

Socio-economic Analysis of Children Involved in Agricultural and Non-agricultural Enterprises in Urban Western Nigeria: A Case Study of Ijebu Ode Township

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Abstract: The paper examines the socio economic characteristics of 120 households randomly selected from Ijebu Ode township from four occupational categorizations, namely trading, civil service/public service, agriculture and agriculture related occupations and other general occupation such as in small cottage industries. The paper assessed how socio economic characteristics, such as age of household head, occupation of household head, marital status of household head, educational attainment etc affect the involvement of children in various forms of agricultural and non-agricultural enterprises. The responses of the household heads were captured through the use of a structured questionnaire. Pearson correlation coefficient showed a positive significant relationship between the age of the respondents and the number of their wards and/or children involved in the family business at 95% level of significance. Controlling for age of household head as a factor, there was positive partial correlation coefficient between the number of children involved in one form of work and household size as explained by the number of wards under the household head, between the number of children involved in one form of work and the marital status of household head, a negative relationship between number of dependents and level of educational attainment, a positive relationship between the sex of the children and number of children working. Based on the findings of the research, recommendations were made in order to ensure the right of the Nigerian child.

Key words: Socio-economic analysis • Urban Western Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

“...Many hands make light work.” c Patten

Harsh economic realities stare many households in Africa in the face. Most developing countries are characterized usually by a dual economy nature and they are usually worst hit by these harsh economic realities in the rural areas. Harsh economic realities interpret into poverty, which in both the short and long run leaves the households, impoverished.

A natural instinct in all living things that makes for their self-preservation is adaptation; failure to adapt leads to extinction. In a bid to alleviate the problems posed by the harsh economic realities, every hand in the households are placed on deck; both the adult and the children alike are drafted into some form of work in order to improve the economic fortunes of the households and alleviate poverty.

“...It is my belief that every man has the divine right to work”-Lundeen

The above quotation is a truism but only as far as it concerns an adult-man and not a man-child. Like a Greek proverb says, “ God gives the birds their food, but he does not throw it into their nests”, it becomes fitting for every adult man to work hard in order to alleviate poverty and secure for the household an adequate food basket.

Strangely enough the above expectation does not hold in reality. The ILO posits that some 214million children between the ages of five and seventeen work in developing countries, inclusive of African countries [1].

According to the Human Right Watch [1] most working children in rural areas are found in agriculture, many others work as domestics; in the urban areas most of the children work at trade and services, with fewer in manufacturing, construction and other forms of work. In most instances in urban areas, trade may involve the sale of agricultural commodities like oranges, maize, vegetables as itinerant traders or sedentary traders in stalls; in some other instances services are rendered on farms or other agro allied industries. In fact the agricultural twist to children working in developing countries cannot be denied, be it in the urban settlements or in the rural

settlements even though it is most prominent in the rural economies of developing countries.

In fact, HRW [2] estimated that of the nearly 250 million children engaged in child labor around the world, the vast majority, about 70%, or some 170 million are working in agriculture.

The problem of child labor, which is viewed as a form of child abuse, has many implications. Oduşina and Nosiru [3] in their work identified child labor as one of the three highest ranking form of child abuse in their study area; their work established that poor academic and social performance were fall outs of such abuses. Dashen and Dashen [4] on child hawking established a 40% automobile risk associated with hawking and 26.9% sexual harassment risk level associated with hawking and a discouraging 45% of the children having developed distaste for education in their study area. Salako [5] established from cross-sectional data that poor education and low socio economic status of the parents was responsible for children being drafted off to work. Of the children interviewed by Salako, 25% said they work to earn money needed by their parents, 67.3% to earn money needed for school fees, while 2.8% said it was to begin a trade.

It cannot be gainsaid that at the root of every child labor issues is poverty (Harsch, 2006), which characterizes most households in developing countries.

Theoretical and conceptual framework: Child labor according to Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia [7] refers to a designation formerly applied to the practice of employing young children in factories, now used to denote the employment of minors generally, especially in work that may interfere with their education or endanger their health.

According to the Bureau of International Labor Affairs [8], ILO estimated that 23.5% of children between ages 10 to 14 years in Nigeria were working, most of them in agriculture, usually on family farms, fishing and as cattle herders and in some cases on commercial farms. In non-agricultural informal sector, they work in domestic service, in public markets, as hawkers on the street, vendors, stall minders, beggars, car washers, scavengers, shoe shine boys, bus conductors and head loaders; in cottage industries they work as mechanics, metal workers, carpenters, tailors, weavers, barbers and hairdressers. In northern Nigeria, child begging is particularly widespread.

The Government of Nigeria in recognition of this menace of child labor ratified the ILO convention 138 and ILO convention 182 on October 2, 2002 [8]. However, the effects are yet to be seriously felt.

