

Socio-Economic Determinants of Child Labour in Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the socio-economic determinants of child labour in Akure and its surrounding areas in Ondo State, Nigeria. Primary data were obtained through structured questionnaires administered to 190 working children aged 6 to 16 years. Descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis using SPSS version 22 were employed to examine the influence of household income, parental education, family size, migration, and school attendance. The results indicate that household income and parental education have significant negative effects on child labour, while family size, migration, and poor school attendance exert significant positive effects. The regression model explains approximately 89 percent of the variation in child labour. The findings highlight poverty, weak educational systems, and household demographic factors as major drivers of child labour. The study recommends poverty alleviation programmes, improved access to quality education, effective enforcement of child labour laws, and strengthened social protection systems to enhance child welfare in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Child labour; Poverty; Education; Family size; Migration; Nigeria*

INTRODUCTION

Child labour remains a major social, economic, and developmental challenge across the world. Over the past few decades, scholarly interest in the subject has increased significantly, reflecting growing concern among governments, international organisations, labour unions, employers' associations, and child welfare agencies. Despite these efforts, child labour continues to persist, particularly in developing countries where poverty, weak institutions, and limited access to education remain prevalent. Consequently, child labour has become one of the most critical child rights issues of global concern (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2013; UNICEF, 2020).

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, continues to face serious challenges in addressing child labour. Although child labour legislation and social security mechanisms exist, their implementation and effectiveness remain limited. Child labour in Nigeria generally refers to the engagement of children under the age of eighteen in activities that hinder their physical, mental, and educational development. Such activities often restrict access to basic education and expose children to hazardous working conditions. It was estimated that about 15 million children were engaged in various forms of labour in Nigeria in 2006, reflecting the widespread nature of the problem. Poverty remains a major driver, as children's earnings constitute an important source of income for poor households (Anker, 1995; Boyden, Ling, & Myers, 1998; Myers, 1999).

Despite policy interventions such as the Child Rights Act (2003) and the Universal Basic Education Act (2004), progress in eliminating child labour has been limited. Only a proportion

of Nigerian states have fully domesticated child protection laws, while enforcement remains weak, especially in the informal sector. Existing labour laws also contain gaps, as minimum age provisions do not adequately cover self-employed and informal-sector children. In addition, inadequate labour inspection and limited social protection programmes further weaken child protection efforts (Asuquo, et al., 2024).

Globally, child labour is most prevalent in Sub-Saharan Africa, where nearly one in four children is engaged in some form of labour before the age of sixteen (Admassie, 2002; Hagemann et al., 2006). Most working children are employed in agriculture and family enterprises, with relatively few receiving formal wages (Edmonds & Pavcnik, 2005a; ILO, 2006; Diallo et al., 2010). Early involvement in labour reduces educational attainment, limits future earning potential, and perpetuates intergenerational poverty. Exposure to hazardous work during childhood also poses serious risks to physical and mental development.

In Nigeria, child labour is closely linked to household poverty, low parental education, large family size, rural–urban migration, and poor school quality (Basu & Ray, 1995; Schultz, 1997; Gupta, 2000). Weak educational infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, and limited learning resources discourage school attendance, while socio-cultural practices sometimes encourage children’s participation in economic activities (Fafunwa, 1974; Awan et al., 2011). These factors reinforce the tendency to substitute schooling with labour.

Akure, the capital of Ondo State, has experienced rapid urban growth in recent years, attracting migrant families in search of livelihood opportunities. This has increased population pressure, income insecurity, and housing challenges, thereby heightening children’s vulnerability to economic exploitation. Migrant and low-income households often face limited access to social services and educational opportunities, increasing the likelihood of child labour participation.

Despite existing national studies, there remains limited localized empirical evidence on the socio-economic determinants of child labour in Akure. Most available data are aggregated and fail to capture community-specific realities. This limits the effectiveness of policy interventions and child welfare programmes. Therefore, this study examines the influence of household income, parental education, family size, migration, and school attendance on child labour in Akure. By providing empirical evidence, the study seeks to support evidence-based policymaking and promote sustainable child welfare and socio-economic development in Nigeria.

