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Socio-economic determinants of child labour and attitudes to child labour among school children in Ibadan

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Summary

This cross sectional study was designed to compare the characteristics of working and non-working school children. Two hundred and thirty one working and 236 non-working children were interviewed. The socio economic factors associated with child labour were trading as mother's occupation, father's educational status, religion, family type (monogamous vs polygamous) and type of residence. Family type (OR= 0.562, 95% C.I. 0.353-0.897, $p=0.016$), religion (OR=0.559, 95% C.I. 0.361-0.867, $p=0.009$) and trading as mother's occupation (O.R= 2.49, 95% C.I. 1.68-3.68, $p=0.000$) were sustained on logistic regression analysis.

With regard to attitude to child work, 186 (40%) of all respondents thought that children should be allowed to work. The majority of those who held this opinion 150, were child workers. Ten percent of working children had themselves chosen to work without any parental influence to do so. Seventy five respondents had ever repeated a class. Forty nine of these were working children a prevalence of 21% of repeaters compared to 26 non working children. (11%). $p=0.004$. Sixty eight percent of children aspiring to careers in artisan trades were child workers. Road traffic accidents and poor school performance were the commonest adverse effects of child labour indicated by school children. Parents should be educated about the adverse effects of child labour on child development. As poverty is one of the major root causes of child labour, free and compulsory primary education may help to reduce the notion of child work as an option for survival in poor families.

Keywords: *Child labour, socio-economic factors, school children, attitudes, working children, non working children*

Résumé

Une étude croisée était faite pour comparer les caractéristiques des écoliers brave et non-brave. 231 écoliers brave et 236 non-brave étaient interviewés. Les

facteurs socio-économiques liés à l'école travailleur, le commerce comme occupation de la mère, le statut éducationnel du père, la religion, la famille monogame ou polygame et le type de résidence étaient analysés grâce au logiciel de régression. En fonction de l'attitude du travail, 186(40%) des participants pensaient que les écoliers doivent être permis à travailler en majorité des enfants travailleurs. Dix pour cent des enfants travailleurs ont choisis de travailler sans aucune influence parentale. Soixante quinze participants n'ont jamais redoublés une classe. Vingt-une pour cent redoublaient la classe sur quarante neuf enfants travailleur contre onze pour cent sur 26 redoublant chez ceux ne travaillant pas ($P=0.004$). 68% des enfants aspirant à une carrière d'artisan commerçant étaient des enfants travailleurs. Les accidents de route et la faible performance étaient les effets adverses chez ces enfants commerce. Ainsi les parents doivent éduqués leurs enfants sur ces effets néfastes. Etant la pauvreté est la cause originelle, l'éducation primaire gratuit et obligatoire peut aider réduire cette notion d'enfants commerçant comme option pour la survie des familles pauvres.

Introduction

Within the last decade in Nigeria, there has been an explosion of children on the streets selling foods, drinks and various household items. Before the advent of this explosion, children have been engaged in a wide range of activities within and outside the home which can be described as child work or child labour. Child work is participation by a child in household activities and family work and child labour is work which impairs a child's personal development, health, safety and physical, mental and psychological well being. When a child's activities are in this realm, whether remunerated or not, within or outside the family context, it is considered as child labour [1].

Child labour in Nigeria occurs mainly in the informal sector of the economy. Children work on the streets as food vendors, conductors, car washers and artisan apprentices. Several studies have addressed the causes and factors associated with child labour. Some studies carried out in other developing countries such as Brazil

Data collected were analysed with Epi Info version 6.0 software. Chi square test was used to test associations between demographic variables and child work. Differences were regarded as statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. A logistic regression model was developed to identify the determinants of child labour in this population.

Results

A total of 467 children were interviewed, 231 working and 236 non-working. Their age and sex distribution is shown in Table 1. They comprised of 174 males (37%) and 293

Table 1: Age and sex distribution of working and nonworking school children

Age (yrs)	Working		Non-Working		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
8 - 12	37	78	60	93	268
13 - 15	35	73	31	46	185
16 - 18	5	3	6	0	14
Total	77	154	97	139	467

females (63%), 301 christians (65%) and 166 muslims (35%). The commonest occupation indicated for fathers was civil service 143 (31%) and trading for mothers 250 (54%). The majority of children 344 (74%) were from monogamous homes. Five respondents (1%) indicated that their mothers were deceased and 10 (2%) indicated that their fathers were deceased. Four hundred and thirteen (89%) had parents who were living together while 45 (10%) indicated that their parents were separated. The majority, 430 (92%) lived with their parents and 37 (8%) lived with guardians. The mean number of siblings by father was 5.01 ± 3.3 and 4.028 ± 1.73 by mothers. Mean number of siblings by fathers for working children was 5.47 compared to 4.61 for non-working children $p = 0.004$. The mean number of siblings by mother was 4.24 for working children and 3.82 for non-working children $p = 0.0009$.

