

**EFFECTS OF CHILD LABOUR ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF CHILDREN  
IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN AWKA SOUTH LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT OF ANAMBRA STATE.**

**BENTINA ALAWARI MATHIAS**

Department of Sociology/Anthropology  
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka  
bentinad1@yahoo.com; mathiasbentina@gmail.com

**&**

**MIRIAM DAVID**

Department of Vocational Teachers Education  
Faculty of Education  
University of Nigeria Nsukka  
miriamdavidm@yahoo.com; sistermiriamdavid@gmail.com

**Abstract**

*Child labour is a contentious issue in our society. This is because it has far reaching consequences to the child, the family and the society. Governments and non-governmental organizations had made efforts to stop the incidence of child labour in the society, but these efforts have not yielded much result. This study examined the impact of child labour on academic performance of children in secondary schools, using selected secondary schools in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State as the study area. Five out of the thirteen state-owned secondary schools were randomly selected for the study. A total of 300 respondents were drawn from these selected schools. Key informant interview (KII) was used to elicit information from the principals of these schools. Data collected was analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Findings showed that street hawking is the most common type of child labour and that it has negative consequences on the academic performance of the child. Based on the findings, the study recommends that government should abolish all forms and categories of street hawking.*

**Key words:** *Academic Performance, Child Labour, Economy, Street Trading.*

**Introduction**

Advanced learners dictionary (2010) defined a child as a young human being who is not yet an adult. On the other hand child labour is the act of subjecting a child to work that is dangerous for kids and that are hazardous to their physical, mental or emotional health. It is also work that prevents kids from attending school such as unlimited or unrestricted domestic work (International Labour Organization- ILO 2007). According to Anderson (2006) child labour is engaging under-aged children into work. He maintained that child labour was utilized to a large extent through most history, but entered public dispute with the beginning of universal schooling with the changes in working conditions during industrialization. In addition was the emergence of the concepts of workers and child rights laws. In 2004, the United States passed an amendment to the Fair Labour Standards Act of 1938. The amendment allows certain children aged 14–18 to work in or outside a business where machinery is used to process wood (Department of labour USA 2012). The law aims to respect the religious and cultural needs of

the **Amish** community of the United States. The Amish believe that one effective way to educate children is on the job (The Economist 2004). The new law allows Amish children the ability to work with their families, once they are past eighth grade in school.

Similarly, in 1996, member countries of the European Union, per Directive 94/33/EC, agreed to a number of exceptions for young people in its child labour laws. Under these rules, children of various ages may work in cultural, artistic, sporting or advertising activities if authorized by competent authority. Children above the age of 13 may perform light work for a limited number of hours per week in other economic activities as defined at the discretion of each country. Additionally, the European law exception allows children aged 14 years or over to work as part of a work/training scheme. The EU Directive clarified that these exceptions do not allow child labour where the children may experience harmful exposure to dangerous substances (Europa 2004). Nonetheless, many children under the age of 13 do work, even in the most developed countries of the EU. For instance, a recent study showed over a third of Dutch twelve-year-old kids had a job (RTL News 2012).

Child labour is predominant in most developing nations because children's contributions to the well being of the family are encouraged and socially accepted (Mathias 2011). In Nigeria; children are seen in urban and rural communities carrying out domestic and economic duties which are functional to the families. According to Dorschner (2000), in the rural areas children are found working in agriculture and on family farms. They are seldom employed by state-owned commercial agriculture plantations, which are responsible for much of the agriculture production for export. In cottage industries and mechanic work-shops, children work as apprentices in serious crafts or trade such as weaving, tailoring, catering and auto repair. In urban areas and towns children work on the streets as vendors, car washers, scavengers, beggars, head load carriers, feet-washers and bus conductors. These economic activities affect the performance of the children since they engage in them at the expense of their studies, this often result in these children leaving school prematurely and entering into paid work. These works are usually under paid.

However, child labour is a punishable offence as in the child labour Act of 1974 which prohibit the employment of under-aged children and restricts labour performed by children to home-based agricultural and domestic work. The child labour Act of 1974 also prohibits forced labour. Despite the above act, most parents still give out their children to work because of economic pressure. Some parents exploit their children at home. In most homes, the girl child is engaged in labour at the financial needs of the family. Finally, the girl child is forced into premature marriage (home while the boys are allowed to go to school. The girl child hawk waves in the street to compliment Mathias 2011). Though there are child right protections nationally and internationally ILO statistics show that a large number of children are still involved in harmful and hazardous work.

