



## CHILD LABOUR AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN OBIO/AKPOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, RIVERS STATE

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### ABSTRACT

The study examined the menace of child labour on students' academic performance. The study adopted the survey descriptive design. Three hypotheses were formulated on the basis of the three major independent variables, which include: Child labour, child neglect and child abandonment and the dependent variables are students' academic performance in school. To enhance effective data generated, a 20 item questionnaire titled "The Purposive Technique and Systematic Sampling Procedures" was used to collect the sample, the total population of two communities: Rumuolumeni and Ogbogoro. A total of 100 respondents were selected from each of the cluster, which rounded to 200 respondents who participated in the study from two study areas. Data generated were statistically analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis (rxy). Results shows that: There is a significant relationship between child labour and students' academic performance, child neglect significantly relates to students' academic performance and there is a significant relationship between child abandonment and students' academic performance. The finding reveals that parents are central in the upbringing of their children in providing them with the basic needs of life: Food, shelter and clothing and not subject them to contributing to the economic status of the family by indulging in child labour. It was recommended that there should be adequate awareness and sensitization programmes to the rural areas to warn parents on the danger of sending a child to serve people as maid in the urban areas. The government should ensure that policies like the Child's Rights Act should be implemented and strictly adhered to, any breach or violators should be sanctioned. Also, guardians should sign agreement with biological parents that if the child/children are subjected to any form of labour and hardship, the children would be withdrawn from them and charges will be pressed.

**Keywords:** Child labour, Abuse, Neglect, Abandonment, Academic Performance.

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### INTRODUCTION

The issue of working children and child labour has received a great deal of attention from both researchers and policy makers in recent years. Child labour is an extremely important

economic and social issue for many reasons. It deprives children of their childhood. In addition, it can adversely affect their physical, mental, and cognitive development. In 2004, the number of working children was estimated to be 218 million in 2004 (ILO, 2006). About 14% of the world's 5-14 years old children were engaged in child labour in 2004. The incidence of child labour (proportion of child labour to number of children) varies across regions with the incidence of child labour being much higher in developing countries. For many years, child labour has been one of the biggest obstacles to social development. It is a challenge and long-term goal in many countries to abolish all forms of child labour, especially in development countries, it is considered a serious issue.

The definition of child labour differs among societies, for example, in Africa and Asia, they do not consider the work of a fifteen years old person as child labour; they view child labour as a good task that children learn skills from work. They distinguish between child labour and child work, where child work is considered to be part of the children's training to be responsible adults while child labour is thought to be exploitative (Omokhodion & Odusote, 2006).

The term "child labour" is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and interferes with their schooling by depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work (<https://www.ILO.org>facts>long-on>).

Recently, the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2013) estimated that there are around 215 million children between the ages of five to fourteen who work worldwide. They are often mistreated and work for prolonged hours, in very bad condition, this can affect their health, physically, mentally and emotionally. These children do not have the basic rights like access to school or health care.

According to ILO (2013), the largest number of child labourers are working hazardous work and the total number of child workers is increasing, even though it is forbidden by law. These children are vulnerable to discuss and many struggle with long-term physical and psychological pain. The main cause that induces children to work is poverty. The children work for their survival and their families (Mapaure, 2009).

Some studies like Dessy and Pallage (2003) argued that not all the work that children do is harmful or brutal. Some work may provide successful learning opportunities, such as babysitting or newspaper delivery jobs, but not if the work exposes them to psychological stress, like human trafficking, prostitution and pornographic activities.

In Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria, the situation is alarming as children of all age range involve themselves in child labour or jobs meant for adults. They are involved in cheap labour, domestic services/maids, hair dressers, hawking of different wares, windshield cleaner, motor-park touts, bus conductors, mechanics and prostitution, etc. This explains the prevalence in incidence of theft, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), accidents, death and loss of children particularly in the Rumuolumeni, Elioparanwo and Ogbogoro areas of Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

It is worrisome to note that most of these children are sometimes exploited, neglected, abandoned and deprived by their own parents. This happens when they terminate the schooling of their children so as to engage them in economic activities with the sole aim of improving the family income. Looking at the portion of the harm emotionally, child labour gets into various vicious cycles by incurring problems in cognate functioning at school. The children tend to show slow and poor attention in reasoning and poor academic performances.