Statement of the Research Problem

Despite national and international efforts to eliminate child labour, the practice remains widespread in many developing countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. Nigeria continues to record a high prevalence of child labour, especially in informal sectors such as agriculture, street trading, domestic services, mining, and small-scale enterprises (ILO, 2006; Diallo et al., 2010). Although several legal frameworks, including the Child Rights Act (2003) and the Universal Basic Education Act (2004), have been enacted to protect children, weak enforcement, limited social protection, and persistent poverty have undermined their effectiveness.

Existing studies indicate that poverty, low parental education, household size, migration, and poor access to quality education are major drivers of child labour in developing economies (Basu & Ray, 1995; Edmonds & Pavcnik, 2005; Schultz, 1997). However, the influence of these factors varies across regions due to differences in socio-cultural practices, economic opportunities, and institutional capacity. In Nigeria, most empirical studies on child labour

have focused on national or regional aggregates, with limited attention given to localized urban and peri-urban settings such as Akure and its surrounding communities.

Akure has experienced rapid population growth, rural–urban migration, and increasing informal economic activities, which have contributed to the growing involvement of children in labour-intensive occupations. Many children in the area combine schooling with economic activities or abandon education entirely due to household financial constraints and weak parental support. Reports also suggest that a significant proportion of working children experience irregular school attendance, poor academic performance, and early dropout, thereby limiting their future human capital development (Boyden, Ling, & Myers, 1998; Schiefelbein, 1997).

Furthermore, despite the availability of descriptive statistics on child labour in Nigeria, there is insufficient empirical evidence on the relative contribution of household income, parental education, family size, migration, and school attendance to child labour participation at the local level. The absence of such context-specific evidence constrains the formulation of targeted and effective intervention strategies.

Against this background, the central problem addressed in this study is the persistent prevalence of child labour in Akure despite existing legal, educational, and social protection frameworks. Specifically, there is limited empirical understanding of how socio-economic and demographic factors interact to influence children’s involvement in labour in the study area. This gap necessitates a systematic investigation into the socio-economic determinants of child labour in Akure and its surrounding communities in order to inform evidence-based policy and sustainable child welfare interventions.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine the socio-economic determinants of child labour in Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Examine the effect of household income on the incidence of child labour in Akure.
2. Assess the influence of parents’ or guardians’ level of education on child labour participation among children in Akure.
3. Determine the impact of family-related factors, particularly family size and school attendance, on the incidence of child labour in Akure.

Research Questions

In line with the objectives of the study, the following research questions are addressed:

1. What is the effect of household income on the incidence of child labour in Akure?
2. How does the level of education of parents or guardians influence child labour participation among children in Akure?
3. To what extent do family-related factors, particularly family size and school attendance, affect the incidence of child labour in Akure?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Literature Review

Child labour remains a complex socio-economic phenomenon that reflects the interaction of poverty, household characteristics, educational opportunities, and institutional arrangements. Understanding the concept and determinants of child labour is essential for designing effective interventions and promoting sustainable development. This section reviews key concepts

related to child labour and examines how socio-economic factors influence children's participation in labour activities.

Concept of Child Labour

Child labour generally refers to the engagement of children in economic and non-economic activities that interfere with their physical, mental, emotional, and educational development. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2013), child labour includes work that is hazardous, exploitative, or detrimental to children's schooling and wellbeing. It encompasses activities that deprive children of their childhood, dignity, and potential. UNICEF (2020) further emphasizes that child labour involves work that exceeds acceptable thresholds in terms of hours, conditions, and risks, particularly for children below the minimum legal working age.

However, not all forms of children's work constitute child labour. In many societies, children participate in light household chores or family enterprises as part of socialization and skill development. Such activities are generally considered acceptable when they do not interfere with schooling or harm children's health (Boyden, Ling, & Myers, 1998). The distinction between "child work" and "child labour" is therefore important in policy formulation, as it helps to identify harmful practices that require urgent intervention.

Household Income and Child Labour

Household income is widely recognized as one of the most significant determinants of child labour. Poverty constrains households' ability to meet basic needs and invest in education, leading families to rely on children's labour as a coping strategy (Anker, 1995). In low-income households, children's earnings often contribute substantially to family survival, especially during periods of economic hardship. Basu and Ray (1995) argue that child labour is more prevalent in households facing unstable income, unemployment, and limited access to credit.

