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## EDITORIAL COMMENT

This fourteenth volume of African Journal of Educational Research contains fourteen well-research articles by seasoned scholars in the field of education. These papers are a reflection of the authors' central concern in promoting the quality of education through quality research and publication. The Editorial Board of the journal is therefore, pleased to release this edition as it looks forward to the publication of other editions in due course.

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## CONTENTS

<b>Relationship between teacher performance and teacher job satisfaction among Junior High Schools of Sekondi - Takoradi (Shama-Ahanta East) District of Ghana</b>	
- Dominic Kwaku Danso Mensah (Ph.D.) and DBA .....	1
<b>Relationship between motivation and job performance: A Case Study of the University of Mines and Technology, Tarkwa, Ghana</b>	
- Anthony Afful-Broni, Angelina Kwasi.....	10
<b>Computer Literacy and Attitude to Computer as Predictors of Chemistry Teachers' Utilization of Computer Technology in Selected Nigerian Schools</b>	
- Ogunleye B. O. ....	20
<b>Effect of integrative teaching approach and students level of proficiency in English language on students' achievement in Senior Secondary School Mathematics</b>	
- Benson Adesina Adegoke.....	30
<b>Some Home and School Factors as Determinants of Secondary School Students Achievement in Saki West Local Government Area</b>	
- Fehintola, J.O., Olaogun, M.O.....	42
<b>Developing Listening Skill in Children for Communication, Interaction and Learning</b>	
- Esther Oduolowu, Amosun Moses Dele.....	50
<b>Interaction effect of brain-based instructional strategy, mathematics anxiety and cognitive style on students' attitude towards mathematics</b>	
- Awolola, Samuel Adejare.....	57
<b>Commercial sex work in tertiary institutions: A challenge to all</b>	
- Atolagbe S.A.....	69
<b>Group learning and gender effects on pre-service teachers' social interactions and achievement in social studies in South-West Nigeria</b>	
- Ajitoni, S.O., Olubela, R.A.....	78
<b>Test anxiety as a correlate of academic achievement among senior secondary school students in Ogbomosho Area of Oyo State</b>	
- Akanbi, Samuel T. ....	89
<b>Trends in the development of private universities in Nigeria: 1999- 2011</b>	
- Lawal, B.O., Ekundayo, T.A.....	98

**School Type, School Location And Students' Learning Outcomes In Geography**

Folajogun Falaye F. V, & T. A. Onayingbo..... 109

**Economic Status, Family Size and Educational Status of the Child as Determinants of Child Labour in Ondo State, Nigeria**

- Ajala, E.M..... 116

**Appositive Noun Phrases, Conflict and Power Shift in Ola Rotimi's *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi***

Bidemi Okanlawon & Akinmade Akande..... 126

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## Economic Status, Family Size and Educational Status of the Child as Determinants of Child Labour in Ondo State, Nigeria

By  
Ajala, E.M.

### Abstract

The study investigated the correlations among economic status, family size and the educational status of the child and child labour in Ondo state, Nigeria. Three hundred and ninety-two working children, whose ages range between 9-14 years and working across various industries (hawking, apprenticeship, household servants and farming) were randomly selected from three local government areas that reflect urban, semi-urban and rural settings. A guided questionnaire titled "Economic status, Family size, Educational status and Child labour" with five sections, each section measuring an aspect of the dependent and independent variables, was the main instrument used in collecting data. Findings showed that all the independent variables have relative contribution to child labour in term of their magnitude thus: economic status,  $\beta=.266$ ,  $t=4.903$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ; educational status,  $\beta=.201$ ,  $t=4.043$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ; family size,  $\beta=.210$ ,  $t=3.652$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . It is recommended that the advocacy role of industrial social worker in the establishment of good welfare policies, correct pricing of labour, free and compulsory education will reduce child labour yet adequate labour working force will be guaranteed in the workplace.

