

**GLOBALIZATION, CHILD LABOUR, CHILD ABUSE AND CHILD RIGHTS AND  
NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: COUNTERPOINTS****JUDE OKEZIE EMMANUEL UDENTA**

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**Abstract**

*Globalization is a phenomenon heavily associated with universal goodness. Be that as it may, the phenomenon has thrown up for several segments and sectors of society imponderable side effects and challenges. Beginning with the family, children are very critical. The future belongs to and depends on them. Accordingly, what are the rights of the child? In which ways has globalization advanced or vitiated these rights, particularly in the Periphery? What are the rooms for improvement? What is to be done? This paper argues that to a considerable extent child labor and abuse of child rights in the Periphery, are symptoms of deepen systemic pathologies woven around globalization. The paper indicates some of these pathologies. The paper accordingly indicates the possibility of a systematic treatment of the attendant challenges. In view of its imponderable implications, child's right and associated issues are very critical, if sustainable international socio-economic development is the quest.*

**I. INTRODUCTION**

- *To restore the dignity of man*  
UNN
- *The child is the father of the man*  
Milton
- *If you build a house and fail to train your child, that child will sell or destroy the house*  
African proverb

Globalization is a multifaceted phenomenon. It is an epoch as well as a process (Fischer, 2003). It defines the exponential momentum of the production, or for that matter, provision of goods and services between people across the globe in a manner only left to imaginations in the past. It equally defines the exponential speed of diffusion of devices and transforms - goods and services in a manner that makes territorial boundaries of little or no consequence, when compared with the years gone by. It defines the technology on which the process is hinged, such as the computers, the *internet* and allied devices (Sewell, 1998). It defines the processes and procedures that conduce to the enhancement of the working of the global economy into one intensely integrated system, in a

way and manner that renders national, regional and continental boundaries, more or less artificial. It is from the perspective of such an encapsulation that this study draws its *raison d'être*.

To begin with, notwithstanding the popular identification of globalization with universal goodness, this paper argues that to a considerable extent, child labour and the abuse of child rights in the periphery are symptoms of deeper systemic pathologies. In this connection, there are several matters arising: Are the rights of the child and therefore, child labour and abuse not contextual? Therefore, what actually constitutes the offensive social relations as regards each case? Should the focus not be on the elimination of repressive/suppressive/ oppressive contexts by enhancing national development? What connections, if any between globalization and the enhancers or obstacles to the elimination of repressive/suppressive/oppressive contexts? Put differently, what are the impacts of the processes and dynamics associated with globalization on child rights and national development and in turn with the ultimate hope of globalization? Now, the ultimate hope of globalization is a better world - one community of Brotherhood and Sisterhood. Now, do the social correlates of globalization promote this global sense of one community – from the point of view of the child? Now, the child is ideally a bundle of innocence, possibilities, love, strength and foundation for future goodness. How far do the workings of globalization enhance or detract from this ideal? If rights in here in the community, in which ways, are the dynamics of globalization helping or vitiating in this direction, if sustainable international socioeconomic development is the quest? First however, a brief historical/intellectual excursus as a helpful mental regulator.

Now, in 1986, Y. B. Usman in his work, *Nigeria Against the IMF: The Home Market Strategy* delved into the debate on the International Monetary Fund, IMF, Loan and the attendant Structural Adjustment Programme, SAP. The features of concern for Nigeria and other economies of the periphery in the world system included deregulation and reorganization including trade liberalization, currency devaluation in an import dependent economy, cutting the costs of administration including the elimination or at least critical and steady reduction of involvement in the provision of (social services), the determination of the local currency by the dynamics of the international market and accordingly, steady devaluation and exchange rate volatility. This state of affairs far from helping matters , only added to further complicate the situation of things in the monocultural economies of the periphery with the attendant dynamics which result in the closure of industries – in addition to the policy of embargo on employment, retrenchment aimed at cutting the costs of administration. The gross effect of all these is the worsening of the unemployment situation and the attendant anomie (Udenta, 1988). All in all, the stronger foreign firms take over the market to the discomfiture of whatever local producers. This further compounds the confusion.