Furthermore, income shocks such as crop failure, illness, or job loss can increase children's participation in labour activities. In such situations, families prioritize short-term income generation over long-term human capital development. Consequently, poverty reinforces a cycle in which low income leads to child labour, reduced education, and continued poverty in adulthood (Akpan, 2016; Akpan & Uford, 2024).

Parental Education and Child Labour

Parental education plays a crucial role in shaping household decisions regarding children's schooling and labour participation. Educated parents are more likely to understand the long-term benefits of education and prioritize their children's academic development (Schultz, 1997). Higher levels of parental education are associated with improved income prospects, better health practices, and greater awareness of children's rights.

Conversely, parents with limited education may undervalue formal schooling and perceive child labour as a necessary or acceptable means of economic support. Low educational attainment also restricts parents' access to stable employment, thereby increasing dependence on children's earnings (Gupta, 2000). As a result, children from less educated households are more vulnerable to early labour market entry and school dropout.

Family Size and Child Labour

Family size is another important factor influencing child labour. Large households often experience resource dilution, where limited income must be shared among many members, reducing per-child investment in education, nutrition, and healthcare. Schultz (1997) notes that

parents in large families may face difficulties financing school expenses, leading to higher dropout rates and increased labour participation among children.

In addition, large family sizes may increase domestic responsibilities for children, particularly girls, who are often engaged in household chores and caregiving. These responsibilities can interfere with school attendance and academic performance, thereby reinforcing the transition from schooling to labour.

School Attendance and Educational Quality

School attendance and educational quality are central to understanding child labour dynamics. Education is widely regarded as the primary alternative to child labour and a key instrument for breaking the poverty cycle (ILO, 2013). Regular school attendance reduces the likelihood of children entering the labour market prematurely and enhances future employment opportunities.

However, in many developing countries, including Nigeria, poor school infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate teaching materials, and low teacher motivation undermine educational effectiveness (Fafunwa, 1974). When schools fail to provide relevant skills and quality learning experiences, children and parents may perceive limited returns to education. This discourages school participation and encourages labour engagement. Moreover, long school distances, transportation costs, and hidden fees further constrain access to education among poor households. These challenges increase absenteeism and dropout rates, thereby facilitating children's involvement in labour activities.

Migration and Child Labour

Migration is increasingly recognized as a factor contributing to child labour, particularly in urban areas. Rural–urban migration often exposes children to economic vulnerability, social exclusion, and weak support systems. Migrant families typically face unstable housing, informal employment, and limited access to social services, increasing reliance on children's labour (Gupta, 2000).

Migrant children may also experience barriers to school enrollment due to documentation challenges, language differences, or financial constraints. As a result, they are more likely to engage in street hawking, domestic work, and informal trading. Migration therefore heightens children's exposure to exploitative labour practices and social risks.

Interrelationship among Socio-Economic Factors

The determinants of child labour do not operate in isolation but interact in complex ways. Poverty, low parental education, large family size, poor schooling, and migration often reinforce one another. For example, poor households with low educational attainment and many dependents are more likely to withdraw children from school and encourage labour participation. Similarly, migrant families with unstable income and limited access to services face heightened vulnerability.

These interrelated factors create a self-reinforcing cycle in which child labour reduces educational attainment, limits future income, and perpetuates poverty. Breaking this cycle requires comprehensive policy interventions that address multiple dimensions of vulnerability simultaneously (Uford, 2022).

The conceptual literature indicates that child labour is driven by a combination of economic, demographic, educational, and social factors. Household poverty, low parental education, large

family size, poor school quality, and migration significantly influence children's participation in labour activities. These factors interact to constrain educational opportunities and undermine child welfare. Understanding these relationships is essential for designing effective policies and programmes aimed at reducing child labour and promoting sustainable human development in Nigeria.

Theoretical Literature Review

This study is anchored on four major theoretical perspectives that explain household decisions regarding children's participation in labour and schooling. These theories provide the analytical foundation for the specification of the empirical model and explain the relationship between child labour and key socio-economic variables.

Household Utility Maximization Theory

The household utility maximization theory is rooted in neoclassical economic principles and assumes that households behave as rational agents seeking to maximize overall welfare subject to income and resource constraints (Becker, 1965). Within this framework, parents allocate available resources and children's time between schooling, work, and leisure in a manner that maximizes long-term household utility.

