

**Odd Labour and Academic Performance of Primary School Pupils in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State – Nigeria**



**Education**

**Key words:** child, odd labour, learning, pupils, academic performance.

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**Abstract**

The study sought to determine odd labour and academic performance of primary school pupils in Calabar metropolis, Cross River State, Nigeria. Survey research design was adopted and data collected from one thousand primary school children were analysed to determine the influence of odd labour on the pupils' academic performance. Two research questions and one hypothesis were formulated to guide the study. The instrument used for the purpose of data collection was constructed by the researcher. The statistical tool used was descriptive statistics and the independent t-test respectively. The result revealed low level of involvement of children in odd labour. Furthermore, odd labour has significant influence on the academic performance of the pupil. It was therefore recommended that parents and care givers should ensure that child odd labour is completely eradicated or reduced to its lowest minimum; so as to enhance the academic performance of the pupils in primary schools.

**I. Introduction**

In recent times, there have been negative reports from examination bodies and educational stakeholders on the poor performance in both West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO). For instance, May/June 2014 WAEC School Certificate Examinations revealed that about 70% of the candidates failed WAEC May/June 2014 examination ([www.pulse.ng](http://www.pulse.ng)). This result shows the poor status of the candidates.

One of the goals of universal basic education is for a child to have complete education within the first nine years in life. However, many children do not attend school, even if they attend, they are engaged in odd labour that hinders their full participation in basic education. It is very sad to note that about six million children in Nigeria are estimated to be working. This could be attributed to factors such as religious problems, inadequate infrastructural facilities, poverty, teenage pregnancy and early marriage to mention but a few (Awosusi&Adebo, 2012; Elijah &Okoruwa, 2006). Despite the numbers that are enrolled in schools, failure rate in examination is still very high. Several researches have been carried out to find solution to this alarming problem, yet the problem still persist.

The issue of young people working for many hours under hazardous conditions at the expense of acquiring basic education has precipitated an intense debate over the past decade and half. Odd labour in the context of this study is viewed as any work that interferes with a child's fundamental right to education. Such work is considered harmful and should be reduced to its lowest minimum or eliminated. Hence, this research seeks to find out if children involvement in odd labour has influence on their academic performance.

**Research questions**

1. What is the extent of primary school pupils' involvement in odd labour?
2. Does odd labour influence academic performance?

**Hypothesis**

1. Involvement of primary school children in odd labour does not significantly influence their academic performance.

## II. Literature Review

The occurrence of child labour remains a very serious issue in most developing countries like Nigeria. Odd labour is synonymous with child labour. These are commonly found in urban centres in Nigeria. In recent times, Nigeria has experienced rapid population growth in the urban area as a result of rural-urban migration. Urbanization has forced many families in Nigeria to engage their wards to work in order to augment family incomes (Okafor, 2010; Nseabasi&Abiodun, 2010).

Records abound on high level of child labour in Nigeria. For instance, in the year 1995, about twelve million children were engaged in odd labour while in 2006 the numbers of children were about fifteen million (Adegun, 2013). The International Labour Organization report showed that about 20 million children under the age of fourteen were involved in child labour. Children work in places like farms, domestic chores, fishing, mining, street hawking and child trafficking. Street hawking is one of the most prevalent types of child labour in Nigeria. This has prevented them from school enrolment. Awosusi&Adebo (2012) observed that many children in Nigeria work for many hours with little or no benefits. Despite the numerous policies designed by the Nigerian government to reduce the incidence of this ugly menace, yet many parents and care givers still engage their children to odd labour.

In a study conducted Ekwe (1986) which involved 100 juvenile hawkers and 100 adults in Owerri town, 96% and 45% of the adults and juvenile hawkers respectively confessed that child labour leads to bad behaviour such as sexual abuse and prostitution. Also Charles (2001) on a study of child labour and children welfare in Calabar metropolis involving 200 domestic servants and 200 employees as respondents. A total of 51 (72.86%), male respondents and 110 (84.6%) female respondents of the employees of about 12-15 years old children were involved. Among the children involved in odd labour, 46 (65.71%) and male 92 (70.77%) female were primary school dropouts, while 12 (17.14%) male and 15 (11.54%) female were primary school graduates. These children were from various ethnic groups/states. For example, Ibibio 42 (21%), Annang 26 (13.32%), Oron 17 (8.55%) and Igbo 26 (13%). The various jobs done by these children vary from baby-sitting to shop attendance. 32 (26.92%) females were cooks, 49 (37.69%) baby-sit, 48 (68.57%) hawked and 22 (31.43%) sold in shops, also 124 (60.5%) male hawked, 59 (29.5%) baby-sit and 60 (30%) sold in the shops. The report showed that these domestic servants go to bed late and woke up early, thus denied of enough sleep after a day's hard job. Their health is also endangered due to lack of proper medical attention.

