not living with their biological parents, which may be as a result of poverty and the main reason they are involve in child labour in the first case. So many other reasons could be adduced to this practice. One of the many reasons could be that the family were living below expected level of income and may not be able to provide all the basic needs of the members for the family.

The children's response to their religious involvement, ninety percent confirmed that they went to one church or mosque,. Ten percent did not attend any religious house. It was observed that even those who attended church or mosque programme did not show any

evidence of such activities in their lives may be because they have little or no control over it. In essence, this issue was beyond that of religious affiliation.

Conclusion

Summarily, the child labourer used in this study was characteristically all school age children. Most of those interviewed were still attending formal school; some are attending Islamic schools while a few are out of school for one reason or the other. Their ages ranged from six (6) to twelve (12).

Most of responders have both parents, while some live with relative or in their master's house as the work requires. A lot of them had other siblings but are not living together. The other siblings are said to be also working somewhere. No religion encouraged children to work but in fact mandate parent to provide for their children and ensure their education, Therefore, religion is not the basis for child labour practice.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following among others:

1. Government should as a matter of priority enforce and monitor compulsory and free basic school in the country. This will make every child to be in school.
2. School programmes should be made interesting in order to attract the attention of school children and their parent so as to restore hope in basic education.
3. General public and professional organization should help in enlighten parents in the evil and the likely result of child labour practice on the parent, the child and the public.
4. Government should make sure the proposed free meal in a day to basic school pupils is not just a policy statement. The timely execution of the plan will reduce the bounden on parent and reduce the child labour practices.
5. Parent should be advice against child hawking and keeping their children with distant relatives without monitoring their children activities and educational progress.
6. Education should be made qualitative enough to to attract and sure completion of basic school and interest for further study.

7. Parents should be encouraged to live up to their natural responsibilities of training up their children in the right ways so that they could be useful to themselves and to the entire community.

8. Religion organization should help through their various activities to encourage children education and discourage parent in engaging their children in child labour

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