In the context of child labour, households compare the immediate income derived from children's work with the future benefits of education. When financial constraints are severe, families are more likely to prioritize short-term income over long-term human capital development. This theory provides the foundation for including household income (HHY), parental education (EDUL), and school attendance (SCHOOLPA) in the model. It predicts that improved income and educational awareness will reduce child labour participation.

Poverty and Subsistence Theory of Child Labour

The poverty-based theory of child labour explains children's involvement in labour as a response to household subsistence needs. Basu and Van (1998) propose the "luxury axiom," which states that households only send children to work when adult income is insufficient to meet basic consumption requirements. Under this assumption, child labour is primarily a survival strategy rather than a deliberate exploitation of children.

According to this theory, low-income households rely on children's earnings to supplement family income, especially during periods of economic hardship. As household income increases beyond subsistence levels, the necessity for child labour declines. This theoretical perspective justifies the inclusion of household income (HHY) in the model and predicts a negative relationship between income and child labour.

Human Capital Investment Theory

The human capital investment theory, developed by Becker (1964) and Schultz (1961), views education as a productive investment that enhances individuals' future productivity and earnings. Parents are assumed to make rational decisions about investing in children's education based on expected returns and available resources.

Households with higher educational attainment are more likely to recognize the long-term benefits of schooling and discourage early labour participation. Conversely, when parents have limited education or perceive low returns to schooling due to poor educational quality, children are more likely to engage in labour activities. This theory explains the role of parental education (EDUL) and school attendance (SCHOOLPA) in the model and predicts that higher education levels and better school participation reduce child labour.

Quantity–Quality Trade-off Theory of Fertility

The quantity–quality theory of fertility, proposed by Becker and Lewis (1973), explains household decisions regarding family size and child investment. The theory posits that parents face a trade-off between having many children (quantity) and investing adequately in each child’s education, health, and welfare (quality).

In large families, limited household resources are spread across many dependents, reducing per-child investment in schooling and wellbeing. As a result, children from large households are more likely to enter the labour market prematurely in order to support family income. This theoretical framework supports the inclusion of family size (FAMILYYS) in the model and predicts a positive relationship between family size and child labour.

Empirical Literature

Edmonds and Pavcnik (2005) — using household microdata and quasi-experimental methods (difference-in-differences and regressions), they show that rising household incomes and economic growth are associated with reductions in child labour and increases in school attendance, *Journal of Economic Perspectives*.

Webbink, Smits & de Jong (2012) — employing multivariate analysis on large, pooled microdata covering 178,000 children in 16 developing countries, they identify that most variation in “hidden” child labour (housework and family-business work) is explained by household factors (income, parental education, urban/rural) and that girls do more household work while boys do more family business work; *World Development*.

Okpukpara & Odurukwe (2006) — using nationally representative Nigerian survey data and econometric estimations, they find that child activity choices in Nigeria are significantly determined by household income, household composition and parental education, implying strong household-level drivers of child labour; (policy/IDS report).

ILO (2013) — the ILO World Report synthesising cross-country evidence (mixed methods and program evaluations) concludes that poverty, weak social protection, and poor access to education are principal drivers of child labour and that social protection expansion reduces children’s labour participation; *ILO World Report on Child Labour: Economic Vulnerability*.

Basu & Van (1998) — through formal theoretical modelling (luxury axiom framework) and supporting empirical discussion, they show that child labour is a household survival response under subsistence constraints, predicting a negative relationship between household income and child labour unless adult labour substitution effects dominate; (economic theory / JEL literature).

Gebregziabher (2023) — using Ethiopian microdata and multivariate econometric models, this recent peer-reviewed empirical study tests the poverty (luxury) hypothesis and finds evidence that poverty is a core driver of child labour while also documenting context-specific heterogeneity that complicates blanket policy prescriptions; *peer-reviewed journal (2023)*.

Sule Magaji (2024) — using primary survey data from Oyo State, Nigeria and multinomial/logit regressions, the paper reports that household unemployment and low parental education significantly increase the likelihood of child labour across activity types (hawking, apprenticeship, domestic work); *IRJEMS (regional empirical journal)*.

UNICEF / ILO (2021 update of 2020 estimates) — using harmonized global household survey methods and statistical modelling, the joint estimates show that child labour rose in 2020 to ~160 million children worldwide, highlighting economic shocks (including COVID-19) and gaps in social protection as key drivers; *UNICEF/ILO global estimates report*.