It is in the light of this danger that the researcher is motivated to undertake the study to ascertain the impact of child labour on students' academic performance.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **The Concept of Child Labour**

The term child labour has various definitions by different scholars. For Moyi (2011), child labour refers to low wages, long hours, physical and sexual abuse. According to Edwards and Pavenik (2005), child labour is viewed as a form of child labour abuse, when children work in bad, conditions and hazardous occupation. The meaning of the term child labour also varies among organizations, International Labour Organization (ILO) argues that child labour is difficult to define. It depends on the type of job, and if the age is under eighteen and if the job interferes with the child's education and development (ILO, 2004).

A child, according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989) refers to a person under the age of eighteen. The World Bank assumes that child labour can do serious threat to long term national investment. Furthermore, according to UNICEF, the problem of child labour can have more bad consequences besides all the concerns of investment (It is relating to economic activities) (ILO, 2013; Weston, 2005).

Bhat (2010) asserts that the definition of child labour is not simple because it includes three different concepts to define, which are "child", "work" and "labour". He claims that the term child can be defined by age but in some societies, people cease to be children at different ages. The onset of puberty occurs at different ages for different people. Therefore in the Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour 1999 (No. 182), defines a child as someone who is under the age of eighteen years (Bhat, 2011).

The definition of child labour differs among societies, for example, in Africa and Asia, they do not consider the work of fifteen years old person as child labour; they view child labour as a good task that children learn skills from work. They distinguish between child labour and child work, where child work is considered to be a part of the children's training to be responsible adults while child labour is thought to be exploitative (Omokhodion & Odusote, 2006).

Not all work that children do is severe, according to International Labour Organization (ILO) Report (2002), if a work does not hinder children's schooling or does not affect their health physically and mentally, then it is generally not categorized as child labour. For instance, helping parents at home, looking after siblings or working for pocket money after school hours and during holidays.

Agil (2012) asserts that not all work that children do harm their health or are considered as exploitative but it depends on the kind of work they are involved in and how many hours they work. It also depends on work conditions, or environment. However, Weston (2005) argues that any work children do can be damaging to their health because the work can be abusive, exploitative or hazardous and it can influence their health. Omokhodion and Odusote (2006) argue that any work that children do outside their home is classified as child labour. According to them, working outside home is usually exposed to environmental hazards which may attack their health and safety.

### **Origin of child labour**

During the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, children were forced to work around farms, in factories, tending crops or preparing food. They work in industries and their condition of work were very dangerous and often deadly. At that time, the industry preferred children to work because it provided cheap labour and more malleable workers (Basu & Van,

1998). In 1833 and 1844, the first legislation came to ban child labour. It implied that children should not work, and the idea was to remove all children from labour which interfered with school. However, many children continued to be involved as child labourers, which was prohibited by law (Bhat, 2011). Indeed, child labour was almost completely reduced from the developed world, however, currently, child labour still continues to rise in developing countries because of rapid population growth, high rates of unemployment, inflation, poverty, malnutrition, bad leadership, corruption and low wages (Bass, 2004).

Child labour is taking place everywhere in the world particularly in low income countries and these children are working all sectors of the economy, such as agriculture, manufacturing, fishing, construction, domestic service, street vending, etc. In addition to that, children are normally unregistered as employers and working in very poor and dangerous conditions without social protection (Serwadda-Luwaga, 2005).

### **Causes of Child Labour**

**Poverty:** There are several circumstances that attract child labour. Studies have demonstrated that the most notable reason being poverty (Bhat & Rather, 2009). Decisions about child labour and schooling are generally made by parents. If the family live below the poverty line, parents see children as part of contributors in their family income. Basu (1999) used a theoretical model of child labour, where he showed the only reason parents send children to labour is because of their low income. Consequently, poor parents cannot afford schooling for their children.