Key words: Economic status, Family size, Educational status, Child labour, Industries

### Introduction

The increased emphasis on the reduction of poverty among the vulnerable population, including children, draws attention to the issue of working children (child labour). Poverty can form a major basis for child labour, however, some social factors encourage child labour. Zelizer (1985) stated that child labour was often commended as necessary for building character and discipline and it is valuable for industrial competition. In other culture, in developing countries, child labour is already integrated with other family work to the extent that its dimensions remain unknown except when intimately looked into.

In Nigeria, most of the issue of child labour has not been majorly traced to the technically, industrialized/manufacturing sectors as in the developed world. This is understandable because most of the child abuse has not been culturally unacceptable. Child labour was considered a part of the socialisation process in which all members of the family together with the community polled their labour together

for the group's sustenance (Adejuwon & Balogun, 2000). There is difficulty in Nigeria in differentiating between what constitute acceptable child labour which serve the purpose of socialisation and exploitative child labour. However, exploitative child labour occurs when a child is made to engage on a regular basis on some income yielding or productive yielding activities for which the primary beneficiaries are persons other than themselves showed that most assumed socialized child labour are exploitative child labour in Nigeria, all with the intent to supplement family income and for the survival of those connected to the child. Based on this concept, the National Child Labour Survey(2003) estimated that there are about 15 million children engaged in child labour in Nigeria.

Olufadewa (2002) established that child labour in Ibadan metropolis can be classified into three: those working in public places such as streets and markets; those in cottage industries (Bus conductors, hairdressing, carpentry etc); those working as domestic servants in

private households and farms. According to Basu and Tzannatos (2003), three international conventions, UN Convention on Rights of the child (1989); the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 182 on Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999) and the UN Millennium Declaration (2000), showed concern for banishing global poverty and investing in children. It is against this background that this study looked at the influence of economic status, family size and educational background of the child on child labour in Ondo State, Nigeria.

Child labour, according to Otis (2004), refers to the paid employment of children who are not physically mature or who are below a legally identified age. The minimum age for employment may vary from 14 to 18 years, depending on the nature of the work and the child labour standards of the country in which the work is performed. There is always a confusion between child labour and child work. Child work, at whatever age, refers to adult-guided activities whose focus is the child's maturation and enculturation into the family and society of which he or she is a part (George, 1990). Although, the child's development of educational, cultural, domestic, or vocational skills is often of immediate economic benefit to the child, the family or society, it need not be. Child work is developmental in nature; it is not driven by the impoverishment of the child and his or her family or by market forces. However, child labour is synonymous with child exploitation because the activities may be hazardous; interfere with child education; or be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development (Convention in the Right of the Child, 1989, p. 10). According to the ILO's international programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC programme Document, 1993), few human rights abuses are so unanimously condemned, while being so universally

practised, as child labour. By any objective measure this issue should be high on the global agenda, but in practice it is surrounded by a hall of silence and perpetuated by ignorance.

The incidence of child labour is a widespread phenomenon in developing countries, including Nigeria (Basu & Van, 1998). In developing countries an estimated 250 million children are engaged in child labour. Studies on child labour (Cockburn, 1999; Swaminathan, 1998; Basu & Van, 1998; Sunthronkajit, Kaiyunta, Varanarn & Varatechakongka, 2002) showed that poverty level (i.e. household income) contribute to the existence of child labour in industries. For example, Cartright and Patrinos (1999) confirmed that 21% of household income in Bolivia was contributed by children, 21% in Tamil Nadu, India (Usha & Devi, 1997). Nagaraj (2002) confirmed that rising income to parents takes children away from work and into schooling. At macro level, as nation became richer, the incidence of child labour tends to fall. When Thailand experienced average annual growth rate of 9 percent, child labour rate was halved to 21 percent (Tzannatos, 2003). Edmonds (2001) finds that rising living standards cause child labour to decline. He finds that increased household income explained 94 percent of the decline in child labour for households at the poverty line.

