



## PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF CHILD LABOUR RELATED ACTIVITIES ON THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL ATTENDANCE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS

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### Abstract

*This study was conducted to ascertain the perceived influence of child labour related activities on the academic achievement and school attendance of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State. Four research questions were formulated for the study. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The entire population of 409 primary school teachers in the 54 primary schools in Nkanu West were studied without sampling. A four-point rating scale questionnaire containing 16 items were used for data collection. Cronbach Alpha method was used to establish the internal consistency of the instrument which yielded reliability coefficients of 0.84, 0.72, 0.96 and 0.80 for the different clusters with an overall coefficient of 0.83. The researchers administered the instrument to the respondents with the help of three research assistants. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. Findings of the study revealed that respondents strongly agreed that child labour related trading and agricultural activities influence the academic achievement of primary school pupils and the school attendance of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State. The researchers concluded that, child labour related activities will reduce the mental capacity of pupils to effectively participate in academic and non-academic learning experiences capable of facilitating academic achievement and retention of subject matters in primary school education. It was recommended among others that, a monitoring channel should be created among schools, government and members of local communities geared towards discouraging primary school pupils from engaging in child labour related activities during school hours.*

**Keywords:** Child Labour, Academic Performance and School Attendance

### Introduction

A Nigerian child in any rural settlement has experienced one form of child labour. In urban areas, there are lots of incidences of child labour in the market place or in households of wealthy Nigerians. Without an iota of doubt, child labour exists in different countries of the world but it is very high in sub-Saharan Africa especially in Nigeria, the most populous black nation of the world with an estimated population of 170 million people (World Youth Report, 2018). It has been reported that Nigeria shares up to 10 percent of the total global out-of-school-children due to child labour related indices (Azeez & Nwauwa, 2018). Child labour is the act of subjecting a child to perform the responsibilities of an adult. According to the International Labour Organization in Nwokoro (2011), child labour is any work that deprives children of their childhood, their potentials and their dignity and is harmful to their physical and mental development. In the same vein, Rodgers and Standing in Azeez and Nwauwa (2018) opined that child labour is an employment situation where children under the age of 15 are being engaged on a more or less regular basis to earn a living for

themselves and families. The authors perceived that child labour is an illegal economic situation that is not only mentally, physically, socially, or morally hazardous to under-aged children but also interferes with their schooling by depriving them of the opportunity to experience qualitative education. In the context of this study, child labour can be defined as those activities children are engaged with to which affects their right and education.

In an ideal society, child labour is not a pleasant circumstance because it exposes innocent children to the wildlife of today's delicate society. Although, the nature of child labour is dangerous and abusive, children are eager to engage in such working environment because it provides them with an escape route from poverty and comes handy as a means of livelihood for them. Due to different conceptions of child labour as a result of different socio-cultural and demographic features of societies, it is important to mention that child work is not related to child labour. Moyi (2011) posited that child work is part of the upbringing and socialization process of a child by parents or members of his or her community while child labour refers to any mental, physical, social and moral work carried out to the detriment and endangerment of the child

In another note, James and James (2008) opined that child work is work in which the primary emphasis is on learning, training or socialization. As such, the work schedule is flexible and responsive to the developing capacity of the child whereas child labour is the use of a child as an economic tool with little or no regard for the negative effects that may affect the health, mental, physical, moral or social development of the child. The researchers submitted that child labour is the elimination of the basic rights of the male and female child either in his or her immediate or relative home under the guise of early childhood development and training.

The fact that child labour comes with some sort of financial gratification seems to attract children from pursuing basic education. Basic education is free and compulsory for every Nigerian child but it is under threat due to the menace of child labour. Hence, Buonomo (2011) averred that child labour is work that harms children or keeps them from attending schools. The increasing number of children selling foodstuffs in the street during school hours may affect their attendance in schools. The occurrence of this phenomenon propelled Aderinto in Odey, Ita and Nchor (2017) to posit that children labourers also known and regarded as street children or children of the street are morally affected from thinking ahead, thus rendering them educationally useless and hopeless.

