

## **IMPACT OF CHILD LABOUR ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

**Jude C. OKAFOR<sup>1</sup>, Uzodinma C. OKAFOR<sup>2</sup>, Ignatius I. NGINI<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1,3</sup>Department of Political Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka NIGERIA

<sup>2</sup>Department of Political Science, Madonna University, Okija, Near Onitsha, NIGERIA

### **Abstract**

*The future of every state anchors so much on the youths and where the future of the child is made to suffer, it means that the future of such state is in danger. This study examined the impact of child labour on the political and social development of Nigeria. The myriad of children abuses prevalent in Nigeria is a cause to worry. The rate at which minors and under aged children suffers social diminution coming from their guardians and the society has assumed a stage of national concern. This is consequent on the societal negligence and governmental irresponsibility to rise up to his responsibilities of protecting and providing for these helpless children. It has forced the minors to embark on odd jobs against the global standard and ethics on child rights. Despite government and constitutional provisions on these children, still everything remains as if there is no future for them. This study adopted secondary source of data which was analysed using descriptive method of data analysis. It employed legal approach as its framework of analysis. The study discovers that child labour has decimated the future and hope of younger ones who found themselves trapped in the web of ruthless guardians and the law remains silent where action is needed. It resulted in a collapse on the institution assigned to enforce rules, regulations and laws made to regulate behaviours in the state and this weakness is a big threat to national development. Therefore, there should be a serious effort by the government and its various agencies trust with the responsibility of policy implementation to brace up with the challenges of commitment in the enforcement of stipulated policies to the letters.*

Keywords: Child labour, Poverty, Development, Politics and Child

### **Introduction**

The contemporary Nigerian state is faced with lots of problems which have continued to affect its development process. It borders on abuse of child rights. The issue of subjecting children to excruciating and burdening roles has taken a centre stage of concern. Children are exposed and introduced into approaching life in a most bizarre and frustrating way that what the future holds for them is bleak. Some of these children are exposed to various forms of degrading jobs which include; excessive indulgence in domestic chores, parks and

streets hawking, excruciating baby-sitting exercise, carrying of heavy loads, and bus conducts, etc. These children are between the ages of 5 to 17 years of age. Some of them are wards betrothed to guardians who turn them to punch bags and domestic work specialists while some come from families that answer poverty as a second name. This has to a large extent hampered the process of attaining a society where the future of the children is guaranteed.

Most states within the globe today are connecting their pace of development to sound child education, but where the child who has a promising hope of a viable future is seen in the streets, parks and odd joints struggling to earn a living for their parents and guardians, such ends up becoming jeopardy to the society. In what is believed to be anti-human practices, most of these wards are locked under terrible experiences ranging from sexual abuse, molestations of various kinds, denial of basic education, poor upbringing and other forms of child abuse (Abubakar, 2009). All these have in one way or the other affected negatively on the psychic of such children. When these negative acts are made manifest, what emerges is nothing but a demoralised and negative personalities with its attendant inferior complex in facing their future (Duffield, 2010).

Against this backdrop, based on the various manifestations of child labour, this paper is led to question in many ways how child labour affects the process of development in Nigeria. What are the various manifestations of child labour in Nigeria? How has government responded to child labour issues in Nigeria? Why has there been a continuous exploitation of Nigerian child despite general criticisms? The various catechisms posed have practically provided us with a balanced platform to explore the hypothetical demands, which anchors on the extent of poverty in the land with its attendant subversion of the mind. The government has not demonstrated any meaningful commitment in salvaging the future of the Nigerian child by any stretch of imagination. This has to a large extent resulted in the abysmal bastardization of human rights and abuse of the socio-political process. Thus, it has dwindled massively the essence of man within the polity and the future of Nigerian child exposed to generational danger.

There is perceived lack of governmental policy framework to protect the poor among us. This has to a large extent affected the lives of the people and their level of commitment in the society (UNICEF Report, 2011). It is thus obvious to note that poverty does not breed confidence in the lives of those minnows. When they lack confidence, they cannot bring about the required change that can turn around the system. The concern of this paper is on reconciling the impact of child labour on the development of the Nigerian state. It captures in holistic terms the major logic and avenues that have been affected owing to the experiences and practices of child labour. The study also provides an in-depth understanding of the variables in focus. To that extent, the later part of this study proffered viable solutions on how to improve on the lives of the children who grow up to become minnows in the society.

### **Theorizing Child Labour and the Development of the Nigerian State**

It is pertinently worrisome that the Nigerian child in our contemporary times is trapped in the web of a visionless society where her future looks so bleak. The extent of class

distinction in Nigeria has given room for extensive institutionalization of poverty in the polity. This has gotten to the extent that every nooks and crannies of the society has the children clustered in a struggle to secure a ticket for their next meal. The desperation and sorrows they wear on their various faces leaves one to wonder what the future really holds for them. Thus, US Department of Labour Report (2010) claims that Nigeria is witnessing the worst forms of child labour, particularly in agriculture and domestic service. In rural areas, most children work in agriculture of products such as cassava, cocoa and tobacco. These children typically work long hours and for little pay, with their families. The report claims some children are exposed to pesticides and chemical fertilizers in cocoa and tobacco fields because of archaic farming practices or because they are deployed as forced labour without protective gear. Additionally, street children work as porters and scavengers, and a growing number of them engage in begging. The report claims commercial sexual exploitation of children, especially girls, takes place in some Nigerian cities, including Port Harcourt and Lagos.

