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## Child Work, Child Schooling And Educational Achievement: An Empirical Evidence For Nigeria

Afolabi Popoola

Joseph Ayodele

Isaac Ajayi

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## Introduction

As a result of the growing international concern about child labour, child work and the effects on the welfare and future of these children, the practices are now being questioned in Nigeria. The recent perception of child labour and child work as a problem stems from the belief, and finding on investigations that involvement of children in economic activities outside the home is injurious to the children's intellectual and physical growth. According to Oloko (1996) working is believed to expose children to physical danger, sexual abuse and other forms of harassment. It is also believed that work prevents children from doing well in school with the resultant risk of condemning them to low wage income in the future (Falayajo, Makoju, Okebukola, Onuga & Olubodun, 1997 and Ray, 2000). An International Labour Organisation (ILO) study quoted by Beguile and Boyden (1988) even went further to suggest that child labour may contribute to adult unemployment. This may be so since children could become substitute workers at cheaper wage rates.

Notwithstanding these negative consequences of child labour and child work, the involvement of children and especially school children in work is widespread in Nigeria. Though, Nigeria ratified ILO convention No 58 of 1936, No 59 of 1937, No 123 of 1965 and signed the memorandum of understanding with the ILO in 2000 to launch a country programme under the International Programme for elimination of child labour, the Labour Act of 1974, (revised in 1990) though includes a wide range of provision prohibiting various forms of child labour. Section 59 allows children to be engaged by her/his family on light work of an agricultural, domestic or horticultural character. Probably, this allowance for family to engage children in work and the loose nature of the informal apprenticeship arrangement provide the encouragement for family to send children out to contribute to family income.

Thus it is commonplace to find children throughout the country at work on the farms in rural areas and in public places such as market places, streets, cottage industries and workshops as well as providing domestic services in the cities. Hawking of wares is particularly rampant on the city streets, motor parks, high ways and other public places by school children, either before or after school hours. When the number of hours put into work is considered and the hazardous nature of what the children are engaged in are put into consideration, the line of demarcation between child labour and child work in Nigeria becomes very thin.

Despite the growing national and international concern on child work, controversy exists among stakeholders, scholars and policy makers concerning the variables which influence family decisions to set school children at work for the purposes of augmenting family income and the effects on school achievement. Testing the luxury axiom of Basu and Van (1998) within the context of schooling that a family will withhold its children from schooling if it falls into poverty, Ray (2000) found this to be true for Pakistan but false in the case of Peru especially for girls. The case of Peru had earlier been documented by Patrinos and Psacharopoulos (1997) where it was reported that children usually combine work with schooling. Ray (2000) went further to report that factors such as age and sex of

children, number of children in the household, number of adults in the household, gender of household head, the education of parents and the wages of the parents contribute to family decision on children's work. Ray's (2000) and other studies on the involvement of children in economic activities have concentrated on the premise that parents rely on children to bail them out of poverty and that children's labour supply equation is partly a function of wage plus other family and community characteristics.

Children had always worked in the Nigerian society. Before the advent of modern economy, male children have always accompanied their fathers to the farm with the farm implements built to size and girls assisted their mothers in selling farm products and also with domestic chores. When education was introduced in the country, it was common practice for boys to combine farm work with schooling and school girls continued to assist their parents in the market place. Every member of the family must participate in family work to the extent of his/her age and ability. The point therefore seems to be that when children work, it is not necessarily due to the family poverty as shown by Basu and Van (1998) or credit market imperfections reported by Parker and Skoufias (2002) or a discounting of the value of education which according to Becker (1991) proposition that children's work may be a response to a trade-off between returns to and cost of education. Indeed, Dumas (2007) captures the description of the situation better when she observed that rather than being wage earners, most working children are more likely to work with their own parents. Indeed a large number of Nigeria's well educated present and past leaders worked while schooling during their youth.