These states of affairs of concern have become ossified by the dynamics, of globalization. Put differently, the features of the SAP - which provided the transitional period to globalization, a source of considerable concern to the economies of the periphery have become compounded by the structural variables associated with the globalization process. The transition was fast-forwarded by the crash of the defunct Soviet Union (USSR) and the rise of a New World Order, enamoured by technological/technical competence – particularly the computer and *internet*. Under the circumstances, unless under appropriate sovereign policy, the deregulation, s rationalization and reorganization of all factors of production have become automatic under globalization.

The economic logic of the situation is simple: It is repressive – monopolistic tendencies immanent in the situation entails the denial of opportunities for trade/investment/creativity and development. It is crucial in this connection to note that in the formative years, the West , i.e, Europe and America plus Australia and Japan enjoyed the benefits of home markets. This provided them the opportunity of markets that were served effectively by the dynamics of endogenously–determined preferred states which challenged their creativity until they were mature enough for international trade. Hence, according to Okongwu (1986) – *intercourse is necessary, but it is necessary in intercourse to proceed from a secure domestic base*. Infact, America had to declare and work on an isolationist policy (Monroe Doctrine, 1923) for over a century before launching into the Global Market after the World War II.

Globalization as an epoch and a process denies the periphery of this benefit and leaves them stymied. Consider technology, there is very little chance for the periphery to flourish. They only provide subsidiary services - opening up shops and retail outlets. Technology defines tools in the production process. In this connection, there is no developed, economy, where the technology did not start small or crude, as with the mustard seed. The benefit of Home market allowed them regenerative evolution. In the case of the periphery, the dynamics of unequal exchange and other allied elements of the pervading political economy obviate these accelerator and multiplier effects or , in current terminology, value chain . Look at Biafra: According to Achebe (2012, p.301) -

During his last wartime speech, Biafra Head of State Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu summarized many of the technological feats of the Biafran state:

In three years of war necessity gave birth to invention. During those three years... (w)e built bombs, rockets, and we designed and built our own refinery and our own delivery systems and guided them far. For three years, blockaded without hope of import, we maintained our vehicles.

The state extracted and refined petrol, individuals refined petrol in their back gardens. We built and maintained our airports, maintained them

under heavy bombardment.... We spoke to the world through a telecommunications system engineered by local ingenuity.

In those years, we had broken the technological, barrier, became the most advanced black people on earth.

What it means is that it is not in our nature. The material conditions – particularly the politics of international economic relations need some adjustment – as they obviate the expected transformation(s). This brings us to the idea of the international Best Practices. How does one achieve international best practices without an initial take-off point? In this connection, why do we have a situation whereby creative minds are arrested for brilliant/creative ideas/skills – they are arrested as illegal refiners, arms dealers and so forth, when the market is not conducive for or supportive of legal operations? Suffice it to mark that it is in the field that experience is gathered and improvements made. Innovations arise from steady challenges and not from disincentives. Creativity cannot be set in motion, according to the *CNN*, in a stifling environment marked by disincentives. When this is matched with the material conditions of a cultural setting where children remain a high value and religion and politics, more or less preaches polygamy and children, there is a serious cause for concern. Furthermore, this in a situation where the enabling condition to provide for the rapidly expanding population is not just there. Accordingly, we are in for several matters of concern. This is the breeding ground for relative deprivation, frustration and violence, including the resort to disruptive activities. It is a ground for escapist tendencies – unwanted love, unwanted pregnancies and unwanted children. It is a breeding ground for Almajiris, Street Children and the several severe care deficits. It is a breeding ground for nothingness and naughtiness (Naughty by Nature and Nuture).

The dynamics of globalization has in the periphery led to a state of affairs whereby states now evade responsibility under the guise of deregulation, reorganization and rationalization. Accordingly, there exists in the periphery, the withdrawal of the state from critical areas without a corresponding replacement welfare structure complicated by the simultaneous elimination of the pristine African Extended Family system. Hence, we have the guided/misguided adoption of global trends without due consideration of the endogenously determined appropriate states - in line with the logic of comparative advantage. Apart from empathy, there are several social relations principles/doctrines/canons that guide public policy and analysis These include respect, dignity, choice/freedom and the allied opportunity for self-expression in terms of passion, talents , skills and the several gifts of nature which abound and call for expression and utilisation. This is about globalization, child labour, child abuse and child rights. Accordingly, we keep in view the foregoing as we turn to the child, the rights and allied matters.

