

DETERMINANTS OF THE USE OF CHILD LABOUR IN CROP PRODUCTION IN ESTAKO WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF EDO STATE, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

The apparition of small children labouring long hours under inhumane conditions has led to an intense debate concerning child labour over the past decade and a half, mostly centering on its role in agricultural productivity. This study therefore explored into the determinants of the use of child labour in crop production in Estako West local government area of Edo state. A multistage random sampling technique was used in the sample selection process. Six (6) communities were randomly selected from which seventeen (17) respondents were randomly selected from each of the six communities, making a total of one hundred and two (102) respondents. Data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The results showed that 61.8% of the respondents were between the ages of 11 and 14 years with the mean age of 14 years. 52.9% of the children were males, while 47.1% were females, all (100%) were single, 31.4% of the children were in JSS, 82.5% were involved in planting and 81.4% were involved in weeding. The regression results indicated a R^2 value of 0.893 which implies that 89.3% of the variability in man hours of child labour (Y) is being accommodated by the independent variables (Xs) specified in the model, with household (X_3) and experience (X_4) significant at 5% level. This indicated X_3 and X_4 are important variables that influence the use of child labor on the farm. Government and non-governmental organizations should make subsidized loans available to local farmers to aid them financially in their crop productions.

Keywords: Agriculture, Child labor, Crop, Determinants, Production.

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is the science of cultivating the soil, harvesting crops, and raising livestock. It also is the science or art of the production of plants and animals useful to man and in varying degrees the preparation of such products for man's use and their disposal (Miller and Dixon, 2010). It is also the deliberate effort to modify a portion of earth's surface through the cultivation of crops and the raising of livestock for sustenance or economic gain (Rubenstein, 2003).

According to the Child's Right Act (2003), a child is defined as one below the age of

18. Children are regarded as a source of joy to families and are invaluable assets to their parents. Hence, they should grow up and be nurtured in a family environment which provides an atmosphere of happiness, love, care and understanding for them. Children require legal protection in conditions of freedom, dignity and security. They should not be maltreated, exploited, over worked or deprived of their fundamental rights to education, association and health. Their households and society serve to provide these (Edmonds and Pavcnik, 2005).

Nigeria has sunk into a quagmire of poverty and incidentally the culture of poverty is

being replicated in all its major institutions, especially the family institution, from where child labours are recruited, incubated, and sent to the larger society (Okafor, 2010).

When families are faced with this kind of precarious economic condition, they may resort to child labour and trafficking the children away from homes to urban centers in order to generate incomes to take care of other members of the family (Tade, 2010; Okafor and Amayo, 2006). Hence, it is common to see in Nigeria the under-age children involved in economic activities to augment their parent's meager income (Ayoade, 2010); a situation that occurs when households begin to substitute child education for child labour.

Characteristics of households are generally the richest determinants of child labour supply when the household is taken as the units of analysis. Child labour has become a burning issue throughout the world especially in a developing country like Nigeria (Ayoade, 2010). The frequent occurrence of natural disaster compounded by political upheavals and mal-governance has made the situation of child labour in Nigeria to become increasingly complex (Okafor and Amayo, 2006).

According to United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (2008), an estimated 218 million children aged between 5 and 17 years are engaged in child labour, excluding child domestic labour, all over the world. About 126 million of these children are believed to be engaged in hazardous situation or conditions such as working in mines, working with chemical and pesticides in agriculture or working with dangerous machineries.

An International Labour Organization (2005) report shows that children who are

working in agriculture suffer from the same kind of accidents, ill health and fatalities as young adult workers, due to lack of experience, education on hazards risk management and most importantly, more exposure to activities which are dangerous to their health. They are more prone to accumulating a lot of these hazardous materials through injuries and inhalation. These result into, for example, greater exposure to diseases and toxic substances and pollutions, frequent awkward and heavy lifting and repetitive strains can permanently injure growing spines or limbs, especially due to the use of poorly designed tools. Skin, eye, respiratory or nervous problems often occur in children exposed to pesticides owing to thinner skin hence toxic substances are more easily absorbed, and children are vulnerable to much lower levels of exposure than adults. These may result into chronic long-term health effects which may not show up until the child has become an adult.

Therefore, it is imperative to examine the determinants of child labour in crop production. The objectives of the study are to;

- (i) examine the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, and
- (ii) determine the factors that affect the use of child labour in crop production in the study area.

METHODOLOGY

Study Area

The study was carried out in Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State with the headquarters situated at Auchi. Etsako West Local Government is in Edo North Senatorial district and is made up of six clans. Agriculture is the major occupation in this area with children constituting the larger amount of farm labour. They are also

involved in storage, processing and marketing. It has an estimated population of 260,700 and it stretches over an estimated land area of 946km² with a density of 275.6km² along main highway from Benin to Okene (National Population Census, 2014). A large percentage of the people living in the area depend mainly on farming as enterprise to earn a living.

The major crops grown include food crops, such as yam, cassava, maize, cocoyam, and vegetable crops such as tomatoes, okra, and pepper, while the tree crops cultivated are: palm oil, cocoa, coconut, mango, cherry, guava and cashew. The livestock produced include birds, goat, sheep and dog.