Rena (2009) shows that poverty and underdevelopment drives child labour. She found that the high prevalence of poverty amongst countries, including India, China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Srilanka, New Guinea, Ethiopia, Uganda, Mozambique, Malawi, Sudan and Chad increases child labour. Therefore, child labour is widespread throughout Africa and Asia. According to the studies of Edmonds and Pavenik (2005), O'Donuell, Rosati and Vam-Doorshlaer (2005) and Akairo and Mtweve (2011), they assumed that tackling poverty can be a perfect solution to reduce child labour.

Poverty creates many problems such as prostitution, corruption, robbery, increased unemployment, poor conditions, malnutrition, etc. (Owoldeji, 2012; Ekpenyong & Sibirii, 2011). Precisely, poor people face inadequate basic needs such as food, clothing, health facilities, etc. People who live below poverty line, live in severe housing conditions and poor sanitary and hygienic conditions. Many of them live in slums or poor residential areas and some of them lack health care and sufficient nutrition. Although illiteracy is far more prevalent among poor people, many of them lack education or they drop out of school because of high cost of schooling.

In general, poor people earn little and in such cases parents are not able to take care of all the responsibilities of their children and they oblige their children to work to increase household income (Khan, 2001). Hosen (2010) observed that in Bangladesh, poor rural parents can barely afford food let alone pay for school fees of their children.

Krueger (1996) showed evident trend from cross-country sample, that low income households are more likely to send their children to labour market which is uncommon in richer households. Duryea, Lam and Levison (2007) observed in urban Brazil that the father's unemployment compels their children to work in order to increase their family's income.

**Family Size:** Large households with little income usually have children involved in child labour than children from smaller household, which demonstrates family size have an effect on child labour. Parents oblige their children to work because they are not able to manage the demands of the large family size. There is also gender difference among household size. Not

everyone and of all ages in the family are working as child labour, which depends on the child's age and gender, for instance, boys are more likely to attend school than girls. Older siblings contribute more to the family income (Ahamd, 2012; Boyden & Myers, 1998). Okpukpara et al. (2006) found that in Nigeria, younger children are more likely to go to school than older children, where boys attend school than girls.

**Traditional or Cultural Factors:** Culture is one major factor which is driving children into labour market. Different cultures of many societies make children start work at very young age which are related to traditions and cultural factors. They assume that children need to learn skills that can be good for their future. According to Tauson (2009), in rural Guatemala, parents prefer them to work because they consider it beneficial for them as they learn work skills. Obinna and Osita-Oleribe (200) assume that many families in Africa want their children to help in contributing towards family income.

**Urban migration:** Many rural families migrate to urban areas because of rural push and urban pull factors, as a result, they are often forced to live and work in the street as they lack access to basic requirements like food and shelter. Mostly, street workers are vulnerable to violence and become more susceptible to illegal work such as stealing, trafficking drugs and prostitution (Yadau & Sengupta, 2009). These children live in urban poverty, many children labourers live in unhealthy poor conditions, slum areas and work in poor environment such as domestic work, or work in hotels and restaurants, etc. (Serwadda-Luwaga, 2005).

Mandalivich (2003) is of the view that people who migrate from rural areas to urban centres in search of better prospects are ill-prepared for the urban life and are therefore, to either use their children or other children to enhance their economic fortunes in another dimension. Child labour has been bound on child rearing norms and attitudes which for the purpose of socialization, children are required to carry out assigned domestic chores and economic activities (Obiekeze, 1987; Mandalivich, 1993).

### **Child Abuse and Students Academic Performance**

Child abuse is defined in the Children Young Persons and Their Families Act as “the harming (whether physically, emotionally, or sexually), ill-treatment, abuse, neglect or deprivation of any child or young person”. It can take many forms including physical, emotional, sexual as well as neglect and exploitation ([www.childmatters.org.nz](http://www.childmatters.org.nz)).

Experiencing abuse and/or neglect may affect children's school performance in multiple ways, including lower grades, higher rate school dropout (Putinum, 2006; Hurt, Malnud, Broddsky and Giannetta, 2001). Also, child maltreatment is widely considered as responsible for a negative effect on children's academic performance as abused students tend to have less concentration span in class (Rew, 1999).