Sharing in the frustration and the pitiable conditions of the Nigerian children on the streets, Sigho (2011) opines that his sources are the faces you see in Market places, the voices you hear in the Parks and the little hands that build the imposing structures within the neighbourhood. "The sources of my story portray how Child labour has grown beyond forced labour in factories to a very loose situation where Children between 9 and 15yrs are now left to indulge in certain level of commercial activities and odd jobs rather than being in the classroom for learning". These children are mostly without basic education. Some are school drop outs informed by parental inability to pay their school fees. In a bid to commit their efforts towards bettering their future and assisting their various families, they end up in ugly places where they experience an advanced level of exploitation. They are used as cheap labour in construction sites and usually earn less than half of what an adult male earns a day. In market places they carry goods in Wheel barrows on the streets they sell wares along. These have gone contrary to the United Nation Article on Childs Right Convention as most of them were indulged in dangerous work activities which interfere with their education (Sigho, 2011).

In line with the above argument Nwiro (2010) comments that child labour is so widespread in Nigeria that it has been accepted by many as part of normal life. But the practice is only an aberration which takes away the innocence of millions of children; it is a threat to the future of the country. In a similar manner, the Nigerian NGO's Report reveals that a staggering 15 million children under the age of 14 are working across Nigeria. Many of these children are exposed to long hours of work in dangerous and unhealthy environments, carrying too much responsibility for their age. Working in these hazardous conditions with little food, small pay, no education and no medical care establishes a cycle of child rights violation (National Modular Child Labour Survey and Federal Office of Statistics, 2002 and UN Report, 2010). This thus, portends a negative future for the nation and the essence of development remains far-fetched.

On a balanced scale, it is germane for us to provide an intellectual linkage between the variables in question. Having captured the theoretical dynamics of child labour, we will now turn our focus to understanding its implication on developmental process of the

nation with basic emphasis on the import of development. Development for what it stands for has been a continuous process which determines the extent states have gone affecting the lives of its populace positively. In addition, this study will employ legal approach as its framework of analysis. The implication is to ascertain and consider the legality and illegality of child labour in Nigeria which will to a large extent capture the conditions of Nigerian children whom the state should provide for. It will examine efforts made by the government to arresting the provoking oddities that continue to affect the future of the Nigerian children and the nation at large.

### **The Dynamics of Child labour**

Any person that is presumed to be below the ages of 18years according to the Nigerian Constitution of 1999 is not an adult except the married which has remained the bane of Northern argument. Also in that light, the UN charter on child right concurs to the above (UNICEF Report, 2011). The implication is that such group of kids are still under the tutelage of their parents or guardians who direct their ways in all they do. It is at this rudimentary stage of development that socialization matters, which means that the child acquires the basic orientation and knowledge about life and how to cope with future. Where the upbringing of a child is hampered by wrong indoctrination, it portends a dangerous precedence for the child and his/ her future which will invariably affect others through peer influence. Those who are trained under harsh environment have the possibility of exhibiting that which was internalized in them in their various homes and it thus, continues to spread in every nooks and crannies of the society. Some of these negative influences and experiences are made manifest in the lives they live; which include use of abusive words, sleeping in the class as a result of hangover sleep from previous night, misplacement of priorities (money for education), etc. All these are products of social values emanating from primary socialization resulting in child labour. In other words, we will endeavour to understand the import of child labour to provide us with a clearer view on the direction of this study.

According to International Labour Organization (2013) not all works done by children should be classified as child labour that is to be targeted for elimination. Children's or adolescents' participation in work that does not affect their health and personal development or interfere with their schooling is generally regarded as being something positive. This includes activities such as helping their parents around the home, assisting in a family business or earning pocket money outside school hours and during school holidays. These kinds of activities contribute to children's development and to the welfare of their families; they provide them with skills and experience, and help to prepare them to be productive members of society during their adult life.

The term "child labour" according to (NAPTIP Report, 2011) is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and interferes with their schooling by depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively

long and heavy work. The implication is that issues of child labour should in practical terms be established. It will help determine the basic ingredients that constitute child labour especially in Nigeria. This is because the issue of child labour is so phenomenal that it varies from one environment to another. Without belaboring the obvious, it would be imperative to note that its major form is articulated to provide a clear view of what child labour stands for in our immediate society Nigeria. Also, according to Article 32 UN of Convention on the Rights of the Child states that "... Parties must recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development".

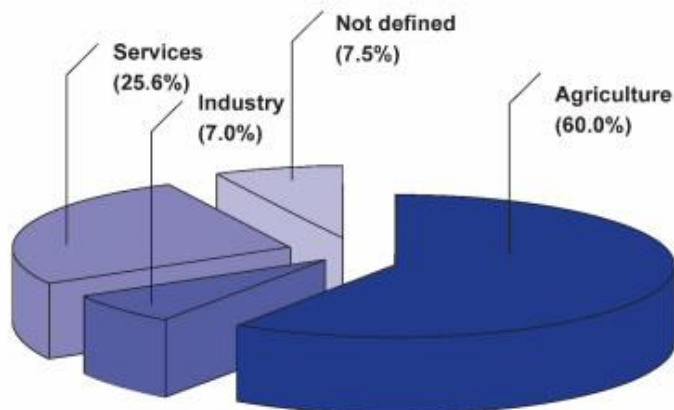
In as much as child labour takes many different forms, a priority is to eliminate without delay the worst forms of child labour as defined by Article 3 of ILO Convention No. 182 became pertinent which include: (a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; (b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances; (c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties; (d) work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

Based on the above diminishing stance, child labour involves children being enslaved, separated from their families, exposed to serious hazards and illnesses 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" depends on the child's age, the type and hours of work performed, the conditions under which it is performed and the objectives pursued by individual countries. The answer varies from country to country, as well as among sectors within countries (ILO-IPEC, 2013).

