

## **Relational Analysis of Child Labour and Juvenile Entrepreneurship in Nigeria**

**Monica Nnenna Agu**

*Department of Entrepreneurship Studies*

*Nasarawa State University Keffi, Nasarawa State, Nigeria*

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### **Abstract**

**T**his paper examines the relationship between child labour and juvenile entrepreneurship. The specific objective of the study is to determine the extent to which child labour leads to juvenile entrepreneurship. Considering the economic situation of present day Nigeria, absolute abolition of child labour in Nigeria is impossible and will lead to further hardship for parents/families that depend on the supportive income of these children. Some children involved in child labour have become juvenile entrepreneurs, therefore as alternative to child labour the nation should encourage and implement juvenile entrepreneurship to reduce the pandemic of child labour. Some of the successful entrepreneurs in our society were involved in one form of child labour or the other. This proves that some of the children who were the victims of child labour developed entrepreneurial spirit and skills that now manifest in their role as successful businessmen, industrialists and politicians. The methodology used in this study is desk research and oral interview. It is observed that child labour has helped in developing the entrepreneurial skills of some children through the hard way. It has also been used as way out of abject poverty for poor parents. Further observations indicate that absolute abolition of child labour in Nigeria is impossible and will lead to further hardship for parents/families that depend on the supportive income of these children. The study therefore recommends that governments at Local, State and Federal levels should provide educational facilities where such children can receive formal education for at least two to four hours every day. The programme should be made flexible enough to accommodate their other entrepreneurial schedule. The study further recommends that children who are victims of child labour should be encouraged to learn useful skills that may lead them to becoming great entrepreneurs.

**Keywords:** *Child labour, Juvenile entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship, Development, Economic situation*

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*Corresponding Author:* Monica Nnenna Agu

### **Background to the Study**

Child labour is deep rooted in poverty. The low earning power of the parents is a reflection of the deteriorating economic situation in Nigeria, which unsurprisingly has led many households to utilize the labour of their children in order to augment the family income (Togunde and Arielle 2008). Absolute abolition of child labor in developing country like Nigeria is like being between the “devil and the deep blue sea”. The reason is that child labour is born out of circumstance rather than culture. Most children involved in child labour are victims of circumstance and mostly from very poor homes. Their parents have little or no education and no sustainable means of livelihood. These parents rely on the contributions of their children's labour for survival. Togunde and Arielle (2008) found the need to supplement the financial well-being of the family as the major reason why the children participate in economic activities at such tender ages. These findings corroborate the previous literature that found poverty to be the major cause of child labor in Africa (Aderinto, 2000; Togunde and Carter, 2008; Ali, Shahab, Ushijima and De Muynck, 2004; Johansson, 2009).

Since poverty is stated as the major cause of child labour in most of African nations of which Nigeria is part of, the choice is between child labour and poverty. Considering the present economic situation and recession in most African countries, the prevalence of child labour has increased. As economic situation gets worse day by day, abolition or even control of the prevalence has become more difficult because of the hardship it will further create for the poor parents who depend on the income of their children to survive.

The fall in standard of education and unemployment which is exacerbated by the recession, as well as lack of qualitative and labour sensitive education has also increased the prevalence of child labour in Nigeria. It has gotten to a stage where some of the children that developed useful skills through involvement in child labour are better off than some of the children that had formal education. This is mostly seen in South-East, Nigeria. This paper looks at the relationship between child labour and entrepreneurship development of the victims of child labour and the effect it has on both the child and economic development of the nation.

### **Concept of Child labour**

Many scholars have given different definitions of child labour. It is difficult to have a generally acceptable definition of child labour since it differs among societies, as observed by Omokhodion & Odusote (2006) who state that Africa and Asia do not consider the work of fifteen years old person as a child labour, child labour is viewed as process of skill development. They distinguish between child labour and child work, where child work is considered to be a part of the children's training to be responsible adults while child labour is thought to be exploitative. Omokhodion and Odusote (2006) argue that any work done outside the home by a child exposes the children to environmental hazards which may affect their health and safety therefore it is classified as child labour.