Leither and Johnson (1994) identified school outcomes in their domains—cognitive learning, participation and integration (i.e. socialization). Comparing these outcomes between a sample of maltreated children drawn from the North Carolina Central Registry of Child Abuse and Neglect and a general school sample, the researcher found that abused children performed significantly worse on all school measures, including grades, standardized test scores, grade retention and absences. Also, the dropout rate for abused children was more than three times higher than that of their non-abused counterparts.

Finally, children who had experienced physical abuse are viewed as more problematic in school, displaying academic deficits, problem behaviour, lowered self-esteem, delinquency and elevated feeling of aggressive and pervasive adjustment difficulties in every variety of context (Leither and Johnson, 1994).

## **Child Neglect and Academic Performance**

Federal legislation laid the groundwork for state by identifying a minimum set of acts or behaviours that define child neglect. The federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA Public Law 93-247) was enacted in 1974 to create a single federal forum for preventing and responding to child abuse and neglect. As a condition for necessary state grant funds under that act, states are required to have procedures in place for receiving and responding to allegations of abuse or neglect and for ensuring children's safety.

Putnumb (2006), Hurt, Malmud, Brodsky and Giannetta (2001) identified that experiencing abuse or neglect may affect children's school performance in multiple ways including lower grade, and higher rates of school dropout. Olusi (2013) affirms that children who are victims of neglect appear to constitute more problems at school. This is because they are the least successful in cognitive task when compared to their other counterparts who are not physically, educationally or socially neglected.

Akoloh, Okenjom and Obialu (2016) in their study, found out that a child that is educationally neglected is often one that lacks material resources, lacks moral, financial and academic support at school while the other aspect of child neglect connotes all forms of victimization, marginalization or alienation that a child may suffer from parents, teachers, peers, siblings or significant others within his immediate environment.

## **Child Abandonment and Academic Performance**

Child abandonment is the practice of relinquishing interest and claims over one's offspring in an extra legal way with the intent of never again resuming or reasserting guardianship over them (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org>child>). An abandoned child is called a foundling (as opposed to a runaway or an orphan). Baby dumping refers to parents (generally mothers) abandoning or discarding a child younger than 12 months in a public or private place with the intent of disposing it (Boswell, 1992).

Child abandonment has a lot of negative impacts on the growing up, they need to feel more and have a meaningful connection to their parents and family. When this state is absent whether physically or emotionally, the child may feel abandoned. Fieldman and Scherzo (2003) assert that a disabled child is one who has some kind of invalidity resulting from his physical features; such disability could be acquired by birth, illness, accident and cultural occurrence. A child under this condition is unable to perform appropriately in certain expected ways and is prone to the risk of abandonment.

## **Thesis Statement**

The society guarantees families a greater degree of autonomy on the care and socialization of children but most times, children are still being maltreated and made to suffer some degree of child labour even from their own parents who are meant to protect and guide them. Child labour has done more harm than good in the educational and social development of children in public secondary schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State and the society in general.

In Rivers State, young boys and girls are been n the street hawking various items for their parents or guardians and this street hawking exposes them to road accidents, robbery, assault, etc. Moreso, children are employed as house boys/girls (maids) which in some cases some of them are abused, sexually assaulted and made to suffer some degree of neglect.

Children engaging in hard domestic services, working in bakeries and other small industries such as pure water packaging firms, children given to prostitution and neo-slavery

and bounded labour in order to meet the economic demands of the society and also render a helping hand to parents e.g. contributing to the family. The resultant effect is that, there is a high rate of drop-out of children from primary and secondary schools, joining of bad gang of pick-pockets and touts in the market or Motor Park, respectively.

The government and non-governmental organizations, parents, corporate bodies and women organizations have tried their best to ameliorate the phenomenon but the effort made is not commensurate with the educational, social and health development of children in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

### **Statement of Objectives**

The main objective of this study is to assess the impact of child labour on academic performance of students. Specifically, the study seeks:

- To examine the relationship between child abuse and students' academic performance.
- To determine the relationship between child neglect and students' academic performance.
- To examine the relationship between child abandonment and students' academic performance.