Hagemann et al. (2006 / ILO) — using cross-country trend analysis for 2000–2004, they report regional distributions (e.g., 122.3 million in Asia-Pacific, 49.3 million in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2004) and emphasise agriculture as the dominant sector for child labour, supporting sectoral targeting of interventions; *ILO technical report / Global child labour trends*.

Ray (2000) — using household microdata for Peru and Pakistan and econometric analysis, Ray shows a positive association between child labour hours and household poverty and a negative association between poverty and child schooling, reinforcing the income-schooling trade-off. *World Bank Economic Review / related journal article*.

Rosenzweig & Evenson (1977) — employing econometric analysis on rural Indian household data, they document strong links between fertility (family size), children's economic contributions, and schooling, providing classic empirical support for the quantity–quality trade-off theory used to justify inclusion of family size in child-labour models; *Econometrica*.

Putnick et al. (2015) — using cross-national survey analysis, this study finds that increased school enrollment is associated with declines in child labour and that school access and quality improvements are crucial for reducing child labour incidence; *Public Health / education research article*.

Diallo et al. / ILO global compilations (2010) — using aggregated international household survey data and trend analysis, these reports document changes in regional child labour levels and stress that most child labour in Sub-Saharan Africa occurs within family enterprises and agriculture, reinforcing the need to consider household and seasonal labour dynamics in model specification; *ILO / global child labour reports*.

Grootaert (1995) — using cross-country empirical review and micro-evidence, Grootaert documents that household-level variables — poverty, parental education, and household composition — are consistent predictors of child labour across contexts, which validates using these variables (HHY, EDUL, FAMILYS) in micro-econometric models of child labour; *International Labour Review / empirical review*.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. Primary data were collected from working children and their households in Akure, Ondo State. This design was considered appropriate because it allows for the collection of detailed socio-economic information at a specific point in time and facilitates quantitative analysis of relationships among variables.

Study Area

The study was conducted in Akure, the capital city of Ondo State, Nigeria. Akure is a rapidly growing urban centre characterized by increasing rural–urban migration, informal economic activities, and population pressure. Major economic activities include trading, agriculture, transportation, craftsmanship, and small-scale enterprises. These characteristics make Akure suitable for examining child labour dynamics.

Population of the Study

The population comprised children aged 6 to 16 years engaged in economic and domestic activities in Akure, as well as their households. This age range aligns with national and international definitions of child labour and minimum working age regulations.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample size of 190 respondents was selected for the study. A multistage sampling technique was employed. First, major child labour-prone locations such as markets, motor parks, farming communities, and commercial centres were purposively selected. Second, simple random sampling was used to select respondents within these locations. This ensured adequate representation of different child labour activities and socio-economic backgrounds.

Sources and Method of Data Collection

Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires administered through face-to-face interviews. The questionnaire captured information on socio-economic characteristics, household income, parental education, family size, migration status, school attendance, and work activities. Due to varying literacy levels among respondents, interviews were conducted with the assistance of trained research assistants. The instrument was pre-tested to ensure reliability and validity before final administration.

Description and Measurement of Variables

Dependent Variable

Child Labour (CL): Measured by children's participation in economic and domestic activities, including hours worked per week and type of work.

Independent Variables

Household Income (HHY): Average daily or monthly household income.

Parental Education (EDUL): Highest educational level attained by parents or guardians.

Family Size (FAMILY): Total number of household members.

Migration Status (MIGR): Dummy variable (1 = migrant household, 0 = non-migrant).

School Attendance (SCHOOLPA): Frequency of school attendance and incidence of absenteeism.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Household Utility Maximization Theory and the Poverty (Subsistence) Theory of Child Labour. The Household Utility Maximization Theory assumes that households allocate available resources and children's time between schooling, work, and leisure in order to maximize long-term welfare under income constraints. The Poverty Theory, as advanced by Basu and Van (1998), posits that households engage children in labour when adult income is insufficient to meet basic consumption needs. These frameworks explain child labour as a response to economic vulnerability and human capital considerations. Accordingly, household income, parental education, family size, migration status, and school attendance are incorporated into the econometric model to capture poverty constraints, educational investment behaviour, and demographic pressures influencing child labour participation.