From the chart above, the **agriculture sector** comprises activities in agriculture, hunting forestry, and fishing. The **industry sector** includes mining and quarrying, manufacturing, construction, and public utilities (electricity, gas and water). The **services sector** consists of wholesale and retail trade; restaurants and hotels; transport, storage, and communications; finance, insurance, real-estate, and business services; and community as well as social personal services. In 2011, Nigeria made a minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labour. In early 2012, the Government supported the development of curriculum through the Almajiri Education Program to increase the capacity of school teachers and managers who serve the Almajiri (children involved in religious begging). Additionally, the Government, with support from the ILO-IPEC, updated a draft National Policy and National Plan of Action on the worst forms of child labour. However, the drafts have not been adopted and made official policy. The general lack of adequate legislation and social protection programs to address the extent of the worst forms of child labour impeded the country's overall progress toward reducing

exploitative child labour. Children in Nigeria continue to engage in the worst forms of child labour, particularly in dangerous activities in agriculture and domestic service.

Figure 1: CHILD LABOUR DISTRIBUTION BY BRANCH OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY, 5-17 YEARS OLD



Sources: National Modular Child Labour Survey and Federal Office of Statistics 2004/2005, 2006. FOS/ILO/SIMPOC-Final Report.

Table 1: STATISTICS ON WORKING CHILDREN AND SCHOOL ATTENDANCE/ EDUCATION

Children	Age	Percentage
Working	5-14	36.3 (1,894,046)
Attending school	5-14	61.7
Combine Work and School	7-14	28.1
Primary Completion Rate	-	74.4

Population of working children: 15,963,078

Source: UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports. Third and Fourth Periodic Report: Nigeria*, Primary completion rate: Data from 2010, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012. All other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from MICS3 Survey, 2007

UNICEF Nigeria is active for children's rights. Child workers include street vendors, shoe shiners, apprentice mechanics, carpenters, vulcanisers, tailors, barbers and domestic servants. Many working children are exposed to dangerous and unhealthy environments. In August, 2003, the Nigerian Government formally adopted three International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions setting a minimum age for the employment of children. The government also has implemented West African Cocoa Agriculture Project (WACAP) (ILO, 2013). There is a similar incidence of child labour in rural and urban Nigeria. It thus, raps up what really constitute child labour with their attendant manifestations. Also, attempting the import of development will be germane to provide us with an appreciable link of the variables and proper assessment of the situation.

### **Understanding the Import of Development**

Development in human society is a many-sided process (Rodney, 1972). At the level of the individual, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being...A society develops economically as its members' increase jointly their capacity for dealing with the environment. This capacity for dealing with the environment is dependent on the extent to which they understand the laws of nature (science), on the extent to which they put that understanding into practise by devising tools (technology), and on the manner in which work is organised. Taking a long-term view, it can be said that there has been constant economic development within human society since the origin to win a living from nature (Rodney, 1972). From the foregoing submissions, it is germane to understand that he took a tour on the various angles of development and anchored it on economic development, which has been since origin. He acknowledged the many sides of development that has to do with improving lives. There is no doubt that Rodney (1972) was plain in his approach to the concept of development. His conceptual analysis on development is entirely comprehensive and covers various aspects of development, which aims at improving the essence of human existence. In summary, he talked about a development that can stand a test of time, which invariably requires sustenance.

In agreement with the view of Rodney (1972), Amucheazi (1979) also argues that development should be centred on man not just on institutional growth. To him, "Development should be man-oriented not institutional-oriented, involving the totality of man in his political, economic, psychological, social relations, among other". In understanding the argument of Amucheazi (1979), for a state to be developed, it must contain the union of concentration on human beings that is, human enterprise. The implication is that improvement and growth in a polity do not affect the human beings rather to glorify the various existing institutions, it can only be perceived as growth other than development, for development is man oriented – human is at its centre. Thus, in line with the afore-stated claims, UN Publication on Right to Development (1991) posits that Development is not only a fundamental human right but a basic human need, which fulfils the aspiration of all people to achieve the greatest possible freedom and dignity both as individuals and as members of the societies in which they live. Digging deep into the

demands and essence of this study, Nwoye (2000: 40) succinctly captures it in sum. To him,

Development is essentially about women and men becoming empowered to bring about positive changes in their lives, about personal growth together with public action; about both the process and the outcome of challenging poverty, oppression and discrimination and about the realization of human potential through social and economic justice. Above all, it is about the process of transforming lives and transforming societies along positive course of action.

To a large extent, the argument of Nwoye (2000) summarizes the essence of this study. It is simply a development that negates poverty, oppression of all sorts and inequality and discrimination in all spheres of human lives. This is because when that is done, the state will experience various positive transformations and actions that will promote social change. The essence is that development does not thrive in a state that promotes discrimination of any sort. It discourages poverty ranging from material to intellectual poverty, which will in turn bring about growth and development in the state. From all intents and purpose, it is imperative to note that for a development to be meaningful, it must have the necessary ingredients and pedigree to protect the future of the children and impact on the lives of the populace over a period of time. This explains the very essence of this study.