**ON THE CHILD, CHILD LABOUR, CHILD ABUSE, CHILD RIGHTS, GLOBALIZATION AND ALLIED MATTERS**

Dictionary and encyclopedia definition of “Right(s) abound. Critical for our limited purposes are the following ideas – *appropriateness, a just claim, justice, in conformity with moral law, to restore to or set in proper position, true, logically sound* (Lechner, 2004, pp.856-857). There are so many shades and forms of Rights in the public domain and discourse. These include, the Divine Rights, Natural Rights, Civil Rights, Social Rights, Minority Rights, Gender Rights, Human Rights, Political Rights, Economic Rights, Reproductive Rights, and here, the Child Rights and so forth.

So, from the array above, which covers much time and space, suffice it to note that “Rights” is all about the just/fair capability or capacity utilization. Therefore, everything that vitiates just or fair capability and capacity utilization is against the expression of human rights. Accordingly, how far and in which ways do the processes/dynamics of globalization operate for or against the enjoyment of the rights of the child? Put differently, what are the factors that support or suppress/repress the rights of children and in which ways can we argue in a logical manner, that they are directly or indirectly connected to globalization in a remote or immediate sense?

We hasten to note at this juncture that rights is primarily an economic value. Accordingly, the economic status to a large extent determines the enjoyment of rights. Hence, the greater prosperity, the more the enjoyment of rights and vice-versa. More on this as the study unfolds.

Concerning the definition of a child, particularly as regards labour and the rights of the child, suffice it to say that it is an AGE affair. In Nigeria, based on the National Youth Policy, children are those whether male or female, below the age of 18years. A similar situation holds true in many other nations of the world.

According to Wikipaedia (2014):

Developing nations and globalization has led to the consequent exploitation of labour especially with children... child labour is terribly harmful for children both physically and mentally as it stops them from receiving a decent education, having fun and enjoying their childhood period...

Millions of children work to help their families. It is estimated that in developing countries around 150 million children aged 5-14... are involved in child labour. These children “do not receive proper nutrition or care. They are denied the chance to be children”...

Today, around the world, around 215 million children work, many full-time. Of those 215 million children around the globe, approximately 114 million (53%) are in Asia and the pacific; 14 million (7%) live in Latin America; and 65 million (30%) live in sub-saharan Africa.

As already indicated elsewhere above, the economic status to a very large extent determines the extent of the enjoyment of rights. Those of the children are no exceptions.

It is in that involvement in the Economic Frontline that the rights of children get compromised and then, abuses arise. Concerning child labour, the ILO (2013) put the matter thus:

Child labour falls into the following three categories:

- (1) Labour that is performed by a child who is under the minimum age specified for that kind of work (as defined by National Legislation, in accordance with accepted international standards), and that is thus likely to impede the child's education and full development.
- (2) Labour that jeopardizes the physical, mental or moral well-being of a child, either because of its nature or because of the conditions in which it is carried out, known as hazardous work.
- (3) The unconditional worst forms of child labour, which are internationally defined as slavery, trafficking, debt bondage and other forms of forced labour, forced recruitment of children for use in armed conflict, prostitution and pornography, and illicit activities.

It is noteworthy that in addressing the issue of child labour, the matter of the *needs of the family* as well as children who work in the entertainment industry is separately considered. All in all, the basic issues are exploitation and hazard. Hence, the concept of family work and responsibility is separate from child labour.

On the rights of the child, the 1989 Convention of the United Nations stands as the first treaty covering a full range of political, civil, economic, social, and cultural rights. According to Wikipaedia (2014), *the Convention serves as both a running point and a useful tool for civil society and individual people, working to protect and promote children's rights*. From the works of several platforms, these rights include:

- Right to proper education
- Freedom from bondage
- Freedom from exploitation
- Right to protection from deliberate hazard
- Right to care
- Right to protection from all form of abuse and so forth.