### **Hypotheses**

- There is no significant relationship between child abuse and students' academic performance.
- There is no significant relationship between child neglect and student's academic performance in school.
- There is no significant relationship between child abandonment and students' academic performance in school.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Social provisional theory**

The proponents of this theory are Titmus and Kant (1963). The basic assumption of the social provisional perspectives is that society is complex and experiences change constantly. The proponents believe that as an integral part of society, the resources individuals used to solve their problems be they personal, group or communal problems should be provided for by the social system. The proponents of this theory place emphasis on the rights of society members especially as it pertains to equality of access to the resources and opportunity society has to offer.

The social provisional theory attaches particular importance to the responses of the community to the numerous personal and social problems, especially as they affect individuals in the society generally and the less privileged in particular. Every society looks forward to its growth, stability and continuity, so the proponents of this theory have made it clear that it is the right of society members to have equal access to resources and opportunities. The child should be given proper orientation, encouraged, motivated and reminded that the continuity of success of the society depends largely on the effort they put in today and not to be over-laboured as young individuals. In fact, many forms of labour and

exploitation/abuse should be checked and prevented from occurring (Charles, and Charles, 2004; Babbizi, 2002).

## METHODS

The study was carried out in Rivers State. The study adopted the survey and descriptive design methods. The design was considered appropriate for the study because it involved the collection of data through questionnaire that was personally administered to the respondents by the researcher. The population of the study was limited to Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of the state due to its largeness and prevalence of child labour as an urban economically viable area. The sample of this study consists of 200 respondents which were drawn through the systematic and purposive sampling technique. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire and library research. The questionnaire consisted of three sections – A, B and C. section A elicits the demographic data of respondents while section B contained phenomenal data using the modified 4 point liker scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) variables, while section consisted of dependent variables and high rate of child labour in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. Data generated were statistically analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (rxy).

### Data Analysis

To test the three formulated hypotheses, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis was used to test the hypotheses. The results were presented with respect to the research questions and corresponding hypothesis stated in the study and testing each at 0.05 level of significance.

## RESULTS

This section focuses on the presentation of data. A total of 200 questionnaires were administered and used for the analysis. Data were presented as shown below.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by sex

Sex	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	130	65
Female	70	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

From tale 1, it can be observed that 130 respondents representing 65% of the total respondents were male while 70 representing 35% of total respondents were female.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by age

Age	Respondents	Percentage (%)
20 – 29	30	15
30 – 39	50	25
40 – 49	65	32.5
50 and above	55	27.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

From table 2 above, the age distribution of respondents showed that 30 respondents representing 15% were between the ages of 20 – 29; 50 respondents representing 25% were between the ages of 30-39; 65 respondents representing 32.5% were between the ages of 40-49; 55 respondents representing 27.5% were between the age of 50 and above years.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents by occupation

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Students	32	16
Farmers	45	22.5
Civil servant	98	49
Others	25	12.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

From table 3 above, the distribution of respondents by occupation shows that 32 respondents representing 16% of the total population were students; 45 respondents representing 22.5% were farmers; 98 respondents representing 49% were civil servants while 25 respondents representing 12.5% were others who in the period of distributing the questionnaire came in contact for personal requirement.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents by marital status

<b>Marital status</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Married	80	40
Single	50	25
Divorced	40	20
Widowed	30	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4 indicates the marital status of respondents. 80 respondents representing 40% of the total population were married; 50 respondents representing 25% were single; 40 respondents representing 20% were divorced, while 30 respondents representing 15% were widowed.

Table 5: Distribution of respondents by level of education

<b>Level of education</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Primary	42	21
Secondary	56	28
Tertiary	87	43.5
No education	15	7.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

In table 5 above, the distribution of respondents by level of education is indicated. 42 respondents representing 21% of the total population had acquired primary education; 56 respondents representing 28% had acquired secondary education; 87 respondents representing 43.5% of population had acquired tertiary education; while 15 respondents representing 7.5% of the population had no education.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between child abuse and students' academic performance.

