

## Assessment of Child Labour among Farming Households in Selected Local Government Areas of Niger State, Nigeria

Ojo M.A., Olorunniyi O.B., Oseghale A.I. and Ojo A.O.

Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension Technology  
Federal University of Technology, Minna

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### Abstract

The study examined child labour among farming households in selected Local Government Areas of Niger State Nigeria. The primary data used for the study were obtained from 103 farmers that were randomly selected from two Local Government Areas using structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics was used to describe the activities and the hazards encountered by children involved in farm work in the study area. Binary logit regression model was used to analyse the factors affecting child labour use among rural agrarians in the study area. The results of the study showed that the major activity status of the children in the study area was combination of schooling with farm work. The study also revealed that there were more females schooling (43.7%) when compared to the males (16.4%) in the study area. In terms of age, male children aged between 15-17 years (48.10%) were more exposed to work only than female children (21.4%) of the same age. However, 40.7 percent of the female children that work and school were aged between 9 and 14 years. The study further revealed that the age of the household head ( $P < 0.05$ ) and the number of male children ( $P < 0.01$ ) increased the probability of involving children in child labour. The study therefore concludes that male children are more prone to use as child labour than their female counterparts and the aged household heads are more likely to involve their children in work. Hence the study recommends that household heads should be sensitized on the need to avoid engaging their children especially the males in long hours of work in order to allow them participate actively in school. Furthermore, there is a need to cushion the effect of low income at old age through the provision of adequate pension schemes since low income is the key reason for child labour use.

**Keywords:** Child, labour, activities, school, work

### Introduction

The use of child labour for agricultural work is prevalently high and has become an obstacle to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) (Edet *et al.*, 2013). A child, according to Dionkno (2008), is a person below the age of eighteen years, who is unable to cater for him or herself or protect him/herself from abuse, neglect, mistreatment or discrimination because of physical or mental disability. In recent years children of various kinds have been exploited due to certain reasons and engaged in child labour. Child labour according to International Labour Organization (ILO),

(2006) is a situation where children less than 18 years of age are involved in any kind of work hazardous to their health, safety and moral development.

In addition, United Nations Children's Funds UNICEF (2007) included children aged 5-11 years involved in domestic work for 28 hours or more per week. The exposure of children to extra activities sometimes influences their decision to engage in crimes in the society. Ajakaye, (2013) posited that the use of child labour is extremely high in Africa especially sub-Saharan Africa. The author reported that about 48 million children are involved in

child labour across sub-Saharan Africa with about 15million in Nigeria. Child labour is mostly common in the rural area due to their agrarian nature and in fact ILO (2010) reported that over 129 million children aged between 5 to 17 years were employed in agriculture while Edet et al. (2013), reported that 60 percent of the child labourers are employed by agriculture. Agricultural activities in general sometimes involve works that are related to accidents and diseases, which could be fatal or non-fatal. The implication is that children employed by agriculture could be affected as they are also exposed to toxic pesticides, dust, diseases and unsafe situations. Children involved in labour activities are deprived of health care because in most cases their health conditions are ignored. Akarro and Mtweve (2011) are of the view that it shrinks their opportunities for schooling and also enslaves them and separates them from their families in addition to them being abused physically, mentally, sexually and psychologically. Despite the fact that the Federal Government of Nigeria has adopted several policies and legislation in order to improve children welfare by eradicating child labour, children are still involved in child labour especially in the rural areas (Robinson, 2004); and this has been attributed to the poor economic structure a situation where most households live below the poverty line (Ekpenyong and Sibirii, 2011). Although much has been done by government and non-governmental organizations to address the problem, there is a general consensus that child labour should be reduced and eventually eliminated across the nation.

Despite government's implementation of several programmes on the eradication of child labour and many researchers have also come up with several results, yet there is still need for more research effort to address this problem particularly in Niger State, Nigeria. It is on this basis that this research is therefore set up to fill this gap and to bring out a clear picture of child labour situation in the

study area. The specific objectives of this study are to (i) examine activity types and status of children across gender and age; (iii) examine the factors influencing child labour use among the rural agrarians and (ii) analyse the hazards encountered by the children involved in agricultural production in the study area.