More so, Teichmanin Odey, Ita and Nchor (2017) stated that, most times these "street children" go through physical and health consequences such as respiratory problems, injuries from accidents, physical and sexual abuse such as rape and molestation malnourishment, extortion of income, police harassments, and participation in harmful delinquent activities all inimical to educational successes. Earlier, Charles and Charles (2004) averred that child labourers face street robbery, inadequate sleep due to fatigue and long hour job. Most times, they suffer from mental related sickness such as stigmatization from the press and public, feelings of disheartenment, stress and irritability, personality disorders, anti-social behaviour, and alienation and isolation from their family. These negative experiences have significant influences on their school attendance, academic performance, grade literacy, leisure time, and overall human capital formation of the child (Odey, Ita & Nchor, 2017). Hence, the Nigerian government has constituted child labour law to guide the child from child labour antecedents that could interfere with their academic achievement in educational institutions (Ogunniyi, 2019). The incessant demands of child labour could affect behavioural patterns of learning and such; affect the academic achievement of pupils in primary schools.

Academic achievement refers to the achievement of scores and grades of pupils at the end of term or



semester examination conducted by educational institutions. Crow and Crow (2011) defined academic achievement as the extent to which a learner is profiting from instruction in a given area of learning, that is achievement is reflected by the extent to which skill or knowledge has been imparted to him or her. Academic achievement is the success a learner makes from any examination exercise. According to Jimoh, Idris and Olatunji (2016), academic achievement is the degree of success attained by learners after being exposed to one form of learning or the other. From the researchers' professional experiences, they posited that child labourers will not experience qualitative learning experiences which may affect their academic achievement and retention in educational institutions.

The long hours spent by child labourers may result in mental fatigue and poor school attendance. According to Isah (2013), school attendance is a vital and administrative record requirement used by school authority and parents to monitor and control annual pupils' attendance. It is measured by multiplying the number of children divided by the number of days the school opens. Yunusa (2012) averred that school attendance is an important, albeit crude, indicator of participation in education. In this regard, attendance can be thought of as being necessary, but not sufficient, for educational engagement and learning. It provides a proxy measure of a child's exposure to educational programs and the opportunities in an educational setting. In a nutshell, Evaristo (2015) posited that attendance refers to state of being present in school for learning purpose.

Child labour related activities reduce the chances of under aged children experiencing basic education. Child labour manifests in trading activities. It starts with children of school going age assisting their parents in the actual selling of goods and services in shops in the streets or public markets. In South East, Nigeria, it is common to see children transporting food items to the market in the morning before going to school and selling sachet water and plantain chips in the afternoon after coming from school. In addition, child labour manifests in various forms in agricultural activities. It starts with children of school going age engaging in farming activities during school hours. In South East, Nigeria, it is common to see children carrying farming tools looking for where they can be hired for digging, weeding and harvesting activities before and after school hours.

Although, Nigeria has introduced a free and compulsory basic education in line with the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), many children of school going age are found in child labour related activities in South East, Nigeria. It is against this background therefore, the study sought to determine the perceived influence of child labour related activities on the academic achievement and school attendance of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2019), Nigeria has the highest number of out-of-school children in the world and South East zone of Nigeria has the 19 percentage of dropout of children who work and save to start a business and conversely the lowest percentage of children who work and save to go to school. These facts seem to lend credence to apprehensions by some people that youths from the zone are opting for trade and business against education. The report also revealed a societal practice called "sibling complementarities" where some parents make some of their children not to attend school and engage them in child labour related activities so as to enable their siblings attend school.

The above situation clearly shows that child labour related activities are common in South East, Nigeria. However, there seems to paucity of research works on the perceived influence of child labour related

activities on academic achievement and school attendance of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State. This is the problem that this study sought to solve.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The general purpose of this study is to determine the perceived influence of child labour related activities on the academic achievement and school attendance of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State. Specifically, the study sought to;

1. Determine the perceived influence of child labour related trading activities on the academic achievement of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State.
2. Determine the perceived influence of child labour related agricultural activities on the academic achievement of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State.
3. Determine the perceived influence of child labour related trading activities on the school attendance of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State.
4. Determine the perceived influence of child labour related agricultural activities on the school attendance of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State.

### **Research questions**

The following research questions guided the study;

1. What are the perceived influence of child labour related trading activities on the academic achievement of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State?
2. What are the perceived influence of child labour related agricultural activities on the academic achievement of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State?
3. What are the perceived influence of child labour related trading activities on school attendance of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State?
4. What are the perceived influence of child labour related agricultural activities on school attendance of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State?