Sources of Data

The data that was used for this study was primary data which was obtained through the use of questionnaire.

Sampling Technique

Multistage sampling technique was used to select respondents for the study. This was done to ensure the element of the project population gets equal chances of being included in the sample. Simple random sampling was used in selecting six (6) communities. Seventeen (17) respondents were randomly selected in each of the six (6) communities, totaling one hundred and two (102) respondents for the study.

Analytical Techniques

The descriptive analytical techniques used in the study included frequency and percentages distribution. Regression analysis was used as inferential statistics.

The descriptive statistics were used to analyze the socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents and the causes of child labour. Inferential statistics (regression) was used to determine the factors that affect child labour usage in the study area. The

regression analysis was obtained using the following:

$$Y = f(X_1, X_2, X_3, X_4, X_5, X_6, X_7 \dots U_i)s$$

where Y = Main hours of child labor used

X_1 = Age (years)

X_2 = Farming experience on (years)

X_3 = Educational level

X_4 = Household size

X_5 = Gender

X_6 = Cost of labor

X_7 = Farm size

U_i = Error

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

DISCUSSION

Table 1 below revealed the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. The table showed that a majority (61.8%) of the children involved in the child labour were between the ages of 11 and 14 years of age with the remaining 38.2% falling between the ages of 15 and 18 years. Age and birth order often dictate occupations and tasks undertaken by boys and girls, the conditions and hours of work, and educational opportunities. The gender portrays that 52.9% and 47.1% of the children were males and females respectively. This finding is in line with that of International Labour Organization (ILO) (2010) which observed that boys outnumbered in child labour service in the research work, Gender and child labour in Agriculture.

The table also portrayed that 72.5% of the children were Christians, while 22.5% and 4.9% accepted Islam and Traditional practices as their religion respectively. This is an indication that religion does not prevent parents from using their children in child-labour. The great economic problems of today group themselves largely around labour and not religion. This finding is supported by Chancellor (2011), when he

asserted that “business is business” and that the phrase is used sometimes to discourage what is called sentiment in matters of this character.

Similarly, the table indicated that 68.6% of the children are in Senior Secondary School (SSS), while 31.4% are in Junior Secondary School (JSS). This implied that majority of the children engaged in child labour were of school age, between 11 and 18 years. The economic situations of their parents might had forced them to engage in child-labour, that is, for the parents to be able to sponsor the children and or augment their educational expenses and again enhanced the family living. This finding is strongly supported by Huebler (2008) when he concluded that poverty is the root cause of child labour. The table also showed that arable crops were prevalently grown in the study area. The crops were cassava, maize, yam with 41.2%, 24.4%, and 14.7% respectively while others (groundnuts, rice, sweet potatoes) were 19.6%. This implied that child labour was mainly employed to grow cassava and maize which are major cash crops of the communities.

Alleviation of family income (51.0%) dominated the reasons for child labour on the farm. According to ILO (2008), poverty is the greatest single cause behind child labour. For impoverished households, income from a child’s work is usually crucial for his or her own survival or for that of the household. Income from working children, even if small, may be between 25 and 40% of the household income. Other scholars such as Harsch (2001), Edmonds and Pavcnik (2005) and Basu and Van (2008), on global child labour have reached the same conclusion. Hence, 80.4% preferred yearly mode of payment to support the family in their educational pursuits. The table also showed that the

purchase of clothes and school uniforms attracted 50.0% while payment of school fees was 36.3% out of the benefits derived from the labour. This conforms with ILO (2008) assertion that lack of meaningful alternatives, such as affordable school materials and quality education are major factors driving children to harmful labour. 61.8% of the respondents showed great passion in farming work. This is an indication that if farming is made more attractive by the government, providing the basic infrastructures in the study area, the youths in the future can engage in agricultural pursuit. This finding is in conformity with the recommendations of FAO (2016) emphasizing the need to continue working on improving social protection systems to foster sustainable and equitable rural development, poverty reduction, and food security, taking into consideration the specific needs of the youths.

The table portrayed that 63.7% of the respondents’ parents were married. This implied that majority of the respondents’ parents failed to perform their duties by not providing for the family members, thereby engaging their children in farming to augment the family incomes.

About 60.8% of the respondents’ parents engaged their children to work on the family farms as a type of labour to minimize the expenditure on farm work. This finding is buttressed by the conclusion of Basu and Van (2008) in their work on the Economics of Child Labour that poverty is the root of lack of parental roles in a household.

82.5%, 81.4% and 55.9% of the respondents were engaged in planting, weeding, and land preparation respectively as type of operations on the farm. This was an indication that child labour was strongly

encouraged by the parents and house heads to reduce substantially the cost of production on the family farms. These findings are supported by the work of Basu

and Van (2008) that majority of the children who worked on their parents' farm is "unpaid family labour."