Model Specification

Functional Model

The empirical model adopted in this study is derived from established works on child labour. Basu and Van (1998) specified child labour as a function of household income and adult wages: $CL=f(Y, W)$, where Y = Income and W = Wages

Edmonds and Pavcnik (2005) modeled child labour as a function of household income, parental education, and school participation: $CL_i = f(\text{Income}_i, \text{Education}_i, \text{School}_i)$

Okpukpara and Odurukwe (2006), using Nigerian data, specified child labour participation as: $P(CL_i=1) = f(\text{Income}_i, \text{Edu}_i, \text{Hsize}_i, \text{School}_i, \text{Region}_i)$, $CL_i = \text{Child Labour}$, $\text{Edu}_i = \text{Level of Education}$, $\text{Hsize}_i = \text{Household size}$, $\text{School}_i = \text{School enrollment}$ and $\text{Region}_i = \text{Region}$

Drawing from these studies and considering the socio-economic conditions of Akure characterized by informal employment, income instability, irregular schooling, and migration—this study modifies existing models by incorporating migration status and poor school attendance as additional explanatory variables. Household income is used to reflect poverty in the informal economy, parental education captures human capital awareness, family size represents demographic pressure, migration reflects vulnerability, and school attendance measures education–labour substitution. Based on theoretical and empirical foundations, the functional relationship between child labour and its determinant is specified and modified as: $U_{CL} = f(\text{HH}_Y, \text{EDU}_L, \text{FAMILY}_S, \text{MIGR}, \text{SCHOOLPA})$

Econometric Model

The functional model is transformed into an estimable form as:

$$CL = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{HH}_Y + \beta_2 \text{EDU}_L + \beta_3 \text{FAMILY}_S + \beta_4 \text{MIGR} + \beta_5 \text{SCHOOLPA} + \mu$$

Where: CL = Child Labour, HH_Y = Household Income, EDU_L = Parental Education, FAMILY_S = Family Size, MIGR = Migration Status, SCHOOLPA = Poor School Attendance, β_0 = Intercept, β_1 – β_5 = Regression Coefficients, μ = Error Term

A Priori Expectations

Based on theory and previous empirical studies, the expected signs of the coefficients are:

$$\beta_1 < 0, \beta_2 < 0, \beta_3 > 0, \beta_4 > 0, \beta_5 > 0.$$

Household income and parental education are expected to reduce child labour, while family size, migration, and poor school attendance are expected to increase it.

Method of Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize respondents' characteristics. Multiple regression analysis was employed to estimate the model using SPSS version 22. Diagnostic tests for normality, multicollinearity, and goodness-of-fit were conducted to ensure robustness of the results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics of respondents are presented in Appendices 1 and 2. The results show that child labour is widespread in Akure, Ondo State. About 84.7 per cent of the sampled children were engaged in economic activities such as agriculture, apprenticeship, trading, and street hawking, while only 15.3 per cent were involved in non-economic activities. Most working children were aged between 11 and 16 years, with male children constituting 68.9 per cent of respondents. This indicates that boys are more involved in labour activities than girls. In addition, about 80 per cent of respondents exhibited poor school attendance, characterized by lateness and dropout.

The household characteristics further reveal that most respondents originated from low-income households, with about 80 per cent earning less than ₦1,000 per day. Parental education was

generally low, as only 13.7 per cent attained tertiary education, while a large proportion had primary education or no formal education. Most households were characterized by large family sizes and weak parental support for school activities. Overall, the descriptive statistics indicate strong associations between poverty, weak educational participation, and child labour in the study area.

Regression Results and Model Fitness

The multiple regression results are presented in Appendix 7, while the model summary and goodness-of-fit statistics are reported in Appendices 4 and 5. The estimated model has strong explanatory power, with an R^2 value of 0.891 and an adjusted R^2 of 0.888. This implies that about 89 per cent of the variation in child labour is explained by the explanatory variables.

The F-statistic is statistically significant at the 1 per cent level ($p < 0.01$), confirming the overall significance of the regression model. This indicates that household income, parental education, family size, migration status, and school attendance jointly influence child labour in Akure.

Effects of Socio-Economic Variables on Child Labour

Household Income

Household income has a negative and statistically significant effect on child labour ($\beta = -0.1570$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that children from low-income households are more likely to engage in labour activities. As household income increases, dependence on children's earnings declines. This finding supports the Poverty (Subsistence) Theory and is consistent with Basu and Van (1998), Edmonds and Pavcnik (2005), and Okpukpara and Odurukwe (2006).