As a corollary to the foregoing, the many faces of the abuse of the rights of the child in the periphery include:

**i.Abductions:** This has been going on in the human trafficking rings worldwide . However, Nigeria seems to have have acquired a certain manner of notoriety in this regard sequel to the

The Chibok Girls Abduction of 14th April, 2014 ( 276 Girls ). The situation has been worsened by the Dapchi Girls Abduction of 19th February 2018( 110 Girls)

- ii. Abuse as child soldiers
- iii. Abuse as suicide bombers
- iv. Abuse as street beggars
- v. Abuse as street hawkers/vendors
- vi. Abuse by paedophiles
- vii. Abuse in the denial of proper education
- viii. Denial of the right to fun and play
- ix. Abuse as sex slaves
- x. Abuse in ritual murders
- xi. Abuse in the sale of babies
- xii. Denial of basic freedom such as the freedom of worship and so forth.

There are several platforms in the global arena directed at the enhancement and protection of the rights of the child. These include:

- (i) The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
- (ii) The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The primary international legal source of economic, social and cultural rights.
- (iii) The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

It is noteworthy that these conventions and charters have not been incorporated into domestic law in Nigeria (and some other nations of the periphery) and thus have no legal force. Be that as it may, Nigeria's child rights act states *inter alia*:

All sectors of the society including government and the people, will benefit from the production of well-rounded and self-confident future leaders.

However, there are considerable challenges as well as opportunities in regard to the realization of this aim. This study considers matters from the position of globalization. Bearing this in mind, let us briefly apprehend our framework for analysis.

## **II. A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS: A SYNOPTIC OVERVIEW**

For our purpose we shall apply a platform aimed at sustainable development from the prism of the centre-periphery variant of political economy applied to the systems paradigm.

To begin with, beyond being an interrelated set of parts, it is such that is in operation or motion. Without the operation or motion, there is no system but a collection of articles or artefacts. Ordinarily, a system may be operational, yet dysfunctional. However, the ideal picture and expectation is, for the system to function appropriately. However, for the system to avoid system malfunction/breakdown(s), there is the need for homeostasis. It is this that promotes system maintenance, balance, regulation, adaptation and stability. Shorn of this, there is system breakdown and/or malfunction.

At this juncture, the centre-periphery paradigm is simply a world system dual economy thesis. In it, the advanced/mature capitalist nations provide the core/centre while their dependencies are the periphery of the system. In the matrix, there is a network of unequal socioeconomic and political relations. For some time, these may seem functional for the core nations. In the long run, however, it raises critical questions as regards the integrity of the entire system.

This brings into the equation, the matter of sustainable development. Sustainable development is the development dynamic that provides well for the present while guaranteeing the well-being of the future generations.

The appropriateness of the framework is clear in these comments by Sabine and Thorson ((1973, pp.672-674) concerning rights, matters arising and the allied certainties and uncertainties.

*Individualism in some form or other has usually been regarded by liberals as an axiom of any theory of value... some such assumption was very deeply embedded in the tradition of modern political theory.... The most forthright expression of it had been the theory of natural rights, with its assertion that men are created equal and that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed.... Presumably, this is the reason why liberal philosophies have again and again reverted to some type of natural rights theory, even though they have never agreed on the best way of stating it.*

*The second postulate... means that a community exists because the people in it do more or less recognize each other as ends or sources of value, and therefore as beings having rights and with a moral claim on the obligations that mutual rights impose..... a political problem... is therefore, a problem in human relations to be solved with a mutual recognition of rights and obligations, with self-restraint on both sides but equally with determination on both sides to stand on one's rights. Within such a relationship issues and disagreements will evidently be perennial, set by the problem of finding a livable footing on which to conduct the innumerable transactions that constitute a human community... their solution could be found by discussion by interchange of claims and proposals, by negotiation, adjustment, compromise, always on the presumption that both sides honestly recognize rights and perform*



*obligations in good faith. And the... community... reduces sheer coercion to an unavoidable minimum.*

*(Sabine and Thorson, 1973, pp.672-674)*

This is the challenge of homeostasis.

This study arises against the background of this desire for a Brave New World – of synergy, mutual respect, harmony and progress. It arises against the background of the quest for sustainable development. It adopts a phenomenological approach in looking back into the future bearing in mind globalization, child labour, child abuse in the quest for child rights.