The poverty hypothesis however, cannot be ignored. Local media is replete with reports of children roaming the street due to parental inability to pay school fees and many children cannot perform well in school because they do not have books and other school materials. It seems reasonable therefore to assume that apart from the local traditions of children having to work, children are made to combine work with schooling to supplement family income in order to make schooling possible. The correctness of this decision is however open to examination. If working has no negative influence on schooling and achievement then the family decision to make children to work is unquestionable but if working hampers children educational achievement, a combination of work and schooling constitute a poor management of the family's human capital

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study therefore is to find out if work has any influence on schooling and educational achievement of children in Nigeria. It is also important to determine the factors that are likely to make a family prone to having working children.

### Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses have been generated in the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between child work and academic achievement.
2. There is no significant relationship among the child and family variables and academic achievement.

### Determinants of Child Work and Influence on Schooling and Educational Achievement

Previous studies have identified a number of factors which predispose families to engaging children in work and how this tends to influence schooling and educational achievement. Based on a review of the

literature in the area, Ray (2000) summarized the factors into child, family and community characteristics. The two variables in the child characteristics are age of the child and the earnings from work. It was postulated that age of child will positively correlate with working and that the size of earning by the children could serve as incentive to sending them to work. The variables of family characteristics include the poverty status of the family, the number of children, occupation of parents and the parent level of education. These are considered to have influence on child work and educational achievement.

These factors are important in estimating the influence of work on schooling and educational achievement. A negative and statistically significant coefficient on these variables would confirm their inverse relationships with schooling and achievement. An addition to the family characteristics in this study is who pays the child's school fees in the family. It is assumed that the issue of who pays the child's school fees between the two parents is influential on child work. In an urban setting the probability of child work is likely to be higher when the fees are paid by the mother than when the father foots the bill. A behaviour pattern has become observable within the setting of this study whereby fathers shift the school fee paying responsibility to the mother while they face other family commitments such as home construction, vehicle acquisition and other society engagement. This is more noticeable among fathers who have more than one wife. The behaviour is however influenced by the level of the man's education. It is therefore assumed that child work will be more among those whose school fees are paid by their mothers and are from less educated fathers. A confirmation of this would be instructive on policy targets in the fight against child work.

## Methodology

The study was conducted among primary four pupils in Ekiti State Nigeria. Ekiti State is one of the states in the south-western part of Nigeria with a high reputation for the people's love for education. The gross enrolment ratio of the primary level is near 100%. Though regularity of attendance fluctuates, there is general belief that student performances have fallen far below what it used to be.

Data for the study came from a survey conducted with the assistance of the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB). Since the motivation for the study was to find out the influence (if any) of child work on academic performance of children, some variables on child and family characteristics were correlated with performances in English Language and Mathematics tests among all primary four pupils in the state. The variables include age of child, sex, work status of the child, father's occupation, mother's occupation, family size, family status, time of work (child) and who pays for school materials (father or mother). The work status refers to whether the child is engaged in work outside the home or not, while family status refers to the number of wives.

A schedule seeking information on these variables was designed and administered on the pupils throughout the state. The administration of the schedule was done by officials of the State Universal Basic Education Board through head teachers of the various primary schools. Space was made available for the class teachers to record the scores of each pupil in the last primary four state examinations written by the pupils in English Language and Mathematics. Each year, the State Ministry of Education conducts quality assurance tests on primary four pupils in the state. The reports of pupils' performances in this test were used to test the hypothesis that there was a negative association between children performance and their work status. In other words children who engage in economic activities outside the home will do less well than those whose work is limited to domestic chores. In all 330 pupils were reported upon in the study.

Pearson product moment correlation statistic and multiple regression analysis were used to test the hypotheses generated in the study. All the hypotheses were tested at 0.01 and 0.05 levels of significance.

## Results and Discussion

A major objective of the paper is to investigate whether work negatively affects educational performance of children. A negative and statistically significant coefficient on the work status variable would confirm this. The result of the study as presented in tables 1-3 provide this confirmation.