The independent variable is students' academic performance in school while the dependent variable is child abuse. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis was employed to test this hypothesis. The result of the analysis is presented in table 6 below.

Table 6: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the relationship between child abuse and academic performance of public school students in school

Variables	$\Sigma x$	$\Sigma x^2$	$\Sigma y$	$\Sigma xy$	r-cal
Child labour ( $x_1$ )	1630	11596			
Students' academic performance (y)			1299	11231	0.173
				8970	

N= 200; Significance at  $p < 0.05$ ,  $df = 198$ , crit.  $r = 0.161$

The result of the analysis reveals that the calculated r-value of 0.173 is greater than the critical value r-value of 0.161 at 0.05 level of significance with 198 degree of freedom. With the result, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between child abuse and students academic performance in school.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant relationship between child neglect and student's academic performance in school.

The independent variable is student's academic performance in school while the dependent variable is child neglect. Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was used in testing this hypothesis. The result of the analysis is presented in table 7 below.

Table 7: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the relationship between child neglect and academic performance of public school students in school

Variables	$\Sigma x$	$\Sigma x^2$	$\Sigma y$	$\Sigma xy$	r-cal
Child labour ( $x_2$ )	1731	16501			
Students' academic performance (y)			1299	12134	0.26
				8970	

N= 200; Significance at  $p < 0.05$ ,  $df = 198$ , crit.  $r = 0.161$

The result in table 7 shows that the calculated r-value of 0.26 was found to be greater than the critical r-value of 0.161 at 0.05 level of significance with 198 degree of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between child neglect and students' academic performance in school.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant relationship between child abandonment and students' academic performance in school.

The independent variable in this hypothesis is student's academic performance in school while the dependent variable is child abandonment. Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was employed to test this hypothesis. The result of the analysis is presented in table 8 below.

Table 8: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the relationship between child abandonment and academic performance of public school students in school

Variables	$\Sigma x$	$\Sigma x^2$	$\Sigma y$	$\Sigma xy$	r-cal
Child labour ( $x_3$ )	1650	15525			
Students' academic performance (y)			1299	11375	0.53
				8970	

N=200; Significance at  $p < 0.05$ ,  $df = 198$ , crit.  $r = 0.161$

The result of the analysis in table 8 above indicates that the calculated r-value of 0.53 is greater than the critical r-value of 0.161 at 0.05 level of significance with 198 degree of freedom. From the analysis, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between child abandonment and students' academic performance in school.

## DISCUSSION

The study seeks to investigate the effect of child labour on academic performance of public schools students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. To properly find out whether variables such as child abuse, child neglect and child abandonment are relatively significant to students' academic performance. The 0.05 level of significance was used for the statistical testing and each hypothesis.

### Child abuse and academic performance of students in school

The result of the first hypothesis seeks to investigate whether there is a significant relationship between child abuse and students' academic performance. The finding of this hypothesis supports Leiter and Johnson (1994) which identified school outcome in three domains: Cognitive learning, participation and integration. Children who had experienced physical abuse were viewed as more problematic in school, displaying academic deficits, problem behaviours, lowered self-esteem, delinquency, and elevated feelings of aggression and pervasive adjustment difficulties in a variety of contexts, make decisions and establish mechanism to meet these needs.

The finding is in line with Row (1999) who found out that child maltreatment is widely considered as responsible for negative effect on children's academic performance. Abused students tend to have less concentration span in class.

Alokan and Olatinji (2014) carried out a study on the influence of child abuse on classroom behaviour and academic performance among primary and secondary school learners in Ekiti State of Nigeria. All teachers in primary and secondary schools in both private and public sector in Ado Local Government Area of Ekiti State were targeted for the study. The study found out that there is a significant relationship between children's active involvement in parent's business and their attitude to class work. Based on the findings, it was recommended among other things, that the effect of child abuse on academic performance should receive attention in education policy forum, and that parents should always relate to their children with concentration, affection and also provide their needs. In schools, these symptoms manifest themselves through students' inability to concentrate, compete school work in time, or understand school work, being fearful, frustrated, stupid or bad about themselves, achieving low grades, and or being told they are lazy or slow (Larkin, 2009).