### **Methodology**

This study was conducted in Niger State, Nigeria. The State is located between Latitude 8°22'N and 11°30'N and Longitude 3°30'E and 7°20'E. The State covers a total land area of 74,244 Sq. km which is estimated to be about 8% of Nigeria's total land area (Niger State Geographic Information System (NIGIS), 2007). This makes the state the largest in the country. The state has an estimated population of about 4 million people in 2006 with a projected population of 4.9 million people at the end of 2017 based on Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN, 2015) estimate of 2.38% annual projection. The State has an average annual temperature of about 32°C with an average relative humidity range of 6% being very dry to 94% (very humid) over the course of the year. Agriculture is the back bone of the economy of Niger State, more than 80% of the population depends either directly or indirectly on it for their livelihood. By reason of its location, climate and soil, the State is one of the largest and most fertile agriculture lands in the country and has the capacity to produce most of Nigeria's stable crops. It also has ample opportunities for grazing, fishing and forestry.

The sample for this study was selected using multistage sampling techniques. The first stage involved random selection of two Local Government Areas (LGAs) (Bida and Wushishi) in the study area. This was followed by random selection of 46 and 57 farmers in Bida and Wushishi LGAs respectively, making a total of 103 farm household units comprising 526 individuals and 324 children aged 5-17 years. This sample size was distributed in proportionate to the LGAs farm

household population in the study area. Three categories of children were considered and they include: school only (children going to school and not working), work only (children working only and not going to school) and school and work (children working and going to school)

The data for this study were collected with the use of structured questionnaire designed in line with the objectives of the study with the assistance of trained enumerators in the State's Agricultural Development Project (ADP). Data collected included total production inputs and farm outputs, various farm activities engaged in by farmers and the children. Also, socio-economic factors of the farmers and the children involved in farm labour such as farmer's age, years of schooling, household size, number of contact with extension agents and accessibility to credit were collected

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, descriptive statistics (such as percentages, frequency distribution table) and binary logit regression model were used. The binary logit regression model was used to determine the factors that influenced the use of child labour among farming households in the study area and the model is expressed as:

$$Y_i = \log\left(\frac{p_i}{1-p_i}\right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \beta_7 X_7 + \beta_8 X_8 + \beta_9 X_9 + U_i$$

Where

$Y_i$  = Dummy variable which takes the value of 1, if the household engages in child labour and 0, if otherwise.

$X_1$  = Age of the household head (years)

$X_2$  = Household size

$X_3$  = Educational level of the household head (years spent in formal education)

$X_4$  = Farm size (ha)

$X_5$  = Household income (N)

$X_6$  = Number of male children

$X_7$  = Number of Female Children

$X_8$  = Ownership of land-assets by household (farm-owning household = 1, 0 = otherwise)

$X_9$  = household's monthly expenditure (Naira)

$U_i$  = Error term

$\beta_1 - \beta_{11}$  = Parameters

## Results and Discussion

### Activity types and status of children across gender and age

The activity type and status of the children across gender and age in the study area are presented in Tables 1 and 2. However, it is important to note that, the status of the children in the study area were grouped into three; school only, work only and school and work as shown in Table 1. The results showed that 51.2% of the children were in the category that combined school with work while 27.8% attended school only. The combination of work and school tend to become competing priorities since these children sometimes undergo pressure from work and are unlikely to strike a balance with the demands of both activities (Sim and Hoilund-Carlsen, 2008). Among the children working, the male had a higher percentage (28.6) than their female counterparts (21.0).

In addition, there were more female schooling (43.7%) than the male (16.4%). This indicates that the male were more exposed to work than their female counterparts and this might not have been unconnected with the family pressure on male children to support their parents on the farm. This finding disagrees with that of UNICEF (2007) which pointed out that enrolment in formal schools favours the males than their female equals due to some cultural factors. However, the findings agree with that of Okpukpara and Odurukwe (2006) who established that male participation in full-time farm work dominates that of females across zones in Nigeria except in the north-east Nigeria where there is marginal difference in favour of male education. In terms of age, male children aged between 15-17 years (48.10%) were more exposed to work only than female children (21.40%) of the same age. However, 40.7% of the female children that work and school are aged between 9 and 14 years. This result follows a priori expectation that child labour increases with the child's age (Badmus, 2011).