Bhat (2010) as cited in (Osment 2014) asserts that the definition of child labour is not simple because it includes three difficult concepts to define, which are “child”, “work” and “labour”. He claims that the term of childhood can be defined by age but in some societies, people cease to be a child at different ages. The onset of puberty occurs at different ages for different people. Suda (2011) sees child labour as any type of work done by children that is dangerous and harmful to children's health and at the same time hinders their education. Moyi (2011) refers to child labour as any work done by children that has low wages, long hours, involves physical

and sexual abuse. ILO (2004) argues that despite the fact that child labour is difficult to define, it depends on the type of the job and, if the age of the child is under eighteen and interferes with the children's education and development. It is therefore defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development.

UNICEF (2007) defines child labour as 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. It is any form of labour that obliges children to leave school prematurely; or requires them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work. The Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act, (1986) defines a child as any person who has not completed his fourteenth year of age. Part II of the act prohibits children from working in any occupation listed in Part A of the Schedule, which include among others, domestic work, dhabas & hotels, catering at railway establishments, construction work on the railway or anywhere near the tracks, plastics factories and automobile garages. ILO (2004) states that not all works that children do are severe, only works that hinder children's schooling and affects their health physically and mentally are categorized as child labour.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (2017) defines child labour as “work that is inappropriate for a child's age, affects children's education, or is likely to harm their health, safety or morals. FAO (2017) emphasizes that not all work carried out by children is considered child labour. Some activities may help children acquire important livelihood skills and contribute to their survival and food security. However, much of the work children do in agriculture is not age-appropriate, is likely to be hazardous or interferes with children's education. For instance, a child under the minimum age for employment who is hired to herd cattle, a child applying pesticides, and a child who works all night on a fishing boat and is too tired to go to school the next day would all be considered child labour.

### **Concept of Entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurship is a dynamic process of vision change and creation. It requires an application of energy and passion towards the creation and implementation of new ideas and creative solutions. Essential ingredients include the willingness to take calculated risks in terms of time, equity, or career; the ability to formulate an effective venture team; the creative skill to marshal needed resources; and fundamental skill of building solid business plan; and finally, the vision to recognize opportunity where others see chaos, contradiction and confusion (Kuratko and Hodgetts, 2004 :30) as cited in (Tende 2015). Stevenson and Jarillo (1999) sees entrepreneurship as a process by which individual either on their own or inside organization pursue opportunities without regards to the resources they currently control. Entrepreneurship is the willingness and ability of an individual to seek for an investment opportunities, establish and run an enterprise successfully (Aruwa 2006 : 3) entrepreneurship is all about seeking for opportunities that will lead to the introduction of one or more new products or services in the marketplace. It is a behavioural activity and orientation. The ability to perceive a business opportunity is a function of deep personal knowledge and experience in products and services and market segment of interest (Tende 2015).

Shepherd (2014) sees entrepreneurship as a dynamic process of creating incremental wealth. The individuals who create wealth assume the major risks giving in their time, equity and

career commitment or provide value for some products of services. Emphasizes is laid on value creation by the entrepreneur by receiving and locating necessary skills and resources. Despite lack of consensus definition of entrepreneurship by many scholars, most definitions that entrepreneurship is recognition of opportunities, risk taking, value creation, creation of something new/wealth, initiation of purposeful activities for aim of profit making (Hisrich and Peters, 2002; Awodun, 2005; Ketchen, 2003; Crossan, 2005; Aina and Salao, 2008; Ma and Tan, 2006).

### **Juvenile Entrepreneurship**

Juvenile entrepreneurship is a relatively new concept in the field of entrepreneurship. Gould (1969) mentioned juvenile entrepreneurship in his study “The Relationship Between Delinquency and Four Variables: Delinquent Associations, The Perception of Opportunity, Social Class and Achievement Motivation”. He asserts that working children has high inclination to becoming entrepreneurs. Juvenile entrepreneurship is mentioned as one of the solution to curb the pandemic of child labour, since absolute eradication of child labour has become impossible despite all forms of legislation enacted to prohibit it. Fajimi (2016) states that Child labour is a big problem and will assume a frightening dimension as most parts of the world, especially Africa, slumps into economic recession. He opines that nations can implement juvenile entrepreneurship as an alternative to child labour pandemic.

