

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Parental socio-economic status as correlate of child labour in Ile-Ife, Nigeria

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**This study investigated the relationship between parental socio-economic status and child labour practices in Ile-Ife, Nigeria. The study employed survey method to gather data from 200 parents which constituted the study population. Pearson Product Moment Correlation and t-test statistics were used for the data analyses. The outcome of the study showed that a significant relationship exists between parental socio-economic status and child labour (parents of low income status showed significant high tendencies toward child labour practices than their high income counterparts). The study has implications for policy makers both in the educational and the economic sectors.**

**Key words:** Nigeria, socio-economic status, child labour, child abuse.

## INTRODUCTION

Child labour is one of the greatest social ills facing Nigeria today, and Africa in general. Various researchers have paid not a little attention to the problem in their researches (Okeihialm, 1984; Omokhodion, Omokhodion and Odusote, 2005; Togunde and Richardson, 2006; Osiruemu, 2007; Togunde and Carter, 2008; Olawale, 2009). The general findings of these researchers revolve around the fact that child labour is prevalent in Nigeria, and that drastic measures will be required to curb its ugly trend. Child labour exposes children to series of dangers. Togunde and Carter (2008) examined some of the consequences of child labour on working children. These include malnourishment which makes them susceptible to diseases, musculo-skeletal disorders from heavy labour, physical and sexual abuse, educational problem due to absence from and lateness to school. Many factors have been studied and found to be responsible for child labour practices. For example, Togunde and Carter (2008) attributed the phenomenon to several factors like globalization, population growth, socialization and violence within the family structure.

Other studies of interest on the phenomenon of child labour in the African context include that of Osiruemu

(2007) who considered the nature and implications of poverty of parents on child labour in Benin City, Nigeria. The outcome of the study revealed a significant positive relationship between poverty of parents and child labour. The analysis of data on the occupation of parents in the said study shows their concentration in low paying jobs. The study of Togunde and Carter (2008) earlier reviewed was in support of the fact that parents engaged their children in child labour in order to augment family income. They also found that the parent of child labourers tend to have low educational, occupational, and income attainments. Corroborating these findings was another study earlier conducted by Togunde and Richardson (2006) on household size and composition as correlates of child labour in urban Nigeria, various household size and composition were examined as implicating factors in child labour. The study concludes that most working children come from households with low parental socio-economic status. Other demographic variables like parental educational achievement and number of children were found to influence child labour practices. In his study of parental socio-economic status as correlates of child abuse and neglect in Ibadan, Nigeria, Olawale (2009) reported a significant difference in the abuse and neglect of students from lower socio-economic background than those from higher socio-economic background. He also reported a significant difference in

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child abuse and neglect among parents of low educational status than parents of high educational status.

Child labour in Africa may indeed not be an index of poverty or underdevelopment. In the eye of an African traditional person, what is called child labour in the west is to him an opportunity to introduce the child into occupational training early in life. This may have compounded the issue of child labour and restrict researchers from attributing its escalation strictly to exploitation as the reason that motivates parents to subdue their children to child labour. Traditional parents often believe that the earlier such training commences, the better for the child, hence parents introduce their children to their (parent's) chosen careers early in life. For this reason, it will not be an unusual sight to see a five year old drummer, shoe maker or cloth-weaver, depending on the parents chosen profession. Meanwhile this does not reflect the perspective of the urban and the Western parents who believe in and practice the contrary. This has therefore made the issue of child labour rather a global phenomenon whose notoriety has attracted the attention of important world bodies as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

Because of the negative developmental effect of child labour and its obvious prevalence in Nigeria, the Federal Government in 2003 enacted a "Child Right Act" which was designed to regulate, streamline and monitor the requisite rights and privileges accruable to the child from parents, community-based social obligations and government social responsibilities (Rights of the Child in Nigeria, 2005). In 2000, the ILO estimated that 23.9% of children ages 10 to 14 years in Nigeria were working (United States Department of Labour, 2002). Also in 2006, UNICEF reports that about 15 million children under the age of 14 are working across Nigeria. This shows that child labour is real in Nigeria. Indices of child labour in Nigeria include street vending, street begging, shoe shining, car washing, bus conducting, phone call hawking, domestic servants and child prostituting. The most frequently observed phenomena of all these indices in Ile-Ife are bus conducting, selling of sachet waters, and mobile phone call hawking. Apart from the fact that Nigeria is a source, transit and destination country for trafficked children, there exists intra-national trafficking in Nigeria. Children and youths from states like Edo, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa and Cross Rivers are trafficked to other states within the country as labourers. Recent developments have shown that Nigerian youths are now being trained abroad for terrorist attacks while early child marriages are also rampant. This is evident in the botched attempt by the Nigerian Umar Abdulmultallab at bombing an airliner from Amsterdam to Detroit (United States) on Christmas day of 2009 (Olaniyonu, 2009). A Nigerian serving senator and former governor was also reported to have contracted a marriage to an Egyptian minor of 13 years old (Ogunbayo, 2010).