**Activities engaged in by children**

The result in Table 3 shows that majority (80.58%) of the male are engaged in farm activities such as land clearing, weeding, planting, watering of farm, processing of farm produce and bagging (farm activities as shown in Table 4) while only few of the females (19.42%) were involved. Majority (80.73%) of the female are engaged in household chores such as washing, cooking, caring for younger ones, hawking and sweeping while only 19.27% of males are involved. This may not be unconnected with the fact that females are known for household chores in most of the cultures in Nigeria. This is in agreement with Mamadou (2009), who reported that the females are mostly involved in household activities and they are often made unseen meanwhile, they represent a large percentage of working children. Male children are more involved in recreation and cultural activities such as religion duties, visiting of friends and families in the study area than the female ones. It is worthy of note in Table 4, that a number of children (9.7%) are employed in the application of agrochemicals making them susceptible to agrochemical related health challenges. More so, activities such as land clearing, ridge making and weeding may be too hectic for the children and this can affect their schooling activities.

The result also revealed that 95.1 percent of the children in the study area engaged in washing while some children were engaged in other household chores. Also, 20.4% were involved in hawking on streets. Hawking exposes children to accidents, sexual harassment and other vices.

**Hazards encountered by children**

The hazards encountered by the sampled children are shown in Table 5. Children that combined school and work seemed to perform poorly (31.1%) in their schooling activities and sometimes got late to school (19.4%) due to the farming activities they were engaged in. From the findings, the hazards encountered by the children were aches and pains (85.4%), snake bite (20.4%) and respiratory

problems (1.9%). This finding agrees with that of Lawal and Akintayo (2007) who reported that about 80% of children in Oyo State are exposed to hazards resulting from their involvement in farm activities and even hawking leading to their lateness or absence from school.

**Factors influencing child labour use among farming households**

The result of the binary logit regression is as shown in Table 6. Age of household head, number of male children and land ownership were the factors that influenced child labour use. The results of the analysis revealed pseudo  $R^2$  of 0.4296 and Wald chi square values of 27.73. The pseudo  $R^2$  value implies that the variables included in the model explained 42.96% variation in the child labour use in the study area while Wald chi square value implies that the entire model is statistically significant at 1% probability level.

Age of household head and number of male children in the family had positive and significant effect on the child labour use in the study area at 5% and 1% probability level respectively. This implies that increase in age of household heads had higher likelihood of engaging their children in child labour. The reason is not far-fetched as older household heads become dependent on remittance from their children. Also, the male children are more prone to child labour activities as increase in the number of male children had positive influence on child labour use. This result corroborates the finding of Khanam, (2004) who revealed that the probability of a child working increased with age of the household head. The ownership of land assets by rural household was significant at 10 percent but negative. This is an indication that land ownership by household heads reduces the likelihood of them engaging their children in child labour. This could be due to the fact that land is an asset that can serve as a source of income when rented or leased out.

### **Marginal effect and partial elasticity of the significant variables in the regression model**

The results of the marginal effect and partial elasticity of the significant variables are shown in Table 7. The results showed that household head age, number of male child in the family and the ownership of land were inelastic which implies that a change in these variables led to less than proportionate change in the probability of child labour use for farm work in the study area.

### **Involvement of children in farm activities**

The result in Table 8 points to the fact that insufficient income was the major reason children were involved in economic activities. As shown, high cost of school fees (59.2%), parents' low income (46.6%) and poverty (23.3%) among others were part of the reasons why household heads involved their children in farm work. This is corroborated by Lana (2014), poor households are unable to meet their basic needs and the household heads are unable to meet up with their obligation. Hence, they rely on the income earned by their children involved in child labour.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the study therefore concludes that most of the children were engaged in working and schooling and male children were more involved in child labour in the study area. Secondly, the aged household heads and households with male children involved their children more in child labour in the study area. Finally, low income as well as poverty was the key reason behind the use of children in farm and other income generating activities which in turn exposed the children to hazards.

