

THE TRIPLE BURDEN OF CHILD LABOURERS: IMPACTS ON EDUCATION

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Abstract

Studies on child protection describe workloads on children involved in child labour as a major issue and serious impediment on their educational achievement and other aspects of their development. This present research aims to examine the educational impacts of triple burden of work on children's education understanding of the impacts of triple burden of work experienced by 15 working children of same ages 7-14 living in metropolitan cities, of Egor and Oredo in Edo State, Nigeria. The study is qualitative using the narrative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the various experiences of children on the basis of poor school attendance, participation at school and non-completion of assignments. Although the socio-economic contexts of parents influence the engagement of children in income earning, interestingly, working children do not always benefit from such work circumstances. Using the thematic data analysis, it was observed that the engagement of children in income earning, housework and schooling negatively influence their academic outcomes as a result of time and work pressure. This thus, requires greater attention for further studies and intervention measures.

Keywords: Child labour, triple burden of work, impact on education, learning outcomes

Introduction

Children engaged in income earning face greater work load due to additional work at home and school. Thus, a question that arises is whether children are being overworked as a source of support to their households. Ensing (2010) indicates that working children encounter more work pressures than their non-working counterparts. This study underscores children's multiple burdens of work and its adverse consequences on their education. Children involved in child labour are exposed to various arduous environments and activities for long hours, which they are incapable of coping with. Hence, they

encounter detrimental transactions and have their moral, social, educational and childhood compromised. Togunde and Carter (2008) indicate in their study that recognising the consequences of workload on children is a facilitating aspect of advancing strategies to confront the phenomenon of child labour. UNICEF's (2007) report across countries suggests that children aged 5-11 are engaged in work for 1 hour a day; and those aged 12-14, 4 hours a day, and their participation in household chores collectively are burdensome. Working children are said to engage in income generating jobs for between 4 and 7

hours daily during weekdays as well as 8 to 12 hours daily during weekends besides school work demand. These responsibilities of income generation and household chores combined with their education invariably place a triple burden on them.

Ensing (2010, p. 9) states that the "ideal workload of child labourers can only be determined when the hours of work and household chores are included." Similarly, Mitik and Decaluwé (2009) indicate that children's burden of work involves all the tasks performed, including households chores, schooling and income generation. Essentially, the intensity of their work load is substantially increased as they suffer numerous impacts academically. Therefore, in this study, the complexity of children's work was considered and how their various responsibilities impacted on them collectively. The way in which child labour influences on children, involve the type of work they do, the duration, intensity, and frequency of work, hence they are also presented with various effects. In the following sub-sections, some children speak of how the activities they performed impacted on their educational well-being.

Child labour is a phenomenon faced with numerous consequences, such as negative impact on children's education. The impact of work on schooling differs from child to child. Although children's engagement in income earning endeavours are viewed as support to the families; however, it disrupts their education. The children's narratives demonstrate how they struggle to adjust with working, performing their household tasks and schooling. Research conducted by Bhalotra (2003, p. 49) asserts that there is "heavier burden of work on school-going children considering the time and efforts that they exert at paid work and housework".

Grootaert (as cited in Togunde & Carters, 2008, p. 175) indicate that "child labour has some harmful effects on children's school attendance, grades, homework, literacy and leisure time". The impact of workload on children's school participation, performance, homework as well as their ability to cope is described by participants in the practical accounts in subsequent sections below.

Methodology

The study adopted the qualitative research approach; it draws on working children's accounts of their experiences, concerns and perceptions on their work pressures from three domains of work within their households, outside to earn and schooling work (Gilgun & Sands, 2012).

Aim of the research

The major objective of this study is to examine the impacts of triple burden of work on children's educational attainment from the perspectives of the children involved in child labour in Benin City, Nigeria.

The research questions

The research questions in this study are:

- What are the experiences of working children, with regards to income generating activity, housework and schooling?
- What are the impacts of children's triple burden of work on their educational attainment?

Scope of the study

The study was conducted in two metropolis of Edo State, specifically, Egor and Oredo local government areas respectively.

Sample and sampling technique

In this study, purposive sampling was used to select 15 working children between ages 7 and 14 years males and females from two local government areas for participation in semi-structured interview. Selection was

based on willingness and the consents of parents/guardians as well as that of children to participate in the research from the two local metropolitan areas. In order to establish rapport, two visits were made to each of the child participants and with their parents/guardians, which helped to build trust and the guarded the researcher's pensive ability. Given that the study is not focused on generality of findings but rather on developing a comprehensive understanding of the impacts of multiple work burdens on children from their own perspectives, hence the number of participants was not of overriding significance. The key criterion for inclusion was that child participants were working children within the localities who were enrolled in schools.