According to Enfants du Monde Droits de l'Homme [9], most of the countries most touched by this phenomenon have serious economic problems. When found in industrialized countries, the under-privileged social classes are the most affected. By way of inference, EDMH [9], concludes that the extreme poverty of affected countries lead them to the use of child labor to supplement especially the family revenue. Consequences of child labor include among others, physical deformation, growth problems, professional sicknesses, exhaustion, accidental deaths. In some cases of early labor, various psychological and behavioral consequences for the children workers are observable.

Salako [5] in a similar study within the study area found out from cross-sectional data that poor education and low socio economic status of the parents was responsible for children being drafted off to work. As a point of departure, taking low socio economic status, this paper attempts to establish a relationship between these socio-economic characteristics and drafting of children to work within the study area.

Research methodology: Ijebu Ode township was used for this research. Random sampling technique was used to gather data from 120 households, selecting the respondent each from each of four occupational categorization, namely, agricultural related occupations, civil/public service, trading and any other general category. Structured questionnaires were used to elicit responses from both household heads, as well as the children, in this case only the working children were interviewed. Descriptive statistics and correlation coefficient were used in the analysis of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sixty eight of the household heads interviewed (56.7%) were married, while fifty two of the interviewed (43.3%) were single by divorce, widowhood, separation or just by plain status. The marital status is very important in the research because it could be helpful in determining if sharing the burden of household sustenance makes for lesser involvement of children in various forms of work or not.

Forty eight of those interviewed(40%) were into trading, 36 of these(30.0%) were in the public service, twenty four of these(20%) were into agriculture and agricultural related enterprises, while 12(10%) were into other forms of occupation.

Table 1: Marital status of household head

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative (%)
Married	68	56.7	56.7
Single	52	43.3	100.0
Total	120	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2006

Table 2: Occupation category of household head

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative (%)
Trading	48	40.0	40.0
Civil/public service	36	30.0	70.0
Agricultural activity	24	20.0	90.0
Others	12	10.0	100.0
Total	120	100.0	

Source: Field survey, 2006

Table 3: Educational attainment of household head

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative frequency
Primary Education	24	20.0	20.0
Secondary Education	12	10.0	30.0
Grade 2 Certificate	16	13.3	43.3
Nigeria Cert in Education	4	3.3	46.6
Higher National Diploma	20	16.7	63.3
B.Sc, B.A, B.Ed etc	24	20.0	83.3
Post Graduate Qualification	20	16.7	100.0
Total	120	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, [10]

Table 4: Number of dependents in the household

Number of dependents	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative frequency
1	12	10.0	10.0
2	36	30.0	40.0
3	7	6.7	46.7
4	34	26.6	73.3
5	7	6.7	80.0
6	20	16.7	96.7
7	4	3.3	100.0
Total	120	100.0	

Source: Field survey, [10]

Twenty of the household heads interviewed(16.7%) had post-graduate qualifications, twenty-four of these (20%) had a bachelors degree, another twenty(16.7%) had a Higher National Diploma qualification, four(3.3%) and sixteen(13.33%) had teaching qualifications, NCE and Grade II certificate respectively. Twenty-four (20.0%) had only primary school education, while 12 (10.0%) had only secondary school education. The importance of education lies in the need to investigate if the level of exposure to

Table 5: Number of children involved in any form of work in households

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
None	33	26.7	26.7
1	23	20.0	46.7
2	60	50.0	96.7
3	4	3.3	100.0
Total	120	100.0	

Source: Field survey, [10]

Table 6: Frequency of school attendance among working children

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
More than 4 times/wk	49	56.7	56.7
Less than 4 times/wk	38	43.3	100.0
Total	87	100.0	

Source: Field survey, [10]

Table 7: Preference of working children between schooling and working

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative (%)
Prefer schooling	83	53.3	53.3
Prefer working	72	46.7	100.0
Total	155	100.0	

Source: Field survey, [10]

education has any impact in using or not using of children in various forms of work in order to sustain the household.

Most of the households, specifically thirty-six (30%), had two dependents; this was closely followed by households with four dependents(26.6%), followed by those with six dependents (16.7%), followed by those with only one dependent (10%), followed by those with 3 and 5 dependents respectively (6.7%). The households with the least frequency of dependents was households with seven dependents.

Thirty-three of the households interviewed (26.7%) had none of their dependents working in any form in order to sustain their household; 20.0% which is 23 households had one of their dependent working on some basis in order to help sustain the household; an astounding 50.0% i.e. 60 of the households, had two of their dependents working on some basis, while 3.3% of the households had 3 dependents involved in some form of work on the behalf of the households. In all, no more than three dependents were involved in any of the instances where children were working in some ways for the Household.