A number of studies done round the world showed that they are more highly aggressive than the non-abused children. These children are also prone to oppositional behaviour like fighting, delinquency and criminality (Dodge & Eckenrode, 1995). These children end up being self-injurious, suicidal, substance abusers, and may have emotional problems and difficulties in peer relationship (Kolko, 1996).

### **Child neglect and academic performance of students in school**

The result of the second hypothesis showed that there is a significant relationship between child neglect and student's academic performance in school. The finding of this hypothesis supports Putnum (2006), Hurt, Mamud, Brodsky and Giannetta (2001) which identified that experiencing abuse or neglect many affect children's school performance in multiple ways including lower grades and higher rates of school dropout.

This finding is also in line with Olusi (2003) which affirms that children who are victims of neglect appear to constitute more problems at school. This is because they are the least successful in cognitive task when compared to their other counterparts who are not physically, educationally, or socially neglected. He added that they are more fearful, inattentive, pathetic, insecure, maladjusted and unable to compete favourably with their peers academically. Socially, they demonstrate inappropriate behaviour and are not accepted by their classmates.

The finding also supports Obialu (2016) which assets that a child that is educationally neglected is often one that lacks material resources, moral, financial and academic supports to carry on with various engagements at school while the other aspect of child neglect (social neglect) connotes all forms of victimization, marginalization or alienation that a child may suffer from parents, teachers, peers, siblings of significant others within his immediate environment.

### **Child abandonment and academic performance of students in school**

The result of the third hypothesis indicates that there is a significant relationship between child abandonment and students' academic performance in school. The finding of this hypothesis supports Fieldman and Schezo (2003) who assert that a disabled child is one who has some kind of invalidity resulting from his physical features; such disabilities could be acquired by birth, illness, accident and cultural occurrence. Once the feeling of abandonment is replaced with a sense of confidence, purpose and love, they will start to improve in school but until then, they must be motivated by peers and teachers to incur their feeling of confidence and self-esteem.

Abandonment and maltreatment both have negative effects on children. As in the case of abandonment, research findings confirm a positive correlation between maltreatment and the failure of affected children to attach securely to subsequent careers (Howe, 2005; Kobak & Madsen, 2008; Mennen & O'keete, 2005; Prior & Claser, 2006; Steele, Hodges, Kaniek, Hillman & Enderson, 2003; and Wilson, 2009).

## **CONCLUSION**

Child labour and students' academic performance in Rivers State is an issue that has to be tackled with utmost urgency in order to meet up with the millennium development goals (MDGs) and the vision 2020. The findings of the study revealed that children are being subjected to labour such as street hawking, street begging, house maids, all sorts of menial jobs etc. The major causes of this which has been highlighted in the course of this research

are poverty, illiteracy, family squabble, migration, etc. has aggravated the issue at discourse. The resultant effect has led to high increase in social ill such as robbery, prostitution, drug addiction/peddling, kidnapping, terrorism (book-haram), etc. (Vanguard Newspaper, December 10, 2011).

Therefore, the issue of child labour and student's academic performance should be a major task to be tackled by the government and should be incorporated into the recurrent budget at both federal and state levels in order to reduce the menace and promote effective child welfare in the society at large.

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations will go a long way in curbing the menace of child labour in our society:

- Parents who cannot adequately cater for their children due to poverty should take them to orphanages where government/private organizations can properly provide their basic needs and educate them to be useful to themselves and the society.
- Government should enforce policies like the Child's Right Act and any defaulter should be made to face the wrought of the law.
- Street hawking and any unwholesome activities should be banned in order to prevent and curb child labour.
- Government at all levels should enhance growth in children needs by providing all the necessary supports that will promote children mentally, physically, emotionally, socially through the provision of basic infrastructures/services like good schools, social centres, etc.
- Awareness programmes should be constantly organized to reach out to the rural areas in form of seminars on the issue of effects of child labour to discourage parents from sending their children to live with relatives/friends as house maids.

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