A wide range of actions are now being put in place both locally and internationally to stem a further development of child labour, abuse and trafficking. These actions include law enactment directed at curbing child labour practices, investigation and prosecution of offenders, prevention of the act of child labour, protection of and assistance to victims of child labour. Because of the negative developmental effect of child labour and its obvious prevalence in Nigeria, Universal Basic Education (UBE) was introduced by the Nigerian government in 1999. Among the objectives of the scheme was the need to promote access to education, reduce the incidence of school drop-outs, provide alternative education to drop-outs, and ensure the acquisition of occupational skills in school and effectively, nurture the child's mind towards taking on communal role. There are other programmes initiated by the Nigerian government like National Programmes against Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) which are also aimed at curbing the ugly trend of child labour. As recently as 2002, the United States Department of Labour (2002) reported that governmental agencies will be implementing a USDOL-funded ILO-IPEC (United States Department of Labour funded International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour) national program to eliminate child labour, and participates in a USDOL-funded ILO-IPEC regional project to combat the trafficking of children. Also the ILO internationalized the campaign against Child Labour, with the adoption of Convention 182 on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour in 1999 (Komolafe, 2008). Other world bodies like UNICEF are not left behind in the fight against child labour, and Nigeria had since ratified many of these international instruments that generally affect the rights of the child.

Given the above background, one is encouraged to look at the Ile-Ife environment which, because of its semi-urban settlement pattern, is expected to yield data that may shed more light on the subject matter. The following hypotheses will be tested in the study:

1. There will be no significant relationship between parental socio-economic status and child labour practices.
2. There will be no significant difference between the attitudes of parents of low income status (socio-economic) and high income status (socio-economic) to child labour practices.

## METHODOLOGY

This study used correlational designs to analyze the data collected from 200 parents in Ile-Ife, South-Western Nigeria. The participants were purposively selected within and around the town. The instrument used was the child labour questionnaire developed and validated by the researchers. A pilot study conducted to test the reliability of the questionnaire yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.78. The instrument recorded a concurrent validity of 0.57 with parental bonding scale developed by Parker, Tupling and Brown (1979),

**Table 1.** Socio-economic and personal information of the respondents.

Variable	Group	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	100	50
	Female	100	50
	Total	200	100
Annual family income	Less than \$2000 per annum	74	37
	\$2000 – \$5000 per annum	70	35
	More than \$5000 per annum	56	28
	Total	200	100
Educational status	Primary	34	17
	Secondary	46	23
	NCE/ND	37	18.5
	HND/BSC	55	27.5
	Postgraduate	28	14
	Total	200	100
Occupational status	Self-employed	102	51
	Paid employment	92	46
	Unemployed	6	3
	Total	200	100

considered adequate for validity rating. Parental bonding scale is a 25-item instrument designed to measure parental behaviours and attitudes toward the child. For the purpose of the study, socioeconomic status was measured using the annual income of parents and their educational attainments. Parents with \$5,000 per annum is regarded as high economic status parents, \$2,000-\$5,000 as medium socio-economic parents and less than \$2,000 as low socio-economic parents. These figures were chosen having put into consideration the wage distribution within the Nigerian context. The data generated were tested using percentages analysis for the demographic variables and correlational statistics and t-test statistics for the hypotheses.

## RESULTS

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the participants. There were equal numbers of male and female participants in the study (50% each). The annual family income shows that 37% of the respondents earn less than \$2000 per annum, 35% of the respondents earn \$2000 to \$5000 per annum while only 28% earns above \$5000 per annum. Considering the educational status, 17% of the respondents had primary education, 23% had secondary education, 18.5 had NCE/ND certificates, 14% had HND/BSC certificate while 14% had postgraduate qualifications. Also in terms of occupational status, 51% were self-employed, 46% were into paid employment and 3% were unemployed.

Table 2 presents the summary of participants' responses to the question items. It would be observed

that 88% of the respondents agree with the statement that socio-economic status encourages child labour. Majority (61%) of the respondents also support the question that foster parents engage more in child labour. Only 1% of the respondents agree with the question that well-to-do parents engage in child labour.

Two hypotheses were tested in this study. The summary of the analyses are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

**Hypothesis 1:** There will be no significant relationship between parental socio-economic status and child labour practices.

From Table 3 it could be observed that a significant relationship exists between child labour and measure of socio-economic status. The correlation between child labour and annual income was significant,  $r(198) = -0.32$ ,  $p < 0.001$  just as the relationship between child labour and educational status was significant  $r(198) = -0.445$ ,  $p < 0.001$

**Hypothesis 2:** There will be no significant difference between attitude of low income parents and high income parents toward child labour practices.