The larger percentage of the households having working children, have the children attending school as regularly as possible (56.7%); yet, an astounding 43.3% of these households have working children attending school

Table 8: Pearson correlation coefficient between age of the household head and number of working children in households

	Age of household head	Number of working children
Age of household head	1.000	0.434*
Number of working children	0.434*	1.000

Source: Field survey, [10]

*-Significant at 95% confidence interval (2-tailed)

Table 9: Partial correlation coefficient controlling for age of household head against selected Variables

	Number of children	Number of working children	Sex of children
Number of children	1.000	0.272 (p = 0.153)	0.083 (p = 0.669)
Number of working children	0.272 (p=0.153)	1.000	0.6494
Sex of children	0.0828 (p=0.669)	0.6494	1.000

Source: Field survey, [10]

2-tailed sig

Table 10: Partial correlation coefficient controlling for perceived contributions of working children against selected variables

	Number of children	Number of working children	Education of household Head	Marital status of household head
Number of children	1.000	0.172	-0.297	0.487
Number of working children	0.170	1.000	0.178	0.543
Education of household head	-0.292	0.178	1.000	0.614
Marital status of household head	0.414	0.541	0.614	1.000

Source: Field survey, [10]

2-tailed sig

less than regular on a weekly basis. This portends harm for the educational development of these children.

Eighty-three of the working children interviewed from the sampled households (53.3%) preferred schooling to working, while seventy-two of the working children interviewed (46.7%) preferred working to schooling haven developed apathy for schooling, an unpleasant twist indeed.

The Pearson correlation coefficient shows moderately strong positive relationship between the age of the household head and the number of children in the household that are working. The implication of

this is that, both variables move in the same direction, i.e. as the age of the household head increases, the more the number of children in the household that are working. This could mean that as the household heads increase in age and approach the age of dependency again they tend to have more of their dependents working in order to sustain the households; again with the increase in age of household head, there is an expected increase in the age of their dependents too and in the absence of improving family economy, needs of the household which is expected to grow with growth in age, may necessitate deployment of more members of the household in order to sustain the family.

There is a weak positive relationship between number of children in a household and number of working children (0.272) i.e. the decision to have children work in a household does, to a small extent, move in the same direction as the number of children in the household. Number of children in the household has practically no relationship with the sex of the children in the household (0.083). The sex of the children in the household shows a strong positive relationship with the number of working children in the household.

There is a weak positive relationship between number of children working and number of children in a household ; a weak negative relationship exists between number of children in a household and educational attainment of household head i.e. as the educational attainment becomes higher the lower is the number of children in the household and vice versa; there exists a moderately strong positive relationship between

Marital status of household head and the number of children in the household i.e married household head tended to have more children than separated, divorced or widowed household head.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The research identified the prevalence of working children in the area at an epidemic level. Of all the households interviewed, 73.3% (Table 5) had at least one of the children working! This paints a gloomy picture of the burden placed on these young ones at their formative years. As a fallout of this, almost half of the working children (43.3%), according to Table 6, attended school less than regularly; by this, the academic development of the children is impaired as a result of their involvement in some form of work. In fact, from the research it is discovered that not only is the children's schooling interfered with when they work, but it also

leads to a feeling of apathy for education, perhaps resulting from their enamored with the concept of money making at such early period in their lives. Almost half of the working children (46.7%), according to Table 7, prefer to work rather than schooling.

The age of the household head was directly related to the number of children working in a household. This seems to suggest that as the household heads get older, it becomes increasingly hard to sustain the household probably as a result of waning productivity, or increasing demand from the correspondingly maturing children. Again, the research showed that a direct relationship exists between number of dependent working in a household and the number of children or dependents in a household (Table 9). However, the relationship between number of dependents in a household and the level of educational qualification of household head was an inverse one, i.e. the higher the educational qualification of household head the smaller the number of dependents or children in the family. It seems to imply that the less literate the household head, the more the number of children or dependents are in the household.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are made:

- Enforcement of laws bothering on child labor by attaching jail terms for errant guardians and/or parents would serve to deter them; this is based on the principle of reinforcement. On this basis, scholarships for primary and secondary school students not for only school tuition but covering other fringe benefits, such as school accessories like laptops, school uniforms, free vacations etc in order to make education attractive to impressionable young children would go a long way in fighting apathy to education.
- Agencies and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) should be encouraged to invest in education, organize tours, exchange programs among students from different countries which would tend to make education more interesting for children.

- Literacy should be geared up in the area of family planning especially among the less literate, harping on the benefits of small household size in a populous country like Nigeria.
- The National Orientation Agency should come up with investment options that parents can affordably invest in at little cost in order to secure the households' food basket, as well as the future of the household.

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