### III. ANALYSIS

To begin with, in their article, “child labour: the effect of globalization”, Rahman, M. M. and Khanam, R. (2012, p.21) note:

*The effects of globalization on child labour are interesting but not beyond the controversy. Studies are limited on this topic though substantial literature exists on child labour. This study reveals that theoretical arguments could exist on both sides: globalization increases child labour and globalization decreases child labour. The empirical evidences on different countries and regions also give us mixed results with regard to child labour – globalization nexus. The actual effects probably depend on country/region specific other socioeconomic factors and government policies.*

In Nigeria and sub-Sahara Africa, globalization increased child abuse and the material conditions speak in this regard. To begin with there are certain pathologies. These include as a matter of synoptic presentation:

(a) Monopolistic tendencies – Basic economics makes this clear. In the first place, the monopolistic tendencies in an epoch of computerization and hitech management in areas that are labour-intensive is a recipe for trouble. Furthermore, there are issues of high population growth-rate accelerated by religion, politics and traditional practices. There is a squeeze on the economic opportunities or openings for the rapidly expanding population. Now, there is a vitiation of economic linkages and diversification and all the benefits that would have come therefrom. At the 2015 Davos Economic Forum, the McKenzy’s Rating, put unemployment in Nigeria to about 50%. Under the circumstances, with many of the parents and breadwinners unemployed or underemployed, from where will they provide proper nutrition, care, education, health, fun and so forth? The child is, therefore, is as a matter of economic necessity, made to join in the family work and responsibility. Who feels it, knows it ! Much more could be written about the low sovereignty of the state, undue

interference of external interests, unprotective liberalization and so forth. Let me summarise in the words of Ilo (2012, p.134-135):

*I spent two nights with Africans in “little Senegal”, a slum in the Northern Italian city of Brescia; I spent five days respectively with some Africans in Balma South West (Amsterdam spot) Amsterdam, one week in North London, and three days in the Jane and Finch area in Toronto and was traumatized by the living condition of the Africans with whom I freely mingled. Africans who live abroad suffer a lot to provide for their families as well as to take care of their relatives living in Africa. ...It is poverty that has driven most African to this kind of lifestyle.*

So, what do you think – that globalization has been such a blessing to Africa? Why are we then, on the run? Is it because the situation is so wonderful? Why do people choose to make the perilous crossing at the Mediterranean Sea or die in the attempt? What is the basis for the Libya Slave trade today ?These are the bases – the material conditions for the issues revolving around child labour, child abuse, child rights and all that.

Already the point has been made that the greater prosperity, the more the enjoyment of rights and vice versa. Furthermore, there are some more subtle, though equally deleterious abuses of the child in periphery. The wholesale acceptance of the withdrawal of the state from social services has led to the abandonment of education to all comers. In Nigeria, for instance, the private schools now dominate the educational sector. There are certainly several good things that can be said about it. However, what about the pedagogy, the socialization, the faith-based orientation? Let us not discuss the absence of games facilities in the private schools that mostly celebrated good certificates, no. There is the gestation and growth of insularity as a result of faith-based orientation as opposed to expected Alexandrian cosmopolitanism and urbane/reasoning. Thus, we have the loss of innocence, and harmony associated with the child. Instead, we have the growth of stereotypes and a world of manichaeisms and dichotomies. Therefore, have we extreme ideas, economically, socially and politically. While the technological transforms like mobile phones and computers and other applications seem to be aimed at drawing people closer, there seems to be greater social gap or distance. One of the many questions that arise and equally germane here is : How many of these are made in the periphery? That would provide opportunities and prosperity. From another angle to the dysfunctionality perspective, there is the over-exposure of the African child – in either extremely rich and busy/confused families or extremely poor and ignorant ones. This is a source of much abuse. Children are exposed to child pornography, paedophiles, drug abuse and other anti-social tendencies with deleterious effects to all stakeholders. Put differently, the self-serving definition of globalization as the New Scramble for Neo-Colonial interests has created the material conditions that foster and foist the abuse of the rights of the child. The structural/material conditions need to be