**Table 1:** Correlation coefficients of child and family variables on performance in English Language and Mathematics.

### Correlations

	Age	Father's occupation	Mother's occupation	Family size	Family status	Who pays materials	Work status	Time of work	Math score	English score
Age Pearson Cor	1	-.077	-.028	-.094	-.079	-.128*	-.028	-.017	-.055	-.075
Sig. (2 tailed)	.	.162	.609	.089	.154	.020	.607	.756	.317	.174
N	330	330	330	300	330	330	329	330	330	330
Father's occu Pearson Cor	-.077	1	.165*	.024	-.083	-.007	-.060	-.042	-.066	-.051
Sig. (2 tailed)	.162	.	.003	.658	.133	.906	.276	.443	.228	.359
N	330	330	330	330	330	330	329	330	330	330
Mother's occu Pearson Cor	-.028	.165*	1	.006	.001	-.079	-.017	-.010	-.106	-.112*
Sig. (2 tailed)	.609	.033	.	.913	.987	.153	.716	.850	.055	.042
N	330	330	330	330	330	330	329	330	330	330
Family size Pearson Cor	.094	.024	.006	1	.112*	-.905	.028	.007	.045	.067
Sig. (2 tailed)	.089	.658	.913	.	.042	.085	.618	.901	.419	.224
N	330	330	330	330	330	330	329	330	330	330
Family status Pearson Cor	.079	-.083	.001	.112*	1	-.108	0.52	.064	-.089	-.116*
Sig. (2 tailed)	.154	.133	.987	.042	.	.050	.349	.248	.107	.336
N	330	330	330	330	330	330	329	330	330	330
Who pays for Pearson Cor	.128*	-.007	-.097	.095	-.108	1	-.006	-.087	-.008	-.008
Sig. (2 tailed)	.020	.906	.153	.085	-.050	.	.915	.115	.885	.887
N	330	330	330	330	330	330	329	330	330	330
Work status Pearson Cor	.028	-.060	-.017	.028	.052	-.006	1	.440*	-.117*	-.113* .040
Sig. (2 tailed)	.607	.276	.761	.618	.349	.915	.	.000	.033	.329
N	329	329	329	329	329	329	329	329	329	329
Time of work Pearson Cor	.017	-.042	-.010	-.007	.064	-.087	.440* .000	1	-.174*	-.175* .001
Sig. (2 tailed)	.756	.443	.850	.901	.248	.115	.329	.	.002	.330
N	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330
Maths score Pearson Cor	.055	-.66	-.106	.045	-.089	-.008	-.117* .033	-.174	1	.568*
Sig. (2 tailed)	.317	.228	0.55	.419	.107	.885	.329	.002	.	.000
N	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330
English score Pearson Cor	.075	-.051	-.112*	.067	-.116*	-.008	-.133* .040	-.175*	-.568*	1
Sig. (2 tailed)	.174	.359	.042	.224	.036	.887	.329	.001	.000	.
N	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) \*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

As can be observed on table 1, there is a negative correlation between the work status of children and their performance in English Language and Mathematics. There is also a significant negative correlation between the hours of work and academic performance. The results however indicate some interesting features. The result, for example, showed positive, though not significant, correlation between family size and work status of children and family status and work status of children. This means that children from polygamous homes and where the number of children is large may be predisposed to work while in school. It can also be observed from the result that the more time children spent working, the less well they perform in school. Though overall, the results showed the negative correlation between the work status and pupils' performances in English Language and Mathematics, for the entire sample of students in the study male students were more affected than their female counterparts.

On tables 3 and 4 it could be

observed that while work negatively impacted on male pupils' performance in Mathematics, the same effect failed to occur among the females. Indeed, the influence of work was positive in the case of female pupils. The same is true of performance in English Language among the pupils (table 4). The gender differences could occur due to the difference is the type of work in which the pupils engage outside their homes. While the females engage in mostly commercial activities such as buying and selling, their male counterparts engage more in assisting their parents in their workshops or may be engaged in manual labour. While engagement in commercial activities could expose the girls to practical exercises in computations, use of calculator and conversational interactions with customers, such opportunities are not frequent in the restricted workshops where the boys mostly operate.