Juvenile entrepreneurship is the capacity and willingness of young people that are less than 18 years to develop, organize and manage a business venture and assume all the risk and reward that accrue from such venture. Juvenile entrepreneurship creates youth who are innovative and creative and exposes them to opportunities that develop them into becoming great entrepreneurs. Juvenile entrepreneurship mostly starts with family businesses. Children that get involved in the family businesses in the process develop skills which enables them become entrepreneurs and much later in life takeover the control of the business from their parents. Surprisingly, children through their involvement in child labour develop skills, passion, drive and entrepreneurial mindset that enable them manage their own businesses before they become adults.

### **Nature of Child Labour in Nigeria**

Child labour in Nigeria is seen in every part of the country, mostly in the urban areas due to constant rural-urban migration that is associated with increase in population. Every State in Nigeria has her share of incidence of child labour and it has no gender difference. Child labour in Nigeria is more rampant in urban centers due to rapid urbanization (Osment, 2013). It comes in various forms such as street vendors, scavengers, apprentice mechanic, vulcanisers, bus conductor, domestic servants, beggars especially in the northern part of the country, hairdressers/barbers, farm workers, shoe shiners, sales apprentice etc.

Ajakaye (2013) observes that 15 million children in Nigeria engaged in child labour. While the International Labor Organization estimates that out of Nigeria's 80 million Nigeria's children about 25 percent under the age of fourteen are involved in child labour. However, efforts have been made by international organizations to eliminate child labour across the world by adoption of different legislations in many countries including Nigeria to prohibit child labour but it has been an impossible task so far due to the economic benefits especially for low income countries. Child labour contributes to the income of the families in poor homes. Some other issues that brought existence of child labour are poverty, culture, illiteracy and unemployment.

## **Causes of Child Labour in Nigeria**

### **Poverty**

The main cause that induces children to work is poverty. Parents are the decision makers when it comes to what a child should do and shouldn't do. The decision whether a child should go to school or is determined by the parents. If the parent has no meaningful income, they see children as contributors to the family income. These children work for their survival and their families. (Mapaure, 2009) notes that Children work for a variety of reasons, the most important being poverty and the induced pressure upon them to escape from this plight. Though children are not well paid, they still serve as major contributors to family income in developing countries. (Harry and Patrinos 2013) Rena (2009) shows that that poverty and underdevelopment drives child labour. She found that the high prevalence of poverty amongst low income countries increases child labour. Furthermore, children whose parents are low income earners have to work in order to support themselves in school. Child labour provides them means of paying tuition fees and other school expenses

### **Low Quality Education**

Poor quality or lack of educational facilities also contributes to child labor. Many times children seek employment simply because there is no access to schools (distance, no school at all). When there is access, the low quality of the education often makes attendance a waste of time for the Students (Harry and Patrinos 2013) Many schools in Nigeria are inadequately equipped, cases of overcrowding, poor sanitation which affect learning and acquisition of knowledge. Many students go through school without acquiring any useful knowledge or skills that will enable them become employable, as a result, some parents find enrollment of children in school a waste of time and unprofitable. They believe that these children are better off learning skills in an informal manner.

### **Rapid Rural-To- Urban Migration**

Another cause of child labour is increase in rural-urban migration. Harry and Patrinos (2013) asserts that families leave the severity of agricultural working conditions for cities in order to search for economic opportunities that often do not exist. They also observe that in the last 40 years, this movement has been drastic. United Nations (1989) opines that there will be up to 57 percent increase in rural-urban migration by the year 2025. Such increases, coupled with worsening economic trends would force children and their families into urban poverty which in turn would increase child labour. Abass (2014) notes that the nature of rural crisis in Nigeria has reached such an extent and degree that even the peasant has failed to produce enough food for him, let alone produce in excess to be appropriated by the state. Thus, food shortages, lower productivity, lower income and increased poverty have ravaged the rural Nigeria within a very short period of time. Even though these are partly and directly due to the inability of the peasants to have access to fertilizer for the predominant fertilizer responsive HYV crops, inputs and other infrastructural facilities. This created poverty and frustration in rural areas which induced rural-urban drift. Serwadda-Luwaga (2005) many child labourers live in urban poverty, unhealthy poor conditions, slum areas and work in poor environment and works in home, hotels, restaurants etc.