### **Methodology**

A descriptive survey research design was employed for the study to determine teacher's perceived influence of child labour related activities on the academic achievement and school attendance of primary school pupils. Four research questions guided the study. The entire population of 409 primary school teachers in the 54 primary schools in Nkanu West Local Government Area was used for the study without sampling. Teachers were used as the respondents because they are not only in charge of overall management, control and maintenance of educational standards but also they know those pupils that are regular in school and those not regular in school. Teachers are also aware of pupils' academic achievement based on pupils' attendance to school. A structured and validated questionnaire titled "Child Labour Related Activities on Academic Achievement and School Attendance (CLRAASA) Questionnaire" was used for data collection. The questionnaire contained 16 items on a 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA - 4), Agree (A- 3), Disagree (D-2) and Strongly Disagree (SD-1). Face validity of the instrument was determined by three experts; two from the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education and one from Measurement and Evaluation Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Cronbach Alpha was used to obtain the reliability of the instrument. The reliability coefficients of 0.84, 0.72, 0.96 and 0.80 for the four clusters of the instrument with an overall reliability coefficient of 0.83 were obtained. The researchers administered the instrument with the help three research assistants. Mean and



standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. Decisions on the research questions were based on the grand mean in relations to the real limits of numbers. Therefore, items with mean ratings of 1.00 - 1.49 are rated Strongly Disagree, those with 1.50 - 2.49 are Disagree, items with mean ratings of 2.50 - 3.49 are rated Agree and those with 3.50 - 4.00 are rated Strongly Agree.

## Results

### Research Question One

What are the perceived influence of child labour related trading activities on the academic achievement of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State?

**Table 1: Respondents' mean and standard deviation ratings on perceived influence of child labour related trading activities on the academic achievement of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State.**

N = 409				
<b>Child labour related trading activities on pupils' academic achievement includes;</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
1.	Pupils who are involved in Street hawking do not achieve better in their academics.	3.97	0.53	Strongly Agree
2.	Searching for scrap materials affect pupils' academic achievement.	3.90	0.35	Strongly Agree
3.	Selling scrap materials affect pupils' academic achievement.	3.78	0.44	Strongly Agree
4.	Working as sales boys and girls before going to school affect pupils' academic achievement.	2.96	0.29	Agree
<b>Cluster mean</b>		<b>3.65</b>	<b>0.40</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>

Data in Table 1 shows that the three out of the four items listed on child labour related trading activities on the academic achievement of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Area of Enugu State were strongly agreed by respondents with mean ratings ranging from 2.96 to 3.97. One item with a mean rating of 2.96 was agreed by respondents. The cluster mean score of 3.65 means that respondents strongly agreed that child labour related trading activities influence the academic achievement of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State. The standard deviations for all the items are within 0.29 to 0.53. This shows that the respondents are not wide apart in their ratings

### Research Question Two

What are the perceived influence of child labour related agricultural activities on academic achievement of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State?

**Table 2: Respondents’ mean and standard deviation ratings on the perceived influence of child labour related agricultural activities on the academic achievement of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State.**

N = 409				
S/N	Child labour related agricultural activities on pupils’ academic achievement includes;	Mean	SD	Remarks
5.	Farm weeding activities affects pupils’ academic achievement.	3.91	0.72	Strongly Agree
6.	Pupils who are involved in farm digging activities do not achieve better in school.	3.89	0.54	Strongly Agree
7.	Farm harvesting activities affects pupils’ academic achievement.	3.74	0.69	Strongly Agree
8.	Farm planting activities make the academic achievement of pupils’ poor.	3.66	0.57	Strongly Agree
<b>Cluster mean</b>		<b>3.80</b>	<b>0.63</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>

Data in Table 2 shows that the four items listed on child labour related agricultural activities on academic achievement of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government Area were strongly agree by respondents with mean ratings ranging from 3.66 to 3.91. The cluster mean score of 3.80 means that respondents strongly agreed that child labour related agricultural activities influence the academic achievement of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State. The standard deviations for all the items are within 0.54 to 0.72. This shows that the respondents are not wide apart in their ratings.

### Question Three

What are the perceived influence of child labour related trading activities on school attendance of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State?