Parental Education

Parental education exhibits a negative and significant relationship with child labour ($\beta = -0.0280$, $p < 0.05$). This implies that children whose parents are more educated are less likely to participate in labour. This finding agrees with Schultz (1997), Gupta (2000), and Edmonds and Pavcnik (2005), who emphasize the role of education in shaping parental decisions.

Family Size

Family size has a positive and highly significant effect on child labour ($\beta = 0.6770$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that children from large households are more likely to work. This result supports the Quantity–Quality Trade-off Theory and aligns with Ray (2000) and Awan et al. (2011).

Migration Status

Migration status positively and significantly influences child labour ($\beta = 0.1050$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that children from migrant households are more vulnerable to labour participation. This finding is consistent with Gupta (2000), ILO (2013), and Sule Magaji (2024).

School Attendance

Poor school attendance is positively and significantly associated with child labour ($\beta = 0.0650$, $p < 0.01$). This confirms that weak educational participation increases children's involvement in labour. This supports the education–labour substitution hypothesis of Rosenzweig and Evenson (1977) and aligns with Edmonds and Pavcnik (2005) and UNICEF (2020).

Summary and Discussion of Findings

The results indicate that child labour in Akure is driven by poverty, low parental education, large family size, migration-related vulnerability, and weak school participation. These

findings are consistent with theoretical predictions and empirical evidence from developing countries. The consistency of the results with previous studies strengthens the validity of the study. It also confirms that child labour is a multidimensional socio-economic problem that requires integrated policy interventions. Effective child labour reduction strategies must therefore combine poverty alleviation, educational improvement, family welfare support, and migration-sensitive social protection programmes in order to achieve sustainable improvements in child welfare in Nigeria.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Conclusion

This study examined the socio-economic determinants of child labour in Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria, using primary data and multiple regression techniques. Guided by the Household Utility Maximization and Poverty (Subsistence) theories, the study analysed the influence of household income, parental education, family size, migration status, and school attendance on children's participation in labour activities.

The findings reveal that child labour remains widespread in Akure and is largely driven by household poverty, low parental educational attainment, large family size, migration-related vulnerability, and weak school participation. Household income and parental education were found to reduce child labour, while family size, migration, and poor school attendance increased children's involvement in labour activities. These results confirm that child labour in Akure is primarily a household survival strategy arising from economic hardship and limited access to quality education.

The high explanatory power of the regression model further indicates that socio-economic and educational factors play a central role in shaping child labour outcomes. The consistency of these findings with existing theoretical and empirical literature strengthens the validity of the study and highlights the persistent nature of child labour in urban Nigerian settings.

Overall, the study concludes that child labour in Akure is a multidimensional socio-economic problem that reflects deeper structural challenges related to poverty, education, family welfare, and migration. Addressing child labour therefore requires comprehensive and coordinated policy responses rather than isolated interventions.

Policy Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following policy recommendations are proposed to reduce the incidence of child labour and improve child welfare in Nigeria:

- **Strengthening Household Income and Poverty Alleviation Programmes**
Government at federal, state, and local levels should expand targeted poverty reduction and social protection programmes for low-income households. Conditional cash transfer schemes, livelihood support programmes, and microcredit facilities should be strengthened and properly monitored to improve household income and reduce dependence on children's earnings. Priority should be given to families with school-age children.
- **Improving Access to Quality and Affordable Education**
Efforts should be intensified to improve the quality, accessibility, and affordability of basic education in Akure and similar urban centres. Government should invest in school infrastructure, teacher training, learning materials, and school feeding programmes.

Hidden school costs should be minimized, and scholarship schemes should be introduced for children from poor households to encourage regular school attendance.