### **Causes of Child Labour**

In a study carried out by so many scholars on the child labour in Nigeria and world over, it thus, revealed that young domestic servants were particularly vulnerable in view of their method of recruitment. In some of the study, one-third of domestic servants escaped from rural to urban areas without the knowledge of their parents with the middlemen abandoning them to their fate and appropriating a substantial part of their income (UNICEF Report, 2011). Poverty and illiteracy reinforced by traditional customs such as polygyny and preference for large family size were identified as root causes of child labour in Nigeria. Moreover, marital instability and family disorganization were identified as contributory factors. Here we will be articulating the above argument based on these factors; poverty, peer influence, social values and environmental influence.

Poverty has been adjudged as a major cause of child labour in the world especially in Nigeria where its worst form of practice is prevalent (UN Department on Child Labour, 2010). It stems from the poverty of the mind to intellectual poverty where people indulge in the practice of devaluing the essence of Nigerian child who should be given a clear vision and future instead of a bleak one. It is no longer a deniable fact that most Nigerians live below the poverty line of One dollar (1\$) per day (UN Report 2012). This has on its own impacted deeply into the psychic of many Nigerians that frustration and hunger have thrown them into the streets with their children in search of food and social help. In as much as some have introduced their children into street lives with its attendant "hustling", some are in the streets begging to satisfy their daily appetite. This gory situation has painted the nation as one that lacked the capacity to transform the bastardized condition



of the polity and has continued to nurture wave of poverty through the institutionalization of corruption. It is believed to be a major debacle towards promoting child labour in Nigeria and world over. The implication remains that government will only limit its effort in fighting child labour without concerted and committed efforts made to address the inferno poverty in the land. It thus has a far reaching impact on the level of literacy in men and women. Table 1 and 2 below addressed the level of literacy in men and women.

Table 1

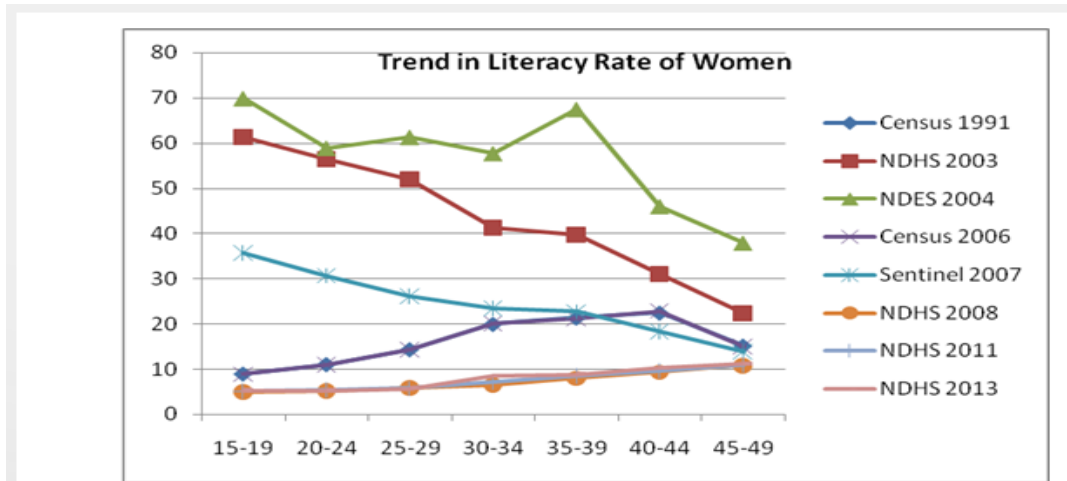


Figure 5. Trend and Level in Age-Sex Specific Literacy Rate for women, 1991-2013

Source: Census 2007, NDHS 2014

Table 2

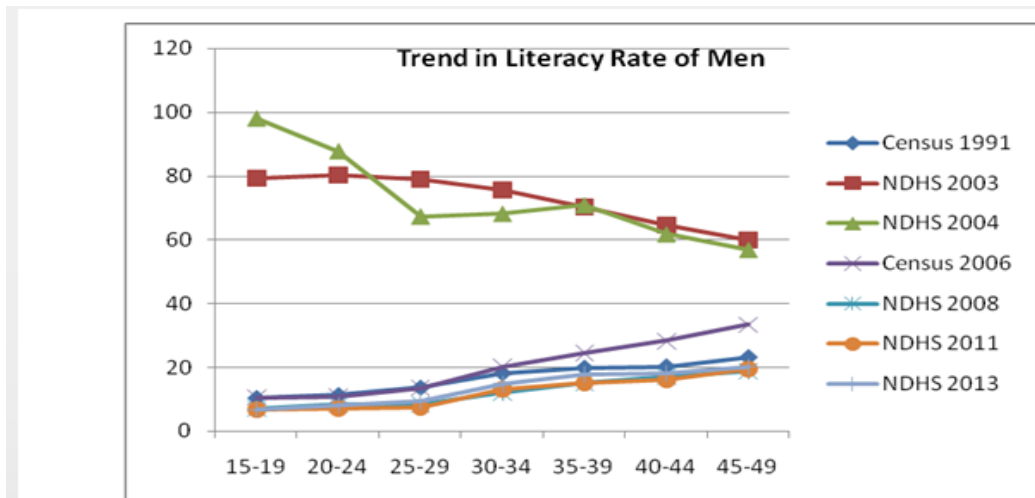


Figure 6. Trend and Level in Age-Sex Specific Literacy Rate for men, 1991-2013

Source: NDHS, 2015

Influence from peer groups can also be attributed as a major cause of child labour. When a child with weak parental upbringing possibly from a wealthy home sees another (a friend) from a wretched background struggling to earn a living through hawking and doing some other menial jobs, the attraction is enough to get the other into the exercise. When he gets into it and makes his first pittance, the desire to get assumes a centre stage in the child's life that where no serious effort is made to refocus the child on the part social development, such situation is capable of shattering the child's future. This is because it will come with some other negative attitudes like stealing when he could get as he used to get, joining of wrong group, drinking and smoking with an attendant life of gangsterism. Duffield (2010) has it that peer influence is a very serious issue with a potent force that every parent should endeavour to be mindful of or else the future of their children will be shattered in their very eyes over time.