In the area of the economics of child labour (Edmonds, 2008; Edmonds and Pavenik, 2005; Basu and Tzannatos, 2003; Basu, 1999) researches focused on the determinants of child labour but the consequences of child labour are also contained in literature such as (Emerson and Knabb, 2007, 2006, 2008; Horowitz and Wang, 2004; Ejrnaes and Portner, 2004; Basu, 2002; Dessy and Pallage, 2001; Baland and Robinson, 2000; Dessy, 2000). This literature emphasized the trade-off between child labour and human capital accumulation to justify the policy interventions assuming depressing impacts from child labour. However, not much has been done regarding the influence of odd labour on academic performance.

Beegle et al (2009), in their study of a five year panel of school children in Vietnam discovered that child labour has negative influence on academic performance. In four different researches carried out by Oloko (2002) in (Children and Women's Right in Nigeria: UNICEF, 2002), involving the cities of Lagos, Oshogbo, Calabar, Kaduna and Bauchi showed that the degree of hazard children are exposed to depend on the kind of labour, gender of the child and the conditions attached to the child. Street hawkers are more prone to serious falls and assault from adults.

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Researches on the influence of child odd labour have mainly focused on attendance rather than academic performance. For example (Ravallion&Wodon, 2000, Assaad , Levison& Dang 2005; Canals – Cerda &Ridao-cano, 2004, Beegle, Rajeev & Roberta 2009)found modest negative effects of child work.

Bezerra, Kassouf, and Arends-Kuenning, (2009) examined the impact of child work on student proficiency. They found that odd labour has a negative impact on the performance of the students. Also, Dumas (2012) examined the effects of child labour on the test scores of Senegalese children and found that child labour has a positive effect. Also, Gunnarsson, Orazemand Sanchez (2006) in their study found that children working for long hours have negative impact on their test scores. This means that engagement of children to odd labour impacts greatly on their academic performance.

Most of the previous studies were on child labour, school attendance and school attainment. However,there were discrepancies in their results. In contrast, Ravalion and Wodon's (2000) study found out that child labour and school enrolment had no significant relationship. Meanwhile, Boozer and Suri (2001) found that there is a negative relationship between child labour and school attendance. Also Psacharopoulos (1997) in his study revealed that a child labour reduces student's academic performance.

However, recent studies argued that school enrolment is notideal for measuring the influence of child labour on academic performance. Hence, Gunnarssonet. al. (2004), indicated that an employed child who is in school can still do well academically. Be that as it may, odd labour has the potential to harm the child's academic performance by reducing time spent on study, or leaving the child too tired to make efficient use of time in school (Orazem&Gunnarsson 2004).

### **III. Methodology**

Subjects and data collection:

A sample size consisting of 1000 pupils were obtained from primary schools in Calabar Municipality. The sampling technique used was stratified random sampling. The subjects (506 male and 494 females) ranged in age between 9 and 11 years.

The questionnaire was captioned Pupils Opinion Questionnaire (POQ) and an Achievement Test in English Language. It was sub-divided into three sections A-C. Section A contains demographic information such as age, sex, school and class. Section B measured the extent of odd labour. Section C was 25 itemsin English Language that measured the academic performance of the pupils. The test items were constructed based on primary six English language syllabus.

#### ***Data Analysis***

The data were analysed with simple percentages, bar charts and line graphs and Independentt-test statistics respectively.The academic performance was measured with the achievement scores in English language.

#### IV. Result and Interpretation

Research question

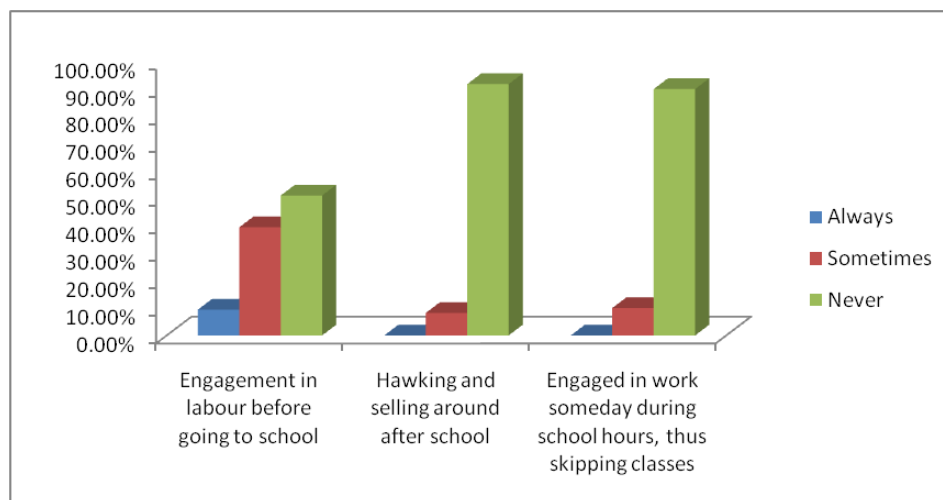
What is the extent of primary school pupils’ involvement in odd labour?

The results in table 1 showed the extent to which parents introduced pupils to odd labour.