Another contributing factor to child labour in developing countries, Nigeria inclusive, is the family size. Large family size will implicitly lead to lower per capita income, hence the need to supplement with extra income from child labour. Furthermore, excess labour from such large household are released from parent economic activity into other forms of economic activity for payment. The household size significantly determines child labour in agricultural activities by releasing them from household to work on farms (Nwaru, 2005; Ukoha, Nwaru & Emea, 2007). This



view is evident in the way children are made to hawk materials on the major streets (a distributive industry), work on farms for pay (an extractive industry) and serve as domestic servants to others (a service industry) for pay. In the view of Nwaru (2005) child labour is a resultant redeployment of excess labour as a result of family size into other sectors of the economy for optimal utility. In Nigeria, and in Ondo State in particular, apart from diversification into agriculture, other sectoral diversities are in the areas of hawking, apprenticeship, domestic servants and construction companies.

The educational level of both the parents and the child have impact on the occurrence of child labour. A person who receives more education (in terms of schooling) as a child grows up is expected to have higher human capital (Basu, 1999; Hazan & Berdugo, 2002; Emerson & Souza, 2003; Bell & Gersbach, 2001). Under normal condition in capital and labour markets, higher human capital will mean a higher labour income, hence, a person who supplies more labour and gets less education as a child will grow up to be poorer as an adult and his subsequent children will be sent to work, thereby perpetuating child labour across generations (Basu & Tzannatos, 2003). Furthermore, across siblings in poor families, child labour is encouraged, in that one child's labour makes it possible for another child to go to school (sibling complementarity). Emerson and Souza (2002) stated that adolescents forgone earnings are a direct outcome of education not acquired. So child labour inhibits the acquisition of human capital through loss of education (Rosati & Rossi, 2003). Therefore to minimise child labour there is the need to make school available and affordable to school age children.

#### Objective of the study

The purpose of the study is to look at the joint effect of economic status, family size and educational background of the child

on child labour. Further look will be taken at the relative effect of each of the independent variables {economic status, family size and educational background of the child} on the dependent variable {child labour}. Three research questions were used for the study:

1. What is the pattern of the inter-correlational relationship between independent variables (economic status, family size and educational background of the child) and child labour.
2. What is the joint effect of the independent variables (economic status, family size and educational background of the child) on child labour.
3. What is the relative contribution of the independent variables (economic status, family size and educational background of the child) to child labour.

#### Methodology

The descriptive survey research design of the ex-post facto type was used for the study. The study was carried out in Ondo state among children experiencing child labour. (Ondo State can be classified into urban, semi-urban and rural settings using population and economic activities. It is made up of eighteen Local Government areas). Three Local Government areas were purposively selected. Akure-South Local Government was selected to represent the urban setting, Ile Oluji Local Government to represent semi-urban setting and Odigbo Local Government to represent the rural setting. From each chosen local government, three electoral wards were randomly chosen and from each ward fifty respondents were randomly chosen thereby making a total of one hundred and fifty working children. Their age ranged between 9 to 14 years with a mean age of 10.7 years and standard deviation of 1.54.

Due to the low level of education of participants, a guided questionnaire tagged

“Economic status, Family size, Educational status and Child labour” was used for data collection. The questionnaire consist of five sections. Section A measured demographic variables such as age, sex, religion, family status, and educational status of parents. Section B, C D and E measured the effect of economic status, family size, educational status of child on child labour respectively, with responses in a 4-poin rating scale of strongly agree(SA)=4; agree(A)=3; disagree(D)=2; to strongly disagreed (SD)=1. Section B measures economic status. It consist of five items adapted from Adler(1997) questionnaire titled “Network on socio-economic status and health socio-demographic questionnaire”. The adapted scale yielded Cronbach alpha value of 0.85. Section C measures the effect of family size. It consist of five items adapted from “Integrating socio-economic determinant of Canadian women’s Health questionnaire” of Vissandjee, Desmeules, Cao and Abdool(2004). The adapted scale yielded Cronbach alpha value of 0.87. Section D measures the educational status of the child. It is self constructed questionnaire whose reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained from test-re-test method of two weeks duration. Section E measures child labour. It consist of five items adapted from ISPCAN & UNICEF(2006) “A collaborative multi-country instrument assessing violence

against children questionnaire”. The adapted scale yielded Cronbach alpha value of 0.75.