### Summary and Conclusion

This paper examined whether work influences the academic performance of children in the primary schools. Based on the luxury axiom of Basu and

Van (1998), some studies had shown that schooling among children can be affected when their parents fall into poverty. The results of these studies however showed different effects for children in different

**Table 2:** Regression estimates of pupils' performance English Language and Mathematics

Co-efficient estimate		
Variable	Mathematics score	English Language score
Constant	57.75 (9.515)	54.142 (10.107)
Age	-.542 (.591)	.783 (.628)
Sex	-2.477 (1.513)	-1.038 (1.607)
Father's occupation	-2.555 (2.258)	-2.084 (2.399)
Mother's occupation	-2.485 (1.371)	-2.838 (1.457)
Family size	.287 (.339)	.481 (.360)
Family status	-1.774(1.121)	-2.621 (1.191)
Who pays for materials	-1.445 (2.499)	-1.33 (2.655)
Work status	-.919 (.956)	-.865 (1.015)
Time of work	-2.662 (1.090)	-2.830(1.158)

**Table 3:** Regression estimate of pupils' performance in Mathematics

Co-efficient estimate			
Variable	Male	Female	All
Constant	49.660 (15.659)	61.676(16.042)	57.785 (9.515)
Age	1.412(1.102)	0.06 E-02	-.542(.591)
Sex	-	-	-2.477 (1.513)
Father's occupation	-674(3.287)	-1.766 (3.356)	-2.555 (2.258)
Mother's occupation	-812 (1.505)	-10.739 (3.790)	-2.485 (1.371)
Family size	.207 (.432)	.322 (.566)	.287 (.339)
Family status	-7.019(3.569)	-1.344(1.181)	-1.774(1.121)
Who pays for materials	-2.085 (3.603)	-2.237 (3.566)	-1.445 (2.499)
Work status	-735 (.986)	4.942 (9.320)	-.919 (.956)
Time of work	-3.103(1.494)	-4.684(4.182)	-2.662 (1.090)

Note: Standard errors are in parenthesis

**Table 4:** Regression estimate to pupils' performance in English Language

Co-efficient estimate			
Variable	Male	Female	All
Constant	46.045 (15.741)	60.800 (17.929)	54.152 (10.107)
Age	1.80(1.108)	.212 (.945)	.73 (.628)
Father's occupation	-2.41 (3.304)	1.217 (3.750)	-2.084 (2.399)
Mother's occupation	-.995 (1.513)	-12.934 (4.236)	-.2838* (1.457)
Family size	.418	.470 (.632)	.41 (.360)
Family status	-7.293 (3.58)	-2.180 (3.985)	-2.621* (1.191)
Who pays for materials	-1.515 (3.622)	-2.610	-1.338 (2.655)
Work status	-.809* (.991)	6.917 (10.416)	-.865* (1.015)
Time of work	-2.665* (1.502)	-6.136* (4.674)	-2.830* (1.158)

Notes: \* Significant at 0.05

\* Standard errors are in parenthesis

countries. For instance Ray (2000) reported that while schooling of children was affected in Peru, the result was different in Pakistan. Though this paper is not adopting the formal definition of ILO on child labour where children engage in full time paid employment, it is suspected that the effects might be similar on the education of the children since the time and energy which the child is to utilise in school is traded for work to augment family income.

Schooling in the south-western part of Nigeria has become mandatory and families send their children to school not minding their level of income. Primary education is also heavily subsidized. Notwithstanding these, many families set their children to work even if only to secure enough money to feed these children and bear their other schooling expenses. It is also the tradition that children should imbibe the virtue of hard work early in life.

The results of this study has shown that work is injurious to the academic performance of primary school children especially males. The result is similar to those of other studies conducted elsewhere (Dumas, 2007 and Falayajo et al, 1997). Attention of policy makers is drawn to the variables which tend to predispose families to set their children on the street to earn income. These include, parents' occupation, size of family and the number of wives at home.

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