### **Unemployment**

Unemployment leads to poverty, disillusionment, frustration, anger and so many other ills. The unemployment situation in Nigeria is alarming, many jobless graduates are seen in 36 States and Federal Capital Territory roaming the street with no hope of getting employment. Some have taken up jobs that are below their qualifications. This discourages children enrollment in school and encourages child labour.

### **Insecurity of Lives and Properties**

Insecurity in Nigeria has taken a dramatic and sophisticated form. It is all pervasive, witness in all the geo-political zones of Nigeria. The pattern of insecurity in Nigeria has been regionalised: militia groups' insurgency in the north, kidnappers in the eastern and southern part of the country, ritual killing in the west, political and non-political calculated assassinations across the nation. (Finintell 2013). An estimated number of about 2,000 lives have been lost to bomb explosion from 2010 till date. These numbers exclude those that died in other communal clashes and from the swords, guns and machetes of the Fulani Herdsmen.

The destruction of lives and properties leaves in its wake extreme poverty and death of breadwinners. With the loss of lives and means of livelihood of the parents/breadwinners, many children are orphaned with no one to care for them, they are then pushed to seek a living for themselves, younger siblings as well as contribute to family income.

### **Positive Effect of Child Labour on Child's Development**

Melnick (2010) observes that we do not live in a perfect world. She argues that child labor is pervasive for the simple reason that impoverished households who cannot meet their basic needs may depend on the income of their children for survival. In many cases, these families are so poor that every member of their family needs to work. Children are seen as a reliable source of income. Income from children has helped family of low income earners to survive extreme poverty. Sometimes, the income other children are used to take care of their aged sick parent, When they are too weak to earn a living as to be able to afford basic human needs such as medication, food, accommodation etc

In Nigeria, children from poor families work in order to go to school. The money these children earn from work is used to pay school fees, and other cost such as note and text books, pen, uniform and any other necessary fees. Many children have to work in order to be able to go to school and contribute to household income(Osment 2014). ILO (2004) argues that combination of school and work makes school attendance difficult because of the long hours of work which interferes with class or homework. Some studies do not agree with ILO (2004) argument. However, some studies argue that child labour does not have an impact on children's school attendance. Omokhodion and Odusote (2006), argue that child labour and schooling may not be linked because many child labourers who attend school also work, to enhance family income and school fees. Despite free education in many States of Nigeria, some parents cannot afford other direct cost which includes feeding, accommodation, books etc.

Many children help in the family business. These children work with their heart because the business belongs to their families. Children working in family business are not seen only in poor families. Entrepreneurs allow their children to do part time job in the family to train them to take over the business in the future. Working in family business enables children to develop useful skills that will make it easy for them to take over the business in future especially when they have concluded their education. The main advantage of children participating in family is that in the case of death of their parents, they can easily continue where they parents stopped. Cases are abound where workers takeover the business at the death of the owner while the children of the owner is left with nothing.

Children while working for money acquire useful skills and experience that may help them have competitive advantage over children who have not worked all. FAO (2017) believes that some child labour activities may help children acquire important livelihood skills and contribute to their survival and food security. People including children who start working and accumulating a wide range of skills in their early ages will have better job opportunities than those without experience. Furthermore, it is a fact that children circumstances are not the same as each other. Some are from very poor families and their parents really need their aids. Thus, working helps them not only earn money to support their parents but also express their responsibility to their family. (Dung 2013). There are many success stories of children who combined school and work and later become great.