The study therefore recommends that: both governmental and non-governmental organization should sensitize the household heads on the need to avoid engaging their children especially the males in long hours of work in order to allow them participate actively in school.

Also, there is a need to cushion the effect of low income at old age through the provision of social security schemes which guarantees stream of monthly stipend for them since low income is the key reason for child labour use.

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**Table 1: Distribution of respondent’s children activity status**

<i>Children Status</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
School only	90	27.8
Work only	68	21.0
School and work	166	51.2
Total	324	100.0

**Table 2: Distribution of children activity across gender and age**

<i>Age Group</i>	<i>School and work</i>		<i>Work only</i>		<i>School only</i>	
<i>by Gender</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<b>Male</b>						
5-8	8	7.7	4	7.4	23	74.2
9-11	28	26.9	9	16.7	6	19.4
12-14	33	31.7	15	27.8	2	6.4
15-17	35	33.7	26	48.1	-	-
Total	104	55.0	54	28.6	31	16.4
<b>Female</b>						
5-8	15	24.2	3	21.4	32	54.2
9-11	23	37.1	2	14.3	13	22.0
12-14	19	30.6	6	42.9	9	15.3
15-17	5	8.1	3	21.4	5	8.5
Total	62	45.9	14	10.4	59	43.7
All	166	51.2	68	21.0	90	27.8

**Table 3: Distribution of activity engaged in by sex of children**

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Work on farm	103	31.79
Male	83	80.58
Female	20	19.42
Household chores	109	33.64
Male	21	19.27
Female	88	80.73
Recreation and cultural activities such as religion duties, visiting friends and families	112	34.57
Male	66	58.93
Female	46	41.07

**Table 4: Distribution of children activities**

<i>Activities</i>	<i>*Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<i>Farm Activities</i>		
Land clearing	86	83.5
Ridge making	54	52.4
Weeding of farm	27	26.2
Planting	48	46.6
Agrochemical application	10	9.7
Watering of farm	48	46.6
Harvesting of farm produce	9	8.7
Processing of farm produce	9	8.7
Bagging of farm produce	9	8.7
Selling of farm produce	15	14.6
<i>Home Activities</i>		
Washing	98	95.1
Cooking	86	83.5
Fetching of water	93	90.3
Caring for younger ones	24	23.3
Shopping	6	5.9
Hawking	21	20.4

\*Multiple responses

**Table 5: Distribution of hazards encountered by children involved in farm work**

<i>Hazards</i>	<i>Children involved</i>	
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Aches and pains	88	85.4
Snake bite	21	20.4
Poor performance	32	31.1
Lateness to school	20	19.4
Absence from school	16	15.5
Skin disease	6	5.8
Respiratory	2	1.9

**Table 6: Factors influencing child labour use**

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Z-value</i>
Age of household head (X <sub>1</sub> )	0.0865	2.45**
Household size number(X <sub>2</sub> )	0.1261	0.98
Educational level of household head(X <sub>3</sub> )	0.0546	0.88
Farm size (ha) (X <sub>4</sub> )	-0.7634	-1.35
Household income(X <sub>5</sub> )	-0.0000	-0.83
Number of male children(X <sub>6</sub> )	1.1038	2.63***
Number of female children(X <sub>7</sub> )	-0.1536	-0.28
Ownership of land access-(X <sub>8</sub> )	-0.8870	-1.71*
Household monthly expenditure(X <sub>9</sub> )	-1.84e-06	-0.05

Number of observation=103

Wald chi<sup>2</sup> (9) =27.73\*\*\*Prob > chi<sup>2</sup> =0.0011Pseudo R<sup>2</sup> =0.4296

\*\*\* = significant at 1% probability level, \*\* =significant at 5% probability level and \* = significant at 10% probability level

**Table 7: Marginal effect and partial elasticity of the significant variables**

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Marginal effect</i>	<i>Partial elasticity</i>
Age of household head	0.0667	0.5192
Number of male children	0.0851	0.1802
Ownership of land	-0.0684	-0.2715