Determinants of child work

Chi squared analysis showed that child work was associated with polygynous family type, muslim religion, low educational status of father, living in 1 or 2 room apartment and trading as mother's occupation. Table 2. There was no association between child work and marital status of parents. Children whose parents were deceased

and India suggest that poverty and family disintegration are responsible for child labour and the street child phenomenon [2-4]. In Nigeria, studies conducted on child workers have highlighted poverty as a root cause of child labour [5,6]. While poverty is known to be a fundamental cause of child labour, poverty alone does not account for the problem because not all poor children are on the street [7]. There is a need to determine other socio demographic factors associated with child labour in this environment. Some studies [8, 9] have compared the characteristics of street children and schoolchildren with the inherent limitation that these two groups are very dissimilar. A comparison of these two groups is also limited by the fact that a large proportion of street children are registered in schools. The present study was school based and was designed to compare the socio economic characteristics of working and non working schoolchildren. The study also sought to determine children's perception and attitudes to child labour.

Method

A cross sectional survey was conducted among primary and secondary schools in Ibadan North Local government area. Two primary schools and 2 secondary schools were randomly selected from a list of schools provided by the local government office. Children in classes 4 - 6 in primary schools and JS 1-3 in the junior secondary schools participated in the study after obtaining the permission of the school authorities.

In each class visited, children were selected if they indicated that they worked outside school hours in jobs such as street hawking or portering. An equal number of non-working children were selected from the same class. Children in the two categories were requested to form two cues and children were interviewed consecutively until the desired number for each class was attained. The age distribution of working children in a previous study in Ibadan was used to determine the proportion of children interviewed in each class. A structured questionnaire was administered to both categories of children. The questionnaire sought information on age, sex, educational attainment and other socio-economic characteristics of the child including the occupation, marital status, type of residence and educational status of their parents. Specifically, respondents were asked if they thought children should work, and if they thought that working children are at a disadvantage compared to their non working colleagues. Questions on benefits and disadvantages of working and plans for a future career were also included.

Table 2: Determinants of child work

Variables	Prevalence of Child labour	Chi square value	p value
<i>Family type</i>			
Monogamous	48%	13.28	0.001
Polygamous	63%		
<i>Religion</i>			
Christian	43%	14.06	0.001
Muslim	61%		
<i>Father's education</i>			
< Secondary school	55%	4.17	0.041
Secondary school and Higher	45%		
<i>Mother's education</i>			
< Secondary school	57%	3.32	0.068
Secondary school and Higher	46%		
<i>Father's occupation</i>			
Trading	55%	0.67	0.41
Non-trading	49%		
<i>Mother's occupation</i>			
Trading	60%	24.8	0.0000
Non-trading occupation	36%		
<i>Type of Residence</i>			
1 or 2 room apartment	55%	8.18	0.016
Flat or house	42%		

were not more engaged in child work than those whose parents were alive. There was no difference in the prevalence of child work between children living with parents and those living with guardians. Logistic regression analysis explained only 14.3% of the variance and family type (OR= 0.562, 95% C.I. 0.353-0.897, $p = 0.016$), religion (OR=0.559, 95% C.I. 0.361-0.867, $p=0.009$) and trading as mother's occupation (O.R= 2.49, 95% C.I 1.68-3.68, $p=0.000$) were sustained.

Educational background

One hundred and forty (30%) were primary school students and 327 (70%) were in secondary school. Eleven students (2%) had ever dropped out of school and 75 (17%) had ever repeated a class. Forty-nine of those who repeated classes were working children, a 21% prevalence of repeaters compared to 26 a prevalence of 11% among non-working children, $p = 0.004$. The commonest reason for missing school was ill health. Only four children (1.2%) admitted that they missed school because of work and 8 (2.4%) missed school for financial reasons.

Nature of work and attitudes to child labour

All 231 working children were engaged in street work. The majority, 210 (91%) were street hawkers, 18 (8%) were

food vendors and 3 (1%) were porters. For 188 (81%) respondents, it was their parent's idea that they should work while 23 (10%) children decided on their own that they would work. Fifty-nine (26%) of these children worked to earn money for school and 144 (63%) to earn money for their parents.