RESULTS

TABLE 1: SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS (N = 102)

Variables	(f)	%	(\bar{x})
Age (in years)			
11 – 14	63	61.8	
15 – 18	39	38.2	14
Gender			
Male	54	52.9	
Female	48	47.1	
Religion			
Christianity	74	72.5	
Islam	23	22.5	
Traditional	5	4.9	
Qualification			
JSS 1 – 3	32	31.4	
SSS 1 – 3	70	68.6	
Types of crop grown			
Maize	25	24.4	
Cassava	42	41.2	
Yam	15	14.7	
Others (Groundnuts, Rice and sweet potatoes).	20	19.6	
Reasons			
To learn how to farm	9	8.8	
To contribute to the family income	52	51.0	
To avoid idleness	33	32.4	
Others (Hobby, way of life, means of livelihood).	8	7.8	
Payment			
Daily	8	7.8	
Weekly	4	3.9	
Monthly	8	7.8	
Yearly	82	80.4	
Benefit derived from the labour			
Food	10	9.8	
Payment of school fees	37	36.3	
purchase of cloths/school uniform	51	50.0	
Others (Experience, Satisfaction)	4	3.9	
Interest on the work			
Yes	63	61.8	
No	39	38.2	
Type of work			
Hawking	32	31.4	
Washing	42	41.2	
Work as hired labor	16	15.6	
Others (Harvesting, Tillage, Clearing, Weeding).	12	11.8	

Marital status of parents		
Single	1	1.0
Married	65	63.7
Divorced	21	20.6
Widowed	15	14.7
Type of labour used by parents		
Hired	17	16.7
Family	62	60.8
Others (House cleaning and environment)	23	22.6
Types of Operations on the Farm		
Land preparation	57	55.9
Making ridges	38	37.3
Planting	84	82.5
Thinning	43	47.9
Weeding	83	81.4
Pesticide application	22	21.6

Source: Field Survey, 2017.

Table 2 showed the problems encountered on the farm. The result indicated that majority of the respondents, 73.5% encountered scorpion sting, while 11.8%, 10.8% and 3.9% encountered bee sting, snake bite and others (wrong farm implements) respectively. This portrayed that 100% of the children experienced one or two problems on the farm and this is

dangerous to their health and life. This finding aligned with the conclusion of ILO (2010) that children were exposed to sharp tools (machetes) and dangerous machinery (tractors), risk of snakebites and injuries from other animals, exposure to extreme environmental conditions, and exposure to agrochemicals including inorganic fertilizers and pesticides.

TABLE 2: PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED ON THE FARM (N = 102)

Variables	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Snake bite	11	10.8
Scorpion	75	73.5
Bee sting	12	11.8
Others (Cut, Puncture)	4	3.9

Source: Field Survey, 2017.

Table 3 portrayed the factors affecting the use of child labour in crop production. The R^2 value of 0.893 indicated that 89.3% of the variability in the benefits of child labour in crop production is explained by the independent variables. This implies that the variables are important economic factors that influence the use of child labour in crop production.

The Coefficient of Age (X_2) and the type of labour (X_5) are positive, indicating that an

increase in the age of the respondents and labour used in crop production by the respondents respectively will increase the benefits of the farmer in the study area.

The Coefficient of Household size (X_3), the experience (X_4) and the level of education (X_6) were negatively related. The increase in the value of all these variables will decrease the use of child labour on the farm. This is buttressed by Cockburn *et al.* (2002) who reported that for labour supply, as

income increases, child labour supply decreases because the need to supplement parental income becomes less compelling and household begins to substitute child labour for child education and training.

The results also showed that (X_3) and (X_4) which were household size and experience respectively were significant at 5% level of significance which indicated that they are important variables that affects child labour use.

TABLE 3 FACTORS AFFECTING THE USE OF CHILD LABOUR IN CROP PRODUCTION

Variables	Co-efficient	Standard error
Sex	0.183	0.609
Age	0.080	0.153
Household size	-0.032	0.117*
Experience	-0.071	0.104*
Type of labour	0.135	0.759
Level of education	-0.276	0.275
Parent marital status	0.166	1.106

* indicates level of significance at 5%

$R^2 = 0.893$

$\frac{2}{R} = 0.36$

F = 1.042

Source: Field Survey, 2017.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

It was discovered in the study that children participation in crop production was very high in the study area. Also, the R^2 value of 0.893 indicated that 89.3% of the variability in the benefits of child labour in crop production is explained by the independent variables. Based on the findings it was deduced that the children were engaged in all the operations carried out in crop production. The conclusion drawn from the study is that poverty was the major factor responsible for the use of child labour in crop production in the study area.

It is recommended that there is need for the government to legislate on the minimum age of a child to be engaged in farm work and the specific areas of farm operations in which he or she can be involved. Children should not be allowed to work on the farm for a long time and must be under the supervision of adults when working on the farm in order to prevent abuse. There is need for promotion of rural development

strategies and programmes aimed at, improving livelihood, thus creating automotive income-generating activities, which address health and safety in agriculture. Government and non-governmental organizations have an important role to play in order to help to alleviate the problems encountered by children in agricultural operation. Cooperatives societies should be formed by the farmers (parents of the children) to assist themselves financially in order to increase their productions and earn more incomes so as to externalize labour usage and use improved technology on their farms. Government should make subsidized loans available to local farmers to aid them financially in their crop productions.

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