Children roaming around the street of Nigeria aimlessly is a sight we are all familiar with. Some of the children are from very poor homes, their parent cannot take care of their needs, therefore incapable of monitoring their activities. Some are homeless orphans without a place to lay their heads. The conditions of these children push them into criminal activities and sex trade in order to earn money to survive. For these children getting employment of any kind, no matter how strenuous the job is a lot better solution to their plight.

#### **Negative Effect of Child Labour on Child's Development**

Child labour affects proper education of a child. Most children who are involved in child labour have low school performance due to low school attendance and punctuality. They have little or no time to study and find it difficult to complete home work. Considerable percentage of children who are street vendors get involved in motor accident. In their bid to sell their wares, they do not look properly before crossing the road. Some end up dying in the process. Others are exposed to physical exhaustion and pains due to frequent long walk and heavy wares that they carry. Under aged children employed to herd cattle are faced with many health challenges such as cold, pneumonia, snake bite etc. Children are exposed to accidental and other injuries at work. They should, thus, be protected to prevent social, economic and physical harm, which persist to affect them during their lifetime. Such injuries include (ILO 2004)

General child injuries and abuses like cuts, burns and lacerations, fractures, tiredness and dizziness, excessive fears and nightmares, Sexual abuse, particularly sexual exploitation of girls by adults, rape, prostitution, early and unwanted pregnancy, abortion, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS, drugs and alcoholism, Physical abuse that involve corporal punishment, emotional maltreatment such as blaming. (ILO 2004)

#### **Relationship between Child Labour and Juvenile Entrepreneurship**

Though child labour has been widely condemned due to some negative effects it has on child's development, however, some form of child labour creates juvenile entrepreneurs. FAO (2017) observes that some child labour activities help children acquire important livelihood skills which enable them start up their own businesses. Children's participation in income earning activities though largely influenced by poor economic situation of their parents/guardian has enabled the children develop entrepreneurial skills which they manifest in starting their own businesses. This is largely seen in South-East, Nigeria, where children from poor homes are enrolled into apprenticeship through hard work and training become successful entrepreneurs. This indicates that some of children's work engagement which can be described as child labour has given room for entrepreneurship development.

Skills acquired during child labour may translate into significant youth poverty alleviation especially for the children and their poor parents who depend on the children for survival. Many children who work in family businesses develop managerial skills and ability at early age and able to take over the business when their parents are no longer capable to manage it or at the death of their parents. Such that even when their parents die young , these children can with ease manage their parent businesses. It has been observed also that these children due to their involvement in family businesses now acquire the ability to manage businesses effectively and efficiently. Just like women who did a lot of domestic chores, as children have turned up to become better wives by getting used to domestic chores during their childhood as they master the work as adult.

### **Methodology**

The paper adopted desk research. It made use of secondary data obtained from printed journals, textbooks, published reports and statistics, magazines, information from internet as well as oral interview of children and parents who are victims of child labour. Due to the fact that the data collected is mostly secondary, content analysis approach was used to analysed the data.

### **Conclusion**

Child labour has no doubt helped in developing the entrepreneurial skills of some children through the hard way. It has also been used as way out abject poverty for poor parents. Absolute abolition of child labour in Nigeria is impossible and will lead to further hardship for parents/families that depend on the supportive income of these children. Some of the successful entrepreneurs in our society were involved in one form of child labour or the other. This proves that some of the children who were the victims of child labour developed entrepreneurial spirit and skills that now manifest in their role as successful businessmen, industrialists and politicians. However, some negative effect it has on children's development has made it to be discouraged everyway in the world. Striking a balance between child's formal education and labour is a sure way of improving the nation's entrepreneurship development.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the conclusion, the following recommendations are suggested:

Governments at Local, State and Federal levels should provide educational facilities where such children can receive formal education for at least two to four hours every day. The programme should be made flexible enough to accommodate their other entrepreneurial schedule. Children who are victims of child labour should be encouraged to learn useful skills that may lead them to becoming great entrepreneurs.

International organizations should be realistic about the challenges faced by poor families, they should use their resources to develop the victims of child labour entrepreneurially rather than fighting for abolition of child labour. Finally, Parents should use holiday period to send their children to acquire skills that might help them in future instead of sending them to summer school during holiday period.



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