Two hundred and four (90%) of these children worked in the afternoon hours only and 16 (7%) worked at weekends only. One hundred and six (46%) had siblings who were engaged in child labour. Both working and non-working children were requested to provide answers to questions on attitude to child work. One hundred and eighty six (40%) of all respondents thought that children should work while 263 (57%) felt they should not and 10 (2%) did not know. The majority, 150 of those who thought that children should work were child workers ($p = 0.000$). Benefits of child work mentioned included to help parents, 203 (56%), to make a living, 60 (17%) and to train to be responsible adults, 40 (11%). The commonest disadvantage of child work mentioned was road traffic accidents, 195 (48%), followed by poor performance at school, 87 (21%). Sixty-seven children (16%) thought street work can encourage children to keep bad company. Ninety-seven children (21%) thought that child work was for children who are deprived. Of those who held this view, only 29 were child workers. Among all respondents, twenty-two (5%) would opt for artisan trades as a future career while 303 (65%) would opt for professional careers. More child workers opted for artisan trades $p = 0.009$. With regard to self-perception, nineteen children (4%) considered themselves less fortunate than their peers and 18 of these were child workers. The majority 350 (81%) considered themselves as fortunate as their peers and 63 (15%) reckoned they were more fortunate than their peers.

Discussion

Child labour has been associated with poverty in many reports [3,6]. Other factors highlighted in this study were religion, family type and mother's occupation.

Although the majority of children in this study were from monogamous families, a greater proportion of children from polygamous families were engaged in child labour. The family size of working children was larger than those of non-working children. These findings are similar to that of Aderinto in his study on street and non street children in Lagos and Ibadan [8]. He reported that street children were likely to be from polygynous homes with families of 5 or more siblings.

In this study, over half of the mothers of children in the study population were traders. This is the commonest occupation for women in Southwest Nigeria. Child labour

was significantly associated with trading as mother's occupation. It seems that these mothers use their children's services as an outlet for selling their wares. This was not the case for trading fathers however.

Socio-economic status is difficult to measure in Nigeria as poorly educated traders may be wealthy and highly educated persons may have a moderate income. While children may be aware of their parent's educational status, many will not be able to provide information about their income. Therefore, educational status of parents and the type of accommodation in which the child lived were used as measures of socio-economic status in this study.

We found that low educational status of fathers was associated with child labour. Mother's education was not important in determining predisposition to child labour. Aderinto, [8] found that child labour was associated with low educational status of parents. Type of residence has been used as a measure of socio-economic status in other studies [10]. We found that child workers were likely to be from families who lived in one or two room apartments. Child labour has been associated with poor living conditions [7].

Some studies have indicated that death of breadwinner or divorce is a risk factor for child labour [11]. In a study carried out in Bodija market, [5] 14% of children working in the market had lost a parent. In this study only 15 (3%) of children had lost their parents and child labour was not associated with loss of parents but this may be due to the few number of children in this category. It may be that a similar reason was responsible for the lack of association with divorced or separated parents. However, other reports have indicated that it is not the death of parents but the lack of care due to physically and emotionally absent parents that precipitates the street child phenomenon [7]. Child labour has also been associated with dysfunctional families due to migration, loneliness and parental absence [7]. This was not substantiated by this study as children who had left their own homes and were staying with guardians were not more engaged in child labour than those staying with their parents.

This study tried to assess the impact of child labour on some aspects of psychological development and educational performance. We found that more child workers than non-workers had repeated classes. Oloko, [12] in a study of working and non working children found that working children performed consistently and significantly worse than non working pupils. This is likely to be due to the fact that working children have little time to spare for their studies and in addition may be too tired to concentrate adequately in school [12]. Future

career aspirations are also affected by child labour as shown by the fact that the majority of children who wanted to take up artisan work when they grow up were child workers while non-working children were aspiring towards professional careers.

This study shows that a small proportion, 10% of children, chose to work of their own volition without parental influence to do so. A little over half of all the children interviewed thought that children should not work. Of those who thought children should work, 83% were child workers. Most children recognised the risk of road traffic accidents in street work. This is a major problem in large cities where children have been knocked down by cars while crossing the road to sell their wares [13].

With regard to self perception, child workers particularly felt they were worse off than their peers. Poor self perception is also related to the fact that child workers aspired towards careers in artisan trades.

About half of the children who worked also had siblings engaged in the same trade suggesting that within the family, several children are affected. Parents need to be educated about the adverse effects of child labour as it seems to fuel a vicious cycle of poverty and poor educational attainment. Government, especially the education sector should address the issues that compel parents to push their children into the workforce at an early age.

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