Comparing the mean scores of respondents in the above table shows that parents of low socioeconomic status have higher mean scores in child labour ( $M = 48.23$ ,  $SD = 6.92$ ) than parents of high socioeconomic status ( $M = 42.23$ ,  $SD = 7.87$ ). Further analysis of the result using t-

**Table 2.** Participants' responses to questionnaire items.

Items	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Indifferent (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)
Child labour is a normal and welcome practice	58 (29)	69 (34.5)	27 (13.5)	32 (16)	14 (7)
Our culture encourages child labour	14 (7)	33 (16.5)	47 (23.5)	67 (33.5)	39 (11.5)
Child labour helps the child to be smart	26 (13)	68 (34)	43 (21.5)	48 (24.5)	14 (7)
The economic reality of today encourages child labour	5 (2.5)	9 (4.5)	10 (5)	68 (34)	108 (54)
Child labour is means of training the child for future challenges	31 (15.5)	90 (45)	47 (23.5)	28 (14)	4 (2)
Foster parents indulges more in child labour	12 (6)	32 (16)	34 (17)	69 (34.5)	53 (26.5)
A working child makes a responsible adult	15 (7.5)	73 (36.5)	46 (23)	61 (30.5)	5 (2.5)
Poor parents engage more in child labour.	3 (1.5)	23 (11.5)	27 (13.5)	87 (43.5)	60 (30)
Child labour is part and parcel of our culture	2 (1)	38 (19)	87 (43.5)	54 (27)	19 (9.5)
A child that works grows up to be wise	8 (4)	64 (32)	49 (24.5)	68 (34)	11 (5.5)
Child labour will make a child to be street wise	6 (3)	38 (19)	55 (27.5)	78 (39)	23 (11.5)
Child labour exposes a child to a lot of dangers	2 (1)	23 (11.5)	19 (9.5)	70 (35)	86 (43)
Child labour will impede a child's education	1 (0.5)	20 (10)	25 (12.5)	71 (35.5)	83 (41.5)
Well-to-do parents indulge more in child labour	81 (40.5)	68 (34)	39 (19.5)	10 (5)	2 (1)

**Table 3.** Relationships between socio-economic status and child labour practice.

Correlations		Labour	Family income	Highest education attained
Labour	Pearson correlation	1	-0.321**	-0.445**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000
	N	200	200	200
Annual family income	Pearson correlation	-0.321**	1	0.277**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000
	N	200	200	200
Highest education attained	Pearson correlation	-0.445**	0.277**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	
	N	200	200	200

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Table 4.** T-test showing the significant difference between attitude of parents of low socioeconomic parents and high socioeconomic status parents toward child labour practice.

Variable	N	X	SD	df	t-cal	P
Low socioeconomic status	74	48.23	6.92	128	4.61	<0.05
High socioeconomic status	56	42.23	7.86			

test found a significant difference between parents of low socioeconomic status and high socioeconomic status in their child labour practice,  $t(198) = 4.61$ ,  $p < 0.001$  (Table 4).

## DISCUSSION

This study has provided a significant insight into the link between parental socio-economic status and child labour. These findings are relevantly contradistinctive to the findings of Osiruemu (2007) which also found a significant relationship between poverty of parents and child labour. Such an outcome as this is not unlikely in a socio-economic environment with high negative economic indices. Child labour is therefore exploited as a means of making the child augment the family income by contributing in their own little way to the economic survival of the family. The findings also support the study of Olawale (2009) which found a significant relationship between parental socio-economic status and child abuse. There are several possible reasons for such an outcome like this. The customary penchant of the rich and wealthy to give good education to their children because of their access to wealth speaks true of what obtains in Nigeria. Most poor children and youths necessarily have to engage themselves in one form of labour or the other in order to fulfill the financial demands of schooling. It is no news in Nigeria that many children combine job with schooling while those in the villages may need to return to farm each day immediately after school. The rich in Nigeria like those in the other lands often do not need to engage their children in labour practices; they rather engage the children of the less privileged ones to serve them.

The result obtained when the attitudes of low income parents and high income parents to child labour was compared shows that there is a significant difference in child labour practices to the advantage of high income parents who indulge less in the practice. Togunde and Carter (2008) and Obidigbo (1999) did make similar discoveries in the various studies they conducted even as far back as 10 years ago, the socio-economic indices that contributed to the outcome of their studies appear still potentially prevalent today. One would indeed be justified to conclude that the trend of the socio-economic malaise continues to be more pervasive. These indices include unemployment, corruption in government establishments, turbulent political practices, poor public education

fundings, frequent worker strikes and loss of jobs as was warranted by the recently global economic meltdown that spread across world economies starting from the West.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes by asserting that poverty is a major cause of child labour, abuse and neglect in Nigeria. Therefore, the clarion call is directed at the government to intensify efforts on revalidating Universal Basic Education in a manner that will enable children of low income parents have access to formal education at a critical formative stage of education delivery. This should come with full tuition-free both at the primary and secondary school levels. The economic situation of the country also needs to be revamped so as to enhance the standard of living of the citizenry and a law should be enacted mandating all school-age children not to be found hawking during school hours. Also the Federal Government should, as a matter of urgency, ensure that the child right law is made operational and effective in all states of the federation, while attempts should be made to redistribute the national wealth such that a greater percentage is directed at taking care of citizen's welfare. Governmental and non-governmental organizations should also endeavour to create care centres for the children of the destitute and the less privileged. Finally government and corporate bodies should create more jobs which will alleviate poverty, and the National Assembly must ensure that a social security bill is passed into law.

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