**Table one:** Number of children involved in ILO categories of work, by age and gender

	All Children ('000s)	Economically Active Children ('000s)	Economically Active Children (%)	Child Labour ('000s)	Child Labour (%)	Children In Hazardous Work ('000s)	Children In Hazardous Work (%)
Ages 5–11	838,800	109,700	13.1	109,700	13.1	60,500	7.2
Ages 12–14	360,600	101,100	28.0	76,000	21.1	50,800	14.1
Ages 5–14	1,199,400	210,800	17.6	186,300	15.5	111,300	9.3
Ages 15–17	332,100	140,900	42.4	59,200	17.8	59,200	17.8
Boys	786,600	184,100	23.4	132,200	16.8	95,700	12.2
Girls	744,900	167,600	22.5	113,300	15.2	74,800	10.5
Total	1,531,500	351,700	23.0	245,500	16.0	170,500	11.1

Child traffickers also take advantage of this situation most of the adolescent girls are deceived into prostitution in foreign countries (Busa 1998). Children under such situation do not receive any formal education; instead many of them are vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse (Okolo 1986). Uchendu (2006) reported that in Eastern Nigerian, there are more than 100,000 boys and girls living and working in the streets. In Northern Nigeria, children known as *almajiri*, survive on the streets, by begging (Ahianté 2004). Children prostitution and trafficking are on the increase in Nigeria (ILO 2007) international Labour Organization report 2007 also revealed that 19 percent of school children and 40 percent of street children surveyed had been trafficked and nearly all of the trafficked children are economically active.

Studies have also showed that children who engaged in child labour do not perform well in school. Orazim (2004) noted that children who engage in child labour do not perform well in school because it affects their concentration in class thus resulting to poor performance. However with the dwindling economic situation in most developing nations, most parents are forced to send their children to work. This study therefore seeks to examine the effects of child labour on the academic performance of children in secondary schools in Awka, Anambra state.

### Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study include:

1. To examine the effects of child labour on the academic performance of children in Awka South Local Government Area.
2. To determine the extent to which child labour affects the society in Awka South Local Government Area.
3. To identify the differences between the academic performance of working children and non-working children in Awka South Local Government Area.
4. To suggest possible solution to child labour in Awka South Local Government Area.

## **Theoretical Orientation**

This study adopts the conflict theory as its framework. The conflict theory was propounded by Karl Marx (1818-1883). The Marxist conflict approach emphasizes a materialist interpretation of history a dialectical method of analysis a critical stance toward existing social arrangements and a political programme of resolution or at least a reform. The materialist view of history starts from premises that the most important determinant of social life is the work people are doing especially work that results in provision of the basic necessities of life, food, clothing and shelter. Marx thought that the way the work is socially organized and the technology used in production will have a strong impact on every other aspect of the society. He maintained that everything of value in society results from human labour. Thus Marx saw working men and women as engaged in making society and in creating the conditions for their own existence (Haralanbus and Halbon 2007).

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations which are independent of their will namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production which constitute the economic structure of society is the real foundation on which arises a legal and political super structure and to which corresponds with definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness that determine their existence but their social existence that determines their consciousness (Moehling 2002). Marx divided history into several stages, conforming to broad patterns in the economic structure of the society. The most important stage for Marx arguments were feudalism, capitalism and socialism

For Marx, the central institution of capitalists' society is private property, the system by which capital is controlled by a small minority of the population. This arrangement leads to two opposed classes, the owners of capital called the bourgeoisie and the workers called the proletariat, whose only property is their own labour time, which they sell to the capitalist. Owners or "the haves" are seen as making profits by paying workers less than their work is worth and thus exploiting them. Marx viewed the exploitative economic arrangements of capitalism. Hence, child labour could be seen as a means of survival for the lower class. Marx believes that child labour cannot be eliminated as long as the private ownership of the means of production exists (Okeibunor and Anugwom 2005). From the conflict perspective, the family is seen as a unit which produces one of the basic commodities of capitalism (Labour) most children are hired out to the capitalists and lumpen proletariats to be used as labour. The children now become an instrument being wielded in the market and exploited. A capitalist society is one where the fittest survive (Ogunbameru 2008). Thus, parents use their children as a leverage to subdue the exploitation of the bourgeoisie in the society. Parents send their children out as workers at the expenses of their academic work.