Research instrument

One interview guide was prepared for the 15 respondents who are all children of school age, since it is the same information it is to obtain. The interview guide was subsequently validated by three experts working with child labour issues and researchers; modifications were made based on their suggestions.

Interview guide for the semi-structured interview: Questions focused on the nature of work and activities children were engaged with, duration of work and number of tasks performed. Opinions were also gathered from children with regard to the consequential effects of the triple burden of work experiences on their education.

Methods of data analysis

In this study, data was analyzed qualitatively by adopting the thematic analysis procedures provided by Braun and Clarke (2006). The application of the thematic data analysis linked with the ecological perspective facilitated an in-depth understanding of the

experiences of children. The Braun and Clarke's (2006) analysis for attaining convergence of empirical knowledge is a six-phase approach, which include (1) Phase one - familiarizing yourself with your data; (2) Phase two - generating initial codes; (3) Phase three - organising themes; (4) Phase four - reviewing themes; (5) Phase five - defining and naming themes; (6) Phase six - producing the report. Thorough attention was committed to reflection on the way children interacted and think about their experiences and views regarding their weighty tasks and development. Consequently, the data collected was verified and the trustworthiness established by utilizing the audit trail to ensure the research is audible and replicable (Koch, 2006). Additionally, data triangulation was achieved by matching the findings with literature in order to improve research credibility (Shenton, 2004). Whilst confirmability was achieved by demonstrating that the findings were not imagined but can be connected to the data (Padgett, 2008) with thick descriptions in the interpretations.

Data Presentation

This study examined the impacts of children's triple burden of work on their education. The following findings were derived from the data analysis.

Triple burden of work and children's non-attendance at school

A noticeable way in which children's workload impedes their education is by non-attendance at school. Despite the financial benefits of income generation, most of the children expressed their dissatisfactions, since it limited their presence in school and possibilities for participating in school activities. Three of the children indicated that they were not permitted to go to school on some days, as a result of the pressure to

work. As Isoken, thirteen years old girl states, "Sometimes I am not allowed to go to school, because of work at the shop, both arranging and selling of items". Limiting the presence of children in school in this way substantially diminishes their chances of building on their learning capabilities, which supports academic excellence. For Child A and B the extent of the academic deprivation was so intense that they were made to remain working even when it was clearly challenging for them. They describe:

Child A: "I am responsible to work at my mother's shop every day. It is challenging during my school days. I wake up at 5:00am to do my house work and also help to prepare the food we sell, after school I work in the shop. Sometimes I do not go to school, that is whenever my mother need to restock....and I will not learn that day, even when I am sick, it doesn't change my mother's decision".

Child B: "I am not happy as I am not always in school..... Every Monday and on our popular market days I will be off from school twice that week. The only time I am allowed to go to school Monday to Friday is when I am writing my examinations. I also assist to work at home, it is quite difficult for me, since I am working and schooling at the same time, but there is nothing I can do".

These narratives by the child labourers aptly illustrate how child labour completely restricted their participation in school. Not only are the children requested to carry out their home chores and work after school but also they are required to remain away from school to work occasionally. This

subsequently impedes their academic development. During my field visits, I noticed child A and B worked during school hours when most children were in their classes. It pricked my heart, to see the children's routine work daily; one would wonder when they learn at school. These situations offer illustrations of how the weight of work on children could constitute a barrier to their being present in school, thereby weakening their academic fulfillment. Researchers found that "children working either outside or inside their households generally have less schooling time than non-working children" (Amin, Quayes & Rives, 2006, p. 1282). When children are denied access to school, it is unlikely that they will partake in all learning activities like their counterparts.

Given that earning from the children's work is crucial to the survival of their households, some children on their own decide to absent themselves from school in order to contribute to the family income. For example, Child C mentioned, "Sometimes I do not go to school to enable me generate money for my family, if I do not work there may be no food for everybody in the house". This shows how children sacrifice their schooling for financial gain, since their household depends on their earnings. Hence, children due to their sympathetic feeling for their families sometimes devote more time to work at the cost of their studies. This situation is linked to child D's case below. Child D indicates how his priority of collecting iron scraps impacted on his ability to attend school consistently. He explains:

"I work every day to provide for my family and my schooling demands. It is quite difficult that I hardly have time for my school. For instance, after school I go straight to work from afternoon till evening.

Sometimes I go to school twice or thrice a week, because I need to work all day for more money. Most times I am also required to help fetch water for the house, some evenings”.