People's value is also a major influence in the lives of children. This has to do with the values held by some families on how to nurture and handle children around them. Some parents and guardians from different families are inherently laden with wickedness as a way of life. With their inherent cruelty, the children are influence by such living them to face worse music in the process (Amosu, 2017). Some force their domestic workers into the streets to hawk with the belief that it is a normal way of life. Some see it as a way of boosting their meagre incomes when the pittance are remitted to them at the end of the day racketing. A typical example of these could be seen in the Northern part of Nigeria where the males (almajiri's) are settled with a begging plate and forced into the society to beg and earn their living.

Most children are influenced by their various environments into doing some of these tedious jobs. These environments are seen in the Northern and South-South part of Nigeria, where poverty becomes your next door neighbour and to compound the situation, too many children are found in these environments (Olisa, 2016). In the Northern part, especially among the Moslems who are possibly subsistent farmers can marry as many wives as four each with so many children he can hardly feed. On the long run, they will resort to street help by hawking or becoming professional beggars, hovering around the length and breadth of the nation in search of what to eat to appease their immediate needs. Some are left to assist their mothers in executing their small street businesses. At the end of the day, these children end up becoming nuisance to the society and a disaster to themselves due to lack of proper upbringing owing to poor educational background. On the part of those living at the South-South part of Nigeria, especially those residing at the **riverine** areas, where you have too many children of which some are fatherless (due to unguarded emotional escapades of the multinational oil workers) are exposed to lives which their environment generates like fishing, hunting and farming at very tender ages, of which their parents cannot do much to ameliorate. These leave too many concerns because they are according to Varma (2000) alienated from the society. Having captured the causes of child labour in the above section, it is germane for us to look at the various ways child labour has affected the future of the Nigerian child.

#### **Developing the Nigerian State Through Child Development Programmes**

Looking at the state of the Nigerian nation on the effect of child labour, it is imperative to note that over the years the government has made tacit effort to curb the spate and the spread of child labour at every nook and cranny of the country. It has assumed constitutional protection and provisions on how to limit the spread of child labour which is beginning to threaten the social existence of Nigeria over the year. To that extent, we shall be stating the various efforts and policies made by government at preventing child labour and related crime in Nigeria.

**Government Policies.** Several policies and legal measures have been adopted by the Federal Government of Nigeria with the objective of improving the welfare of children by eradicating or reducing the problems associated with child labour. However, some of the legal measures and policies have been uncoordinated, not well implemented and largely un-enforced. Although, there is no direct labour policy in the country, there are several policies and programmes which cover a wide range of subjects including education, health, population, social development, child welfare and youth (UNICEF, 2001), which if implemented would have positive impact on the child labour problem.

The fact that Nigeria is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of Child (CRC), and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, implies that Nigeria has an indirect policy on child labour. Article 32 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Article 15 of the OAU Charter on the Rights of the Child address child labour in similar ways. State parties are to recognise the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous as to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. Article 4 of the CRC and Article 1 of the OAU charter require state parties to undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures for implementation of the rights recognized in these conventions. State parties are to also provide for minimum ages for admission to employment, appropriate regulation of the hours and conditions of employment and appropriate sanctions to ensure effective enforcement of the conventions. *Nigeria's ratification of several ILO Conventions, which have bearing on child labour, is an indication of its commitment to eradicate or reduce the problems of child labour. Out of 30 ratified ILO conventions, five specifically relate to child labour.* These are: Convention 15 on Minimum Age (in Trimmer and Stokers, 1921), Convention 16 on Medical Examination of Young Persons (in Sea, 1921). Convention 58 on Minimum Age of Admission of Children Employment at Sea (1936). Convention 59 on Minimum Age (industry, revised 1937). Convention 123 on Minimum Age for Admission to Employment Underground in Mines (1967). In as much as these conventions are not contravened in the public sector, there are scattered evidences that they are violated in varying degrees in the semi-formal and informal sectors.

**The Labour Act 1974.** There are several provisions in the Labour Act of 1974 designed to limit age of admission to employment in various occupations as well as limits of working hours and exposure to hazards. Section 59 stipulates that, no child shall (a) be employed or work in any capacity except where he is employed by a member of his family on light work of an agricultural, horticultural or domestic character approved by the Minister or (b) be required in any case to lift, carry or move anything so heavy as to be

likely to injure his physical development. Provisions of the Labour Act (1974), include section 59(2), which forbids a young person under the age of 15 years to work in any industrial undertaking. Work in technical schools or similar situations are exempted.

Section 59(3) says, inter-alia, a young person under the age of 14 years may be employed only; (a) on a daily wage, (b) on a day to day basis, and c) so long as he returns each night to his parents' (or guardian) residence. Section 59(4) stipulates that no young person under the age of 16 years shall be employed in circumstances in which it is not reasonably possible for him to return each day to the place of residence of his parents. Section 59(6) establishes that no young person shall be employed in any employment, which is injurious to his health, dangerous or immoral. Section 59(8) prohibits a young person under the age of 16 years from working for a long period of 4 consecutive hours and from working for more than 8 working hours in any one day. It is noteworthy that no provision in the labour code protects young domestics. It merely states that the commissioner may make laws, which might address the problems. However, he has never done so. This has also contributed towards making the desire to reduce the spate of child labour in Nigeria. The ugly scenario that attends it anchors so much on the weakness of the intuitions of government to live up to its bid in making sure that the desires and aspirations of a future Nigeria is ensured.