**Table 3: Respondents’ mean and standard deviation ratings on the perceived influence of child labour related trading activities on school attendance of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State.**

N = 409				
S/N	Child labour related trading activities on school attendance includes;	Mean	SD	Remarks
9.	School attendance of pupils involved in street hawking is poor.	3.97	0.63	Strongly Agree
10.	Pupils who usually Search for scrap materials do not attend school.	3.93	0.82	Strongly Agree
11.	Selling scrap materials prevent pupils from attending school.	3.90	0.58	Strongly Agree
12.	Pupils who work as sales boys and girls have low school attendance.	3.85	0.74	Strongly Agree
<b>Cluster mean</b>		<b>3.91</b>	<b>0.69</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>





Data in Table 3 shows that the four items listed on child labour related trading activities on school attendance were strongly agreed by respondents with mean ratings ranging from 3.85 to 3.97. The cluster mean score of 3.91 means that respondents strongly agreed that child labour related trading activities influence the school attendance of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State. The standard deviations for all the items are within 0.63 to 0.82. This shows that the respondents are not wide apart in their ratings.

#### Research Question Four

What are the perceived influence of child labour related agricultural activities on school attendance of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State?

**Table 4: Respondents' mean and standard deviation ratings on perceived influence of child labour related agricultural activities on school attendance of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government of Enugu State.**

N = 409				
S/N	Child labour related agricultural activities on school attendance.	Mean	SD	Remarks
13.	Farm weeding activities prevent pupils from attending school.	3.73	0.40	Strongly Agree
14.	Pupils who are engaged in farm digging activities have poor school attendance.	3.69	0.23	Strongly Agree
15.	Pupils who are engaged in farm harvesting activities do not attend school.	3.84	0.38	Strongly Agree
16.	Farm planting activities prevent pupils from attending school.	3.89	0.29	Strongly Agree
	<b>Cluster mean</b>	<b>3.79</b>	<b>0.32</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>

Data in Table 4 shows that the four items listed on child labour related agricultural activities on school attendance of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government Area were strongly agreed by respondents with mean ratings ranging from 3.69 to 3.89. The cluster mean score of 3.79 means that respondents strongly agreed that child labour related agricultural activities influence the school attendance of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State. The standard deviations for all the items are within 0.23 to 0.40. This shows that the respondents are not wide apart in their ratings.

#### Discussion

Findings in Table 1 revealed that respondents strongly agreed that child labour related trading activities such as street hawking, searching for scrap materials and selling scrap materials among others influence the academic achievement of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State. This finding tally with Heady (2003) who found that child labourers had substantially lower reading and mathematics test scores than non-working children of school going age. This study is also in consonance with Peter (2015) who reported that pupils who were involved in child labour experienced lower academic achievement mean score than pupils not

involved.

Findings in Table 2 revealed that respondents strongly agreed that child labour related agricultural activities such as farm weeding activities and farm planting activities among others influence the school attendance of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State. This finding is in agreement with Omokhodion and Uchendu (2010) who discovered that child labourers have lesser chance of attending school than pupils not engaging in child labour related activities. This finding also is in congruence with the study of Moyi (2011) who posited that child labour related activities are not mutually exclusive activities and even complementary to academic performance.

Findings in Table 3 revealed that respondents strongly agreed that child labour related trading activities such as street hawking and searching for scrap materials among others influence the school attendance of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State. The finding of this study is in tandem with Ole (2014) who reported that child labour related activities prevent children from attending schools.

Findings in Table 4 revealed that respondents strongly agreed that child labour related agricultural activities such as farm weeding activities and farm planting activities among others influence the school attendance of primary school pupils in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State. This finding concur with the study of Isah (2013) who posited that child labour activities such as cultivation, planting and harvesting cause educational interruptions among child labourers. The findings of the study is also in consonance with Peter (2015) who posited that child labour related activities have a strong effect on school attendance of pupils.

## **Conclusion**

Due to the various interrelated factors that necessitate child labour, the introduction of free and compulsory education is yet to curb the incessant occurrence of child labour in most urban and rural areas of Nigeria. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concluded that child labour related activities will reduce the mental capacity of pupils to effectively participate in academic and non-academic learning experiences capable of facilitating academic achievement and retention of subject matters in primary school education.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study and conclusion made, the researchers suggested the following recommendations;

1. Primary schools' administrators' and teachers should follow up cases of absenteeism among primary school pupils in order to call their parents to order by remembering them on the legal and educational implications of child labour related activities on children.
2. Government should enforce the existing child labour laws by engaging in a large-scale prosecution of parents and care givers who subject children of school age to child labour related activities so as to reduce incidences of child labour in the society.
3. A monitoring channel should be created among schools, government and members of local communities geared towards discouraging primary school pupils from engaging in child labour related activities during school hours





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