Child D's narrative describes how rigorous he works daily and skips school some days for work. This situation shows that children's determination to earn money makes them work strenuously. The impact here is that it discourages school attendance. If children feel their earning is necessary for the sustenance of their households, commitment to work and absenteeism from school is likely, due to the love for their families. Researchers in Ghana confirm that the “responsibilities of children to support their families place their education as a second fiddle, as school and work are often in conflict, thereby hindering their regularity at school” (Amu, Akaba, Oduro & Quarcoo, 2014, p. 16). Children seem to consider their work as priority, thus compromising regular attendance at school. Hence, less schooling and more work commitment is likely to weaken their chances of obtaining an education.

Triple burden of work and children's lack of punctuality at school

The process of attending school while engaged in work and punctual in school is extremely complex. Although children desire to be educated, they are sometimes not prompted to school. This could hinder the realisation of their educational aspirations. For instance, Child E and Child F attend school late on a regular basis, which is an obstacle for them accessing the appropriate school services. These children miss lessons due to their commitment to work. Two children state:

Child D: “I do not go to school

early at times, since I had to vend at the market... sometimes instead of going to school, my mother tells me to go out and vend. When there is no food at home, I must hawk very early in the morning, when I return I often go late to school. I like school, so at times I lie [smiles] that I will be flogged in school if late, but my mom will not listen to me”.

Child E: “My aunt's shop where I work opens from 7.00am to 8.00am and then 2:00pm till 8:00pm every day, on the days I go to school. In the morning I sweep our flat, then leave for the shop, before going to school....most times I do not go early to school, especially when some of my customers will not want to leave the shop on time, I usually miss some classes and morning assembly”.

It emerged from these narratives that due to the extent of children's work commitments, they were unable to go to school on time. These situations also show how desperate children are to be educated. Some even lie in order to get to school early. When I explored how often they were late at school, they indicated twice and barely once a week. If children are denied the opportunity to be punctual and participate in morning lessons, they are likely not to benefit totally from schooling. Amu, et al., (2014, p. 25) further confirm that “most children who work are often not punctual to school, due to the option to work.” Limiting children to tasks, without value for their school time has negative impact on their study outcome. If children work continuously in this way, they may not achieve well in school. Edmonds and Pavcnik (2005) indicate that the demands on

children to help prevent household financial constraints, increases their time allotted to work, thus, some go late to school and sometimes are absent from school.

Triple burden of work and children's lack of participation at school

Apart from being regular at school, one of the most salient ways in which workload impacts on children's education is their ability to concentrate and participate in class. Research by Bhalotra (2003, p. 53) argues that "even when work activities do not prevent children from attending school; it may reduce their study time or tire the children to the point of impairing concentration and learning". Three of the children interviewed described how their various tasks overwhelm their functionality at school, which was a serious hindrance to their learning. The children reveal how they were unable to focus on class activities:

"Child F: I am not performing well at school because I do not have time to study and nobody teaches me at home. Even when I try; I end up sleeping I failed and repeated primary 3 because I did not do well in my class work and examination. I am not happy with this".

"Child G: Sometimes I am not able to concentrate on my school work as my work disturbs me, when in class I will be thinking of how I will work after school. Sometimes I will be too tired...this makes me not to understand what I am being taught. I do not like the work".

Child H: "I do not contribute in school because my work affects me. This makes me angry. Most times I sleep in class and I am not able to listen to my teacher... because I do

all the housework and the work at the shop alone".

These children share their frustration about the hindrance they experienced as a result of work, which created setbacks in their studies. These situations illustrate that the children's activities for long hours was tiresome and exhausting, with little or no time for rest. Hence, they were distracted and could not focus at school, which is indicative of the way in which children's education is compromised for work. If children pay more attention to work rather than their studies, it is likely to hamper their alertness in school, thus diverting their attention on learning. Nicolaou and Durieux, (2005, p. 8), confirm that "work does interfere with the school performance of children, thus contributing to poor learning outcomes". The extreme level of putting children to work affects their learning outcomes. This contributes to poor academic performance and achievement.