***The Constitutional Provision on Fundamental Human Rights.*** Even the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has lots of provision on the rights of the Nigeria child. The constitution is the most important document providing protection for all citizens including children. There are provisions in Chapter 1V, sections 33 to 46 of the 1999 Constitution which contains fundamental rights that are very essential. For instance, section 34 (1) states that "Every individual is entitled to respect for the dignity of his person and accordingly; (a) no person shall be subjected to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment, (b) no person shall be held in slavery or servitude, and (c) no person shall be required to perform forced or compulsory labour".

***National Legislation.*** Ayua and Okagbue (1996) noted that in respect of the work or employment of young persons below the ages of 18 years, the Labour Act divided children into several categories. It provides that: no child below the age of 12 years is to be employed or allowed to work in any capacity except to the extent that he may be employed by a member of his family on light work of an agricultural, horticultural or domestic character (section 58 (1)). A child below the age of 14 years may only be employed on a daily wage basis and must be able to return each night to the place where he resides with his parents or guardian (domestic service excepted) (section 58 (3)). Subject to certain specified exceptions, a child below the age of 15 years may not work or be employed in any industrial undertaking or in any floating vessel (sections 58(2) and 60). A person below the age of 16 years may not be employed in circumstances where he cannot return to the place of residence of his parent or guardian except there is a written contract to this effect, and the arrangement is approved by an authorised labour officer. Persons in this age range may not be employed to work underground on machine work or in a public holiday. They may not be required to work for longer than four consecutive hours without a break or be permitted to work for more than eight hours a day.

Looking at the above, it is obvious to note that the constitution is not ignorant of the plight of the Nigerian child. What hampers the protection of the Nigerian child against living prospective lives anchor so much on policy implementation? Thus, in as much as we have all these on ground over the years, we are still trapped in the web of a continuous making of policies to address the spate of child labour which has to a large extent eaten deep in the fabrics of our nations life. The above showed that there are regulations to protect the right and privileges of the child in Nigeria but the worrisome situation questions why above all these regulations, Nigerian child still suffer as if such never existed. The issue that begs for comprehension is why the series of regulations and law when the government cannot provide the necessary framework to contain these abuses that has hit the red button. It has to a large extent shown that the society and government has no value and future for the Nigerian child, especially the helpless ones in the society. What it means is that pretentious structures are set to aid the abuse on the Nigerian child and this deflates that claim on the rights of a child in Nigeria.

### **The Nigerian Child and the Future of Nigeria**

Under this section, we look at the synergic arrangement that united the Nigerian child in line with labour and how the linkage affected their future. In as much as we have tried to a large extent to look at the nature of child labour and its import on development, the study evaluated in detail the practical linkage to ascertain its impact on the development of Nigeria. The obvious remains that Nigeria children have been made to pass through odd situations, all in a bid to improving the economic lots of their masters. It has thus provided ample room for further exploitation of Nigerian child which runs contrary to the development of the Nigerian state. The implication is so enormous to the extent that it affected both the individual and the society.

On the part of the individual, it manifests itself in areas like psychological, social and economic aspects of their lives. For clearer explanations on that it is obvious to note that; These children have nothing to live for and so they can be manipulated easily by wrong hands. They grow up without love and dignity and so they later become tools of destruction in the society by extremists and terror groups. These children are vulnerable; they grow up to be the ready tools for terror groups who will find them so easy and cheap to brainwash. When they grow up they feel alienated from the society, thus breeding unnecessary class divisions among the people. It diminishes the value man and social respect and makes the people unsure of their fundamental human rights and how it is protected in the society.

Table 3

**Table**

Characteristic	Age-sex Educational attainment by various surveys.														
	Women								Men						
	Census 1991	NDHS 2003	NDES 2004	Census 2006	Sentinel 2007	NDHS 2008	NDHS 2011	NDHS 2013	Census 1991	NDHS 2003	NDHS 2004	Census 2006	NDHS 2008	NDHS 2011	NDHS 2013
15-19	13.2	18.3	19.0	12.3	22.4	15.5	14.8	15.8	26.3	25.8	26.0	27.1	18.8	19.0	17.8
20-24	17.7	14.6	14.3	16.8	21.1	13.3	11.4	10.4	33.1	20.2	19.9	34.3	13.6	13.8	12.9
25-29	20.2	15.0	15.9	20.2	17.8	11.2	12.7	12.2	35.6	19.0	18.1	37.5	17.9	17.5	16.9
30-34	21.5	14.4	14.4	20.6	14.4	12.6	11.2	10.6	37.3	16.8	15.9	38.3	22.8	21.9	21.8
35-39	35.1	14.2	15.1	34.2	11.7	16.1	15.1	19.1	45.3	16.8	17.9	45.3	21.3	21.4	22.3
40-44	29.1	15.0	14.8	28.2	9.8	16.3	14.8	16.8	58.1	17.2	16.3	59.2	21.8	21.9	20.8
45-49	13.2	12.2	11.9	12.3	20.4	5.7	13.5	15.8	26.3	17.2	17.0	26.3	18.8	17.3	18.7

Source: Nigeria 1991 census, NDHS 2003, NDES 2004, Nigeria 2006 census, Sentinel 2007, NDHS 2008, NDHS 2011, NDHS 2013.