## **Methodology**

Awka South Local Government Area is one of the twenty one Local Government Areas in Anambra State of Nigeria. It covers an area of 141,954 square kilometers. It is the second largest Local Government Area in Anambra State. It housed the State capital and Local Government Headquarters. Thus, it is usually very busy. It is made up of nine towns namely: Amaenyi, Amawbiea, Awka, Ezinato, Isiagu, Mbaukwu, Nibo, Nise and Umuawulu. In the past the people of Awka South Local Government Area are well known for Black smithing. Today, they are engaged in several other trades and vocation (Dikeocha 2006). The national population census (NPC 2006) figure for Awka South Local Government is 345,116. A further

break down shows that there are 162,450 males and 182,666 females. The sample size for this study is 300. The sampling technique is the simple random sampling technique. Five out of the 13 state-owned secondary schools were selected for the study. The instruments for data collection were structure questionnaire and interview guide for Key Informant Interview (KII).

### Findings:

The study observed that effects of child labour on the child's academics include below average score in examinations, repeating classes, loss of educational opportunities, lack of concentration and absence from class.

**Table Two:** *The effects of child labour on Academic of the child.*

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Absence from class	50	16.66
Lack of concentration	35	11.67
Below average score	69	23
Loss of educational Opportunities	30	10
Repeating classes	26	8.67
All of the above	90	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

In addition to the above the respondents also said that children who engaged in child labour sleep in class, make noise in class and come late to school. They also do not submit their projects on time.

The effects of child labour on the society includes: Brain drain, lack of skilled workers and lack of matured labourers.

**Table Three:** *The effects of child labour on the society.*

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Brain drain	113	39.66
Lack of skilled workers	100	35.33
Lack of matured workers	77	25.01
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

In addition to the above the respondents noted that a society that lacked skilled workers do not attract foreign investors as such, there few foreign companies in Awka South Local Government compared to other Local Government Areas in other state capital in Nigeria. All the respondents accepted that child labour has negative effect on the academic performance of the child. The respondents also said that most of the children who engage in child labour drop out of school because of shame. They also said that it is not possible to combine academic work with other types of work and still perform well in school. According to them, academic work demands full concentration.

The possible solution to child labour in Awka South Local Government Area includes enforcing functional free and compulsory education for all children, abolishing of street hawking by children, enforcing child right laws and provision of employment for graduates

**Table Four: Possible solutions to child labour.**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Free and compulsory education	116	38.69
Abolish street hawking	55	18.37
Enforce child right laws	49	16.37
Provision of employment for graduates	80	26.47
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

The respondent also said that State and Federal Government should provide welfare packages for indigent parents. This according to them will help to reduce poverty. Also that non-governmental organizations and very rich parents should help to train the children of poor parents who are intelligent.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study observed that all over the world children engaged in work but in the developing nations child labour is more extensive while some combine it with schooling. Child labour is mentally physically, socially hazardous and harmful to children's health (ILO 2012). It deprives the child of that childhood experience and subjects them to difference levels of abuses-physical, emotional and sexual. Government and Non-Governmental organizations at levels have made effort to solve this problem in the society but it has continued to grow. It interferes with the education of the child. Attention is being paid to its effects on education because schooling is a major instrument for development of both the child and the society.

In its most extreme forms, child labour involves children being enslaved separated from their families, exposed to serious hazards and illness and / or left to fend for themselves on the streets of large cities often at a very early age. Whether or not particular forms of work can be called 'child labour' depend on the child's age the type and hours of work performed, the conditions under which it is performed and the objective pursued by individual countries. Thus, the answer varies from country to country, as well as among sectors within countries. Based on the foregoing, the study recommends that:

1. Government should improve the standard of living of its citizens. This will go a long way in eliminating poverty which is a major cause of child labour in the society.
2. Education should be made free and compulsory for all children until the secondary level.
3. Government should take harsh measures against child trafficking which will in turn reduce child labour and improve children academic performance.
4. Child rights laws should be enforced especially in the rural areas where child labour is predominant.
5. Non-governmental organizations and well to do individuals should help to protect the rights and interest of children. They should also recognize some of these children who are promising and adopt them and provide parental attention.

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