Triple burden of work and children's non-completion of homework

Not only does child labour affects children's performance at school, it also impacts on their homework. The extent to which the multiple responsibilities assumed by children impacted on their education is also evident in their inability to engage in homework. Some children articulated frustration about their limited time at home due to other tasks, which hindered their ability to work on their school assignments. For some children, working provided them with little space to study at home, since they were drained and unable to stay awake to undertake their homework. Below are some accounts of children's work experiences and the difficulties they encountered doing their homework. For instance, Child I and Child J recount how they encountered difficulties attending to their home work:

Child I: *"My work is more difficult to cope with during school days. I try to do my homework in the school sometimes, but I cannot... due to work after school, from 2:00pm to 6:00pm. No time at home, since I also do home chores. My work disturbs my homework".*

Child J: *"I arrange the shop in the morning before school. When I return from school, I eat and start working from 2.00p.m to 8.00p.m. I clean the house and wash our clothes in the night once I close from work; since they left everything for me alone to do. I hardly had time for my homework".*

The narratives offer illustrations of how work could impede children's homework schedules. In these contexts, children's responsibilities after school create challenges on completing their assignments at home, as the number of hours, specifically 4 to 7 hours of chores, has a bearing on children's engagement with homework. Research confirms that "the long working hours of children fill up their spare time, particularly when combined with household chores, as there is always work for children to do at home" (Ensing, 2010, p.36), which reduces their opportunities to do their homework. Given that child labourers experience more 'heavy time', they are unlikely to devote sufficient time for homework, which could affect their education.

Children perceive their tasks as detrimental to their intellectual development, in particular, when they fail to complete their homework, because it affects their progress in school. This perception was clearly evident in the narratives of Child K, Child L and Child M who recount their

dissatisfactions:

Child K: *So many times I do not do my homework.... At home in the evening, I always forget, I sleep. And because our teacher does mark our work... she also punishes any one that fails to do his homework, including me most times.*

Child L: *"My works prevent me from reading at home. At times I am unable to do my homework; because when I return from vending, I will be doing my housework and do not remember to see my books...I don't like the work".*

Child M: *"It is not all the time that I do my homework, because I will need to go and work after school. Once I am home, I wash plates and eat but often forget that I have homework. I always have zero".*

The children's experiences illustrate how they felt obstructed and discontented about being unable to study at home, which disrupted their learning outcomes. The children cited their inability to undertake homework due to absent-mindedness, and commitment to other responsibilities in and outside their households. This delay in accomplishing homework can cause serious effect on children's learning outcomes. Mitik and Decaluwé (2009) confirm that the inability of children to attend to their homework due to workloads inhibits their possibilities of benefiting from schooling. Hence, the loads of tasks restricted the time required to engage in assignments and this ultimately impacted on their academic progress.

Despite the income generated from child labour, the failure to complete

assignments seem repulsive and harmful to the children's educational pursuits. This further suggests the frustrating situations children experience between carrying out their required tasks on the one hand and doing their school work on the other hand. The above explores the ramification of the children's considerable workload that thwarts their ability to study and obstruct their future prospects. Evidently, these situations epitomize the difficulties children face while engaged in triple burdens of tasks within the Nigerian context (Joseph-Obi, 2011). Substantial work demand on children often pave the way for poor school attendance, lateness, failure to attend to homework and general poor performance at school. As the time spent devoted to work activities instead of school work, impede their concentration in a learning environment, which could deprive children of positive academic performance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The accounts in this research underscore the link between children's triple burden of work and the resultant complexities on their education. Amuda (2010) based on his labourers in Nigeria, argues that in order to understand the actual experiences of children in the society, it is crucial to consider the consequences of work on their learning outcome. Children's experiences of work circumstances indicate clearly how the complexities of their activities triggered threats and hampered their educational developments.

As a consequence, the following conclusion was attained; that hindrances experienced in children's education were perpetuated through impeding school attendance, performance, assignments, thereby limiting their ability to cope effectively with studies. Children's income

generation was encouraged by parents/guardians because of its potential benefits of relieving households' financial burden in a number of cases and in few instances, as a way of encouraging children into trades. However, difficulties exist that threaten children's academic developments.

This research highlights the possibility of dealing with child labour issues with the view to enhancing children's effective functioning. Therefore, based on the findings, there is need for concerted effort at reducing child laboring. There should be intervention policies to assist parents with poor financial background with intervention services. This is because the process of intervention within the interpersonal dimension of children's work load includes, counselling for children and family members, awareness and other support programmes.

Children and family's well-being are of crucial concerns in the Nigerian context, but there are significant gaps in relation to national policy on social support for working children as well as families. Thus, social assistance provision, which offers consistent allocations of cash, fee waivers and aids from governments and non-governmental agencies to the aged and families in dire scarcity of fund with the aim of diminishing poverty and helplessness, is likely to help safeguard children from economic activities. Moreover, in order to deal with the basic socio-economic context of child labour and ensure that children realize their developmental potentials, policy efforts need to be focused to improve household outcomes.

Social work practitioners and other child protection workers should ensure that the services adopted are significant to addressing clients' needs. As such,

intervention provision should be sustainable and capable of averting child labour, and recovery of children/parents through inclusive family-centred restorative strategies.

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