Source: Mutil, 2014

According to Okafor (2010:50), such act has multiple effects on the state which include the following: Abuse of human rights, Social exclusion and crime, Retardation of human capital. Undermining governmental authority. From the position of Okafor, such act violates the fundamental right of all persons to life, liberty and the security of the person. He further noted that the African governments with Nigeria in focus do not exercise control over their territory, but the operation of child labour and trafficking...undermined public safety. Many child prostitutes and street children are exposed to diseases through criminal processes. Thus, this has far reaching impact the future of Nigerian child. The table captures the central argument of the study.

Table 4

Age Group	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		2015						
0 – 5	35	48.5	27	28	50.9	24	28	53.8	9	3	25	38	32	45.7	49	36	42.2
6 – 15	114	67.3	95	201	67.9	77	167	68.4	345	145	29.6	101	245	70.8	245	354	59.1
16 – 25	96	79.6	92	386	80.8	43	337	88.7	127	265	67.6	134	497	78.8	155	233	60.1
26 – 35	24	74.7	49	75	60.5	5	49	90.7	14	39	73.6	15	56	78.9	34	58	63
36 & Above	3	82.4	0	5	100	2	6	75	5	12	70.6	8	26	76.5	11	26	70.3
Unclassified	7	50	7	11	61.1	0	11	100	0	0	0	0	11	100	0	0	0
Total	279	72.5	270	706	72.3	151	598	79.8	500	464	48.1	296	867	74.5	494	707	59.9

Source: NAPTIP

Source: NAPTIP, 2016

Talking about societal, it is no denial of facts that it jeopardises 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, is known as “hazardous work”. It thus manifests itself in areas notably; It makes them (under-privileged) look like nuisance to the public and the society. The implication is that those with sound parental upbringing tend to be more focused that they seem to be eliciting the jealousy of those who do not have the privilege. It debases the social essence to the extent that various forms of social vices are learnt and transferred from one child to the other, thereby placing the society at the risk of building a viable society that will be man-oriented. It weakens the value and quality of human beings in the society to the extent that is a prevalence of inferiority complex amongst the people becomes unavoidable. This speaks negativity about the nation in various ways which limits the process of development in the state.

From the above logic, it is now obvious to note that child labour has a very negative influence on the state and the individuals that populate the society to the extent that the image of a country is made smaller before the comity of other nations. This is dependent on the fact that its psychological implication affects the horizon and future of such nation where such practices is at the highest point.

### Conclusion

In sum, it is obvious to note that child labour is a very serious developmental impediment in Nigeria. Various homes are trapped in its web and the influence on the society is so visible and audible with its attendant dangerous effects as we examined above. The various hues and cries by various stakeholders to pacify its dangerous effects have yielded not good result as the practice continues to spread like a wild fire at every nooks and crannies of the state. It is consequential to note that in developing Nigeria through a child development programme, the worst forms of child labour should be eliminated. The

reason remains that development centres on man and where the future of the child is left to trail in jeopardy; every effort made by government becomes a mockery of development. The perplexing and vexed circumstances that compound the whole exercise anchors on its various forms. This has shown that what the government pretends to be preaching on how to improve and better the lots of Nigerian child is inherently laden with a political and economic conundrum. These complications emanated from the weak policy enforcement on the part of the government.

From history, it evident that this practice did not start in recent times, but has been as old as the state and government has been making several policies and laws all to no avail. In the long run it was discovered that, its implementation has been a major setback to achieving a progressive society where the future of the Nigerian child is guaranteed. The various indices and submission by different group are exemplary evidence to confirm the distorting effects of child labour in Nigeria. Thus, except serious effort is made to ameliorate the permeating effects, the Nigerian state will be far from achieving its very objective of building a future for the Nigerian child. This is because most adults in our society who suffer similar fate have their future and aspirations chattered to the extent that some see themselves as nuisance to the public due to the fact that they are not able to contribute meaningfully to the society when they see what their mates have achieved. As such, it reflects on the level of their child upbringing where they lack the capacity to change the status quo. Also, in many ways, its negative effects have been channeled into disaster processes that do not speak well for the society.

### **Recommendations**

From the academic voyage and conclusions stated, it presents an informed platform to elicit solutions from the existing problems of the society on the abuse of child's rights in Nigeria. This has negatively hampered the process of socio-political development in Nigeria as regards to giving a Nigerian child a hope and future. Therefore, having gone this far in articulating the major concerns of this study, we are led by empirical evidence to posit the remedial blueprint on how child labour could be addressed in Nigeria. This will go a long way in easing the attendant political tsunami that confronts the Nigerian state which has assumed a multifarious dimension, endemic in nature and are relatively intractable considering the window dressing approach given to it by the government. This was occasioned by the non-responsiveness and the irresponsibility of the holders of power which has attracted a lackadaisical enforcement that has continued to frustrate the whole exercise.

On that note, this study recommends that; (a) There should be a serious re-orientation exercise, if possible door to door sensitization programme to educate every family especially those living in the interior villages on the negative effects of child labour and its consequence on the image of the nation. This because the class character of those living in the interior villages deserve continuous sensitization to loosen the rigid chains of exploitation seen in them. (b) Concerted effort should be made by government to make poverty a history in Nigeria through well sponsored mechanised agricultural projects and programmes. (c) Policy implementation: there should be a serious effort by the



government and its various agencies trusted with the responsibility of policy implementation to brace up with the challenges of commitment in the enforcement of stipulated policies to the letters. Most times, it is not the policies that matter but the implementation of those policies that is the problem. (d) There should be transparency in making and implementation of government policies so as to reflect the interest of the masses it was designed for, if not it will remain a stillborn.