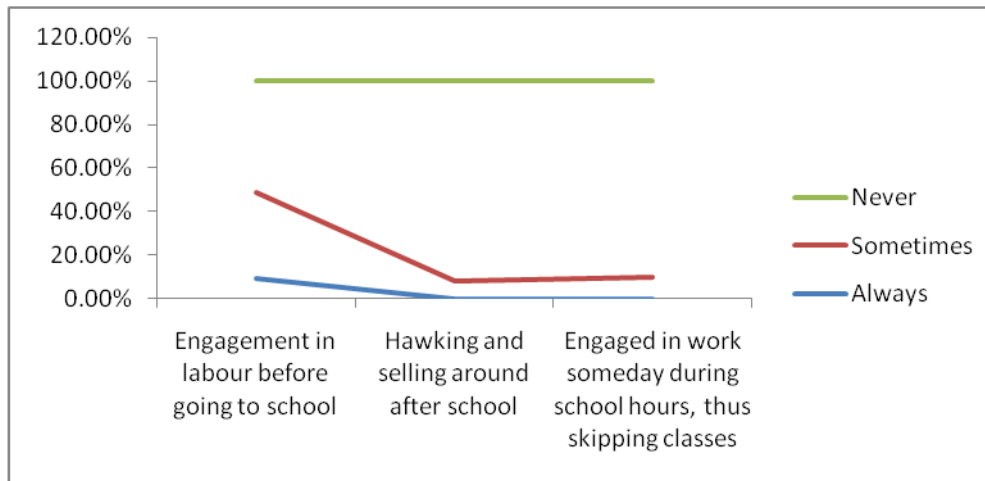
**Table 1. Frequency table showing pupils involvement in odd labour. N=1000**

S/N	Pupils Involvement in odd labour	Always	Sometimes	Never
1.	Engagement in labour before going to school	94 (9.4%)	395 (39.5%)	511 (51.1%)
2.	Hawking and selling around after school	-	82 (8.2%)	918 (91.8%)
3.	Engaged in work someday during school hours, thus skipping classes	-	100 (10%)	900 (90%)

In the study, 9.4% of the 1000 respondents reported that their parents always involved them in odd labour. Involving children in house work before going to school, about 39.5% reported that they were sometimes involved, while 51.1% reported that they were never involved. Whereas, 8.2 % revealed that they sometimes hawk and sell after school, 91.8% were never involved. Again 10% revealed that they were sometimes engaged in work during school hours, thus skipping classes as 90 % were never involved. These responses revealed low involvement of pupils in odd labour. This is further shown in figures 1 and 2. This table is further illustrated in pictorial forms as shown in figure 1 and 2.



**Figure 1: Bar chart of pupils’ involvement in odd labour**



**Figure 2: Line graph of pupils' involvement in odd labour.**

**Hypothesis**

Involvement of primary school children in odd labour does not significantly influence their earning outcome.

**Table 2: Independent t-test analysis of pupils' involvement in odd labour and academic performance.**

Variable	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
High odd labour	51	9.96	4.29	2.92	.004*
Low odd labour	949	11.97	4.79		

P<0.05, df=998, \*Significant

The result showed that the mean score of respondents highlyinvolved in odd labour (X=9.96) was significantly lower than the mean score of 11.97 of those lowly involved in odd labour. By implication, the result shows that involvement of pupils in odd labour has a significant influence on their academic performance.

**V. Discussion of Findings**

The study revealed that odd labour is not high. In other words, parents and care givers do not highly involve primary school pupils to odd labour. This finding contradicts the findings of Charles (2001) who found out that children involved in odd labour was high. The contrast is as a result of the Cross River Government's ban on child labour in the state especially in Calabar metropolis.

Furthermore, this study showed that parental involvement of primary school pupils in odd labour has negative influence on their academic performance. The result revealed that children who were involved in odd labour had lower scores compared to their counterparts whose parents rarely involve them in odd labour. This is supported by Bezerra et.al. (2009) whose study found that odd labour has a negative impact on the performance of the students.

Another closely related study that supports this finding is Dumas (2012) who examined the effects of child work on the test scores children, finds some evidence of positive effects of child work on their academic performance. Also, Gunnarsson et.al. (2006) also found negative impact of working on students test scores. In addition Beegle et.al. (2009), Oloko (2002), OrazemandGunnarsson (2004) found that child odd labour has negative influence on academic performance.

## VI. Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusively, the study shows that a high proportion of the pupils were not involved in all areas of odd labour examined (Engagement in labour before going to school, hawking and selling around after school and engagement in work someday during school hours, thus skipping classes). This proportion of students had higher test scores than their counterparts who were involved in odd labour.

Based on the findings, there is a clear evidence to show that the Cross River State Child Right Act passed into law on the 26<sup>th</sup> May 2012 which prohibits child odd labour is effective in the metropolis. In addition, parents and care givers should ensure that child odd labour is completely eradicated or reduced to its lowest minimum. This will enhance high learning outcome of pupils in primary schools and foster the foundation for better academic performance in external examinations.

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