With due permission from Masters and parents of the participants, cross-sectional data were collected from the children that cut across hawking, apprenticeship, domestic servants and agriculture. The researcher with two research assistants administered four hundred and fifty questionnaires which were returned the same day of completion. Three hundred and ninety-two questionnaires were found useable for data analysis. This gives 83.11% response rate. Descriptive statistics of simple percentages, standard deviation and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation were used to determine the relationships among the variables. Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the joint and relative effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable.

### Result of findings

Research Question 1: What is the pattern of the relationship between independent variables (economic status, family size and educational background of the child) and child labour.

Table 1 showing the descriptive statistics and inter-correlational relationship among variables

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Child labour	Economic Status	Family size	Educational Status
Child Labour	11.5153	2.9978	1.00			
Economic status	11.3214	3.0868	.482	1.00		
Family Size	9.3316	2.7970	.480	.622	1.00	
Educational Status	9.5255	2.9182	.423	.424	.518	1.00

Table 1 shows the correlation coefficients between all the independent variables (economic status, family size and educational background of the child) and dependent variable (child labour).

Economic status( $r = .482$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), Family size( $r = .480$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and Educational status of the child( $r = .423$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) correlated significantly with child labour. Family size ( $r = .622$ ;  $p < 0.05$ )

and Educational status of the child ( $r = .424$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) significantly correlated with Economic status. Educational status of the child ( $r = .518$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) significantly correlated with Family size. The three independent variables correlated positively among themselves. Meaning that family size can affect economic status and the level of education of the child. Furthermore, economic status had great impact on the education of the child. The inter-twined effect of the independent

variables no each other and the subsequent correlation with the dependent variable (child labour) as shown on the table above.

Research Question 2: What is the joint effect of the independent variables (economic status, family size and educational background of the child) on child labour.

Table 2: Summary of Regression Analysis Between the Independent Variables and child labour ( $R = .561$ ;  $R^2 = .314$ ;  $AdjR^2 = .309$ ; Standard Error Estimate = 2.4921)

Source of variation	Df	Sum of squares	Mean square	F-ratio	Sig.
Regression	1104.134	3	368.045	59.259	.000
Residual	2409.774	388	6.211		
Total	3513.908	391			

Table 2 shows that the joint effect of the three independent variables (economic status, family size and educational background of the child) when put together as a composite construct yielded a coefficient of multiple regression ( $R$ ) of .551 and a multiple correlation square ( $R^2$ ) of .314. This shows that 31.4% of the total variance in child labour is accounted for by the combination of the three independent variables. The analysis of variance of the data produced an F-ratio value,  $F_{(3,388)} = 59.259$ ;  $p < 0.05$ . The

finding thus confirm that economic status, family size and educational background of the child have an influence on child labour.

Research Question 3: What is the joint contribution of the independent variables (economic status, family size and educational background of the child) to child labour.

Table 3 showing the relative contributions of the independent variables on child labour

	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	4.519	.542		8.330	.000
Economic status	.259	.053	.266	4.903	.000
Family size	.225	.062	.210	3.652	.000
Educational status	.206	.053	.201	4.043	.000

Table 3 further shows the relative contribution of the independent variables on child labour. The variables contributions in term of their magnitude is presented as follows: economic status,  $\beta = .266$ ,  $t = 4.903$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ; educational status,  $\beta = .201$ ,  $t = 4.043$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ; family size,  $\beta = .210$ ,  $t = 3.652$ ,  $p <$

0.05. Thus, all the three independent variables contributed to child labour.

#### Discussion of findings

In general, all the independent variables (economic status, family size and educational status of the child) correlated significantly with dependent variable (child labour). The result of the regression analysis indicates that economic status, family size and educational status of the child have significant correlation with child labour. The extent to which each of the independent variable influenced child labour are reflected in the t-ratio as shown in Table 2.