addressed by all peoples as with Ebola, HIV/AIDS and so forth. These structural factors are accountable for the unemployment, the socioeconomic and political instability and crises, the migrations, the abuses and so forth. Be that as it may, certain interests are making it big and smiling to the banks – blood money or not!. However, who cares? Yes, we are all supposed to be concerned for with time, the rot spreads. It is said – One rotten apple spoils the bunch! Today, as a result of the deleterious effects of globalisation ISIS is wreaking havoc in the Maghreb, West and Central Africa. Today, flowing from same dynamics, the Taliban is wreaking havoc in Afghanistan. ISIS in Iraq, Syria and their neighbours; Boko Haram in Nigeria. Even in Europe and America, the disruptive activities are on. Therefore, while the leaders of the Less Developed countries need to do something surgical about the structural dynamics that essentially give rise to these monsters and monstrosities, the world needs to weigh in from Peace Building angles. There are many of these. Leadership is sorely needed in this situation. The world as well as the Less Developed or the underprivileged world needs leadership.. However, in addition to leadership, the underprivileged world needs ownership and accountability on the part of the masses.

On the functional angle however, globalization remains good for the child in the periphery. Under due teacher, parent or guardian guidance, it is a very invaluable source of education – the e-library and other opportunities; the challenge of peers who are making it and the desire to catch-up; solutions to all manner of challenges – medical, educational, technical and so on. However, all under appropriate control.

#### **IV. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- i. The empathy of the core nations is critical for the periphery to deal with the structural challenges. However, why must the periphery count on the soft-heartedness of the core nations for the commencement of progress? Change begins within.
- ii. Therefore, the commitment of the periphery is fundamental – the Government as well as the Governed – in order to have a comprehensive approach to the challenges. However, leadership is crucial. As President Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire put the situation in October, 1973( Chinweizu, 1978, p.xxvii) :

We should always have present in our minds the fact that the world is at a crossroads. It is no longer divided by ideology, nor even all that much by race or by political geography, but by economics, and this is the real essence of the question of relations among the peoples of the world today.... It is not enough just to condemn colonialism, imperialism and racism, but it is important too to measure our strengths and weaknesses and to unify to fight the battle of development.... That is why I utter

a cry of alarm so that we may all forget our small rivalries and our small sordid interests in order to constitute among ourselves, in unity, a great force, not a force against the East and the West , but a force which would enable us to be able to sit down and talk as equal partners with both sides.

These thoughts arose from the minds of the sane Mobutu Sese Seko before the insanity associated with vanity overtook and eventually destroyed him. Therefore, in regard to these matters and more, let sanity, integrity, regard for human dignity and all decent values be our guide. This is to engender the requisite dynamics for Peace Building as well as the construction of a better world for all the children and people of the world. This takes us to education.

- iii. Education is to be more systematically and professionally managed through thorough supervision by the appropriate ministries, departments and agencies. These institutions should not be compromised by bad politics through destructive spoils system appointments. Professionalism and merit should drive the educational sector. It is the mother of all sectors and strategies for progress.
- iv. The United Nations to move from Resolution to action in many issue areas. Hence, the importance of the commitment of the core states.

## V. CONCLUSION

Rights are God-given capacity for the achievement of beauty, grace and perfection: capacities with which people are naturally endowed with – that need conducive environments to thrive – let us be part of the creation of the appropriate conditions.

As a Child Rights Campaigner, Malala received the 2014 *Nobel Prize for Peace*. Now, why was *Malala shot* at by the Taliban with the intention of killing her? She was shot for her insistence on her right to education. Accordingly, let us put the Child Rights on one hand and put globalization on the other. In which ways, (directly or indirectly) has globalization played the part of the Taliban in regard to the enjoyment of their Rights as children?

In the words of Confucius: *When the goal cannot be achieved, you do not remove or forget or eliminate the goal, you rather change the steps*. A corollary to this is that not knowing where to go in order to achieve one's goal is a fundamental challenge. In this connection, the world expects global peace, but what about the provision of the enabling environments for peace building? Or, are we creating the conditions for aberrations distortions and twists? That is the crux of the matter. For even in the most intense of competitions and survival, there should be a place for humanitarian ideals.

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