## References

- Abubakar, A. (November 18, 2009) "Nigeria Struggles to Curb Rise in Child Beggars." telegraph.co.uk [cited April 23, 2012]; <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/expat/expatnews/6596232/Nigeria-struggles-to-curb-rise-in-child-beggars.html>.
- Adeokoya, AE, and Fasina. O. O. (2007) "Occupational Safety Needs of Farm Children in South West Nigeria." *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(no. 1):18-22;
- Amucheazi, E. C. (1979). "Problem of Development in Nigeria". Nsukka: UNN, Division of General Studies.
- Ayua, I. A. & Okagbue, I. ed. (1996). *The Rights of the Child in Nigeria*. Lagos: Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies
- Duffield, C. (September 28, 2010) "Nigeria's Children 'Robbed of a Future'." bbc.co.uk [cited April 27, 2012]; <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/worldafrica-11427409>
- International Labour Organization (2013) What is child labour? <http://www.ilo.org/ipecc/facts/lang--en/index.htm>
- International Labour Organization - IPEC (2007). *Rooting Out Child Labour from Cocoa Farms Paper No. 2: Safety and Health Hazards*. Report. Geneva.
- International Labour Organization –IPEC (2009). *Economic Community of West African State Project Document (September 2009)*, cover page, 40-42.
- International Labour Office. *Children in hazardous work: What we know, What we need to do*. Geneva, International Labour Organization; 2011.
- NAPTIP. (November 2008) *National Policy on Protection and Assistance to Trafficked Persons in Nigeria*. Abuja, Government of Nigeria.
- National Policy on Protection and Assistance to Trafficked Persons (2016). *Understanding the challenges of Child Development*. Abuja: Nuga Publishers
- Nwoye, K.O. (2000). *Corruption, Leadership and the Dialectics of Development in Africa: An explanatory Perspective*. Enugu: Associated Printing & Litho Co. Ltd.
- Rodney, W. (1972). *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. London, Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications.
- Simon, L. "Poverty and Girl-Child Hawking in the North." *tribune.com* [online] August 3, 2011 [cited April 23, 2012]; <http://tribune.com.ng/index.php/gamjifeatures/26025-poverty-and-girl-child-hawking-in-the-north>.
- UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports. Third and Fourth Periodic Report: Nigeria*, 76.
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics.( March 29, 2012) *Gross intake ratio to the last grade of primary.Total.;* <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Pages/default.aspx?SPSLanguage=EN>.
- UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.(June 21, 2010) *Consideration of Reports Submitted byStates Parties Under Article 44 of the Convention: Concluding Observations: Nigeria*. Geneva.

- Report No. CRC/C/NGA/CO/3-4. [http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/treaty/CD\\_Concl\\_Obs\\_2010/CRC/54th%20session/CRC-CNGA-CO-3-4%20\(e\).pdf](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/treaty/CD_Concl_Obs_2010/CRC/54th%20session/CRC-CNGA-CO-3-4%20(e).pdf).
- UNICEF. *Information Sheet- Nigeria Country Programme- Child Rights Act*; August 2007. [www.unicef.org/wcaro/WCARO\\_Nigeria\\_Factsheets\\_CRA.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/wcaro/WCARO_Nigeria_Factsheets_CRA.pdf).
- UNICEF. (December 12, 2007) "Child Slaves Work Nigeria's Mines." iol.co.za [cited April 27, 2012]; <http://www.iol.co.za/news/africa/child-slaves-worknigerian-mines-unicef-1.382443>.
- UNICEF. (December 26, 2007) "At a Glance: Digital Diary: Nigerian Street Children Tell their Stories of Life without Security." unicef.org [cited May 15, 2012]; [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/nigeria\\_42282.html?q=printme](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/nigeria_42282.html?q=printme).
- UNICEF, *Information Sheet- Nigeria Country Programme- Child Rights Act*.
- U.S. Department of State. "Gabon," in *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2011*. Washington, DC; June 27, 2011; <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2011/164232.htm>.
- U.S. Department of State. "Nigeria (May 24, 2012) " *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2011*. Washington, DC;; <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/>
- U.S. Department of State. "Nigeria," in *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2011*. Washington, DC; June 27, 2011; <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2011/index.htm>.
- U.S. Embassy- Abuja, *Reporting, February 19, 2008*, para3.
- World Health Organization. (2011) *Child-Fosterage Promises and Trafficking in Children for Domestic Work in Nigeria: Issues and Implications for Policy*. Research Summary. Geneva; Report No. WHO/RHR/HRP/11.05. [http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/2011/WHO\\_RHR\\_HRP\\_11.05\\_eng.pdf](http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/2011/WHO_RHR_HRP_11.05_eng.pdf).
- 1999 Constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria. Nigeria. Minting Publishers.

### Biographical Notes

**Jude C. OKAFOR**, *Ph.D, B.L.*, is a Reader in the Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, NIGERIA. His area of specialization and research interest is public administration. Email: [Okaforc51@yahoo.com](mailto:Okaforc51@yahoo.com).

**Uzodinma C. OKAFOR**, *Ph. D.*, is a Lecturer in the Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, Madonna University, Okija Campus, near Onitsha, NIGERIA. His area of specialization and research interest is international relations. Email: [foreverdimma@gmail.com](mailto:foreverdimma@gmail.com)

**Ignatius I. NGINI** is of Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, NIGERIA. Email: [Ignatius.ngini@gmail.com](mailto:Ignatius.ngini@gmail.com)