The result showed that the economic status of parents determines child labour. That poor parents engaged in child labour for economic gains. For instance, in an agrarian society where farmers or parents income are low relative to their needs child labour becomes prevalent with the aim of assisting their parents. This is in line with the finds of Raji (1999) and Okpukpara and Odurukwe (2003) that parent's income in agrarian society has positive and significant influence on child labour because as parents income decrease, the more the children participate in farm activities so as to supplement the meagre income of their parents.

Family size has effect on child labour. The higher the family size, the more the probability of sending their children for child labour. For instance, in Nigeria, those from the rural sites send their wards to participate in farming activities or send them to the urban centres (labour market) to look for jobs like housemaids etc. so as to meet the necessary needs of the family. This so because more mouths are to be fed, due to large numbers, coupled with low income level (poverty). This in line with the findings of Nwaru, (2004) and Mwebaze (2004) that the larger the family size, the lower the per capita income and the need for extra income which motivate parents to send their children to work.

Furthermore, the finding showed that poverty and poor educational quality of the child are determinants of child labour. Poverty discourage schooling and instead

encourage early age working so as to enhance the family income. This is confirmed by the findings of Raji, (1999), and Jacoby and Skoufias, (1997) that household use child labour as an instrument for coping with income variability.

### **Recommendations**

Findings from the study have useful implications for the industrial social workers. Industrial social worker should endeavour to play the advocacy role to see to the correct pricing of labour at the workplace. That is, they should ensure that parents working in industrial organisations are adequately remunerated so that their income will be able to cater well for their children. The implication is that child labour, as a source of reimbursement for family livelihood, will be drastically reduced. Parents who have enough income on their own will prevent their children from unnecessary child labour, such parents will encourage schooling and human capital development for future income in children at older ages.

Industrial social workers should work on credit creation and insurance markets for parents at the workplace. This will allow parents to fall on these policies during bad times. They can borrow at reasonable terms, so they need not send their children to work to help the household ride out of the rough patches. There has been link between available credit/insurance market and reduction in child labour (Baland & Robinson, 2000; Ranjan, 2001).

Another intervention strategy which social worker can introduce to policy makers is counselling/advocacy for good welfare practices such as rewarding of both parents who withdraw their wards from working and reward children who go to school rather than working. This is a kind of supportive measures to accompany a child's withdrawal from child labour.

Since researchers (Adejuwon & Balogun, 2000; Green, 1990; Ebigo, 1988 and

Martiner, et. al., 1994) have found that child labour has negative influence on the psychological health and physical development of children, social worker should bring to light and awaken the public consciousness of both the children who work and their parents the danger child workers face. Professional services like that of social workers, psychiatrist, family therapist are required to correct the damages that child labour may have caused to the psychological health and development of children who have been involved in child labour (Black, 1998).

### Conclusion

Child labour cannot be eliminated in the foreseeable future, but policies and programs can be adopted to reduce and humanize it (Bequele, 1992; Fyle, 1989; Myers, 1991; Pollock, Landrigan & Mallino, 1990). It is imperative that the government or its agents should establish policies that call for the promotion and enforcement of universal compulsory education. Historical experience of industrialised nations demonstrates a direct relationship between the establishment and enforcement of compulsory primary school education and the reduction of child labour (Weiner, 1991).

There is need to raise public awareness as to the existence of child labour, the various forms that it takes and their consequences. In many countries child labour is taken as a way of life, and no distinction is made between it and child work. Public understanding is necessary so that child labour is known to be harmful to the physical, emotional, academic and moral development of children. Relevant child labour legislation must be developed, improved and enforced. Law negating child abuse should be promulgated and a creation of movement for change must be set in motion. The movement should involve government agencies, media, communities, social workers and non-governmental organisations involved in

human rights, women's issues and child issues.

Economic pressure should be advocated and imposed on the economy practising child labour through international boycotts of products produced via child labour. This has been used successfully in India in which there was the boycotting of Indian carpets produced by child labour in Germany in 1991 and then spread to Switzerland (Foreign Labour Trends, 1993, p. 4). Therefore, as a result of globalisation of the world economy, all policy programmes that will influence the dropping of child abuse should be employed.

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