- **Promoting Adult and Parental Education**
Adult literacy and continuing education programmes should be expanded to improve parents' educational attainment and awareness of children's rights. Community-based sensitization programmes should be implemented to educate parents on the long-term benefits of schooling and the negative consequences of child labour. Educated parents are more likely to prioritize education and discourage early labour participation.
- **Supporting Family Planning and Reproductive Health Services**
Given the positive relationship between family size and child labour, government and non-governmental organizations should strengthen family planning and reproductive health services. Public awareness campaigns should promote responsible family size and child welfare, particularly in low-income communities.
- **Targeted Support for Migrant and Vulnerable Households**
Special intervention programmes should be designed for migrant households and urban poor communities. These programmes should include access to affordable housing, health services, vocational training, and social welfare support. Local governments should establish community centres that provide information and assistance to migrant families.
- **Strengthening Enforcement of Child Labour Laws**
Existing child protection and labour laws, including the Child Rights Act and Labour Act, should be strictly enforced. Labour inspection systems should be strengthened through adequate staffing, training, and funding. Collaboration among government agencies, law enforcement bodies, and civil society organizations should be enhanced to monitor and eliminate hazardous child labour practices.
- **Enhancing School–Community Partnerships**
Schools should work closely with parents, community leaders, and religious organizations to promote children's education and monitor school attendance. Community-based child protection committees should be established to identify children at risk of labour participation and provide early intervention support.
- **Integrating Child Labour Issues into Development Planning**
Child labour reduction strategies should be integrated into national, state, and local development plans. Education, employment, housing, and social welfare policies should be harmonized to address the root causes of child labour. Regular monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be introduced to assess policy effectiveness.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to existing literature by providing empirical evidence on the socio-economic determinants of child labour in Akure, Ondo State. By integrating poverty, education, family structure, migration, and schooling variables into a unified analytical framework, the study offers context-specific insights that can guide policy formulation and programme implementation in Nigeria.

Suggestions for Further Research

Future studies should employ longitudinal data to examine the long-term effects of child labour on educational attainment and labour market outcomes. Comparative studies across different regions of Nigeria are also recommended to capture regional variations and strengthen policy relevance. Additionally, qualitative research methods may be adopted to explore children's lived experiences and social perceptions of child labour.

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Appendices

**Table 1- Nominal Regression
 Case Processing Summary**

		N	Marginal Percentage
Child Labour	Noneconomic activities	29	15.3%
	economic activities	161	84.7%
What economic activities do you engage while working?	Agriculture	81	42.6%
	Business	30	15.8%
	Hawking	23	12.1%
	Apprenticeship	40	21.1%
	Wheelbarrow	2	1.1%
	Car wash	14	7.4%
	What non-economic activities do you engage while working?	Begging	2
	Meal preparation	85	44.7%

	Sweeping Fetching water	5	2.6%
	Washing IroningCothes	28	14.7%
	Taking_Care_Of_Babies	48	25.3%
	Domestic_worker	22	11.6%
Parent or Guardian Level of Education	Tertiary	26	13.7%
	Secondary	56	29.5%
	Primary	74	38.9%
	Illiterate	34	17.9%
How old are you?	15-16 Years	86	45.3%
	11-14 Years	85	44.7%
	6-10 Years	19	10.0%
What is your Gender?	Male	131	68.9%
	Female	59	31.1%
how many are you in your House hold	7 above	33	17.4%
	4-6	157	82.6%
How punctual are you at school?	Very punctual	38	20.0%
	Late_School	105	55.3%
	Miss_Sch_One_day_ Weekly	28	14.7%
	Sch_Drop_Out	19	10.0%
Valid		190	100.0%
Missing		0	
Total		190	
Subpopulation		60 ^a	

Source: SPSS Output.

Table 2- Case Processing Summary

		N	Marginal Percentage
Child Labour	noneconomic activities	29	15.3%
	economic activities	161	84.7%
Did you migrate to Akure in the last one week or past 12 months?	No	25	13.2%
	Yes	165	27.8%
What is the amount of your feeding per day and nature of apartment	N1000 and Below. 1-2 Rooms	152	80.0%
	N2000-N3000. 3 Bedroom flat	38	20.0%
What type of parent family do you have?	Single parent	71	37.4%
	Both Parent	64	33.7%
	No Parent	55	28.9%
Why do you migrate to Akure?	To Stay with my Relatives	33	17.4%
	To work as Domestic Servants	52	27.4%
	As a beggar	35	18.4%
	To look for Job	70	36.8%
Describe the house you stay	Face me I Face you	111	58.4%
	2-Room Self Contain	40	21.1%
	3-Bed Room Flat	19	10.0%
	Own Building	20	10.5%
Cooking Energy	Charcoal / Abacha Stove	36	18.9%
	Fire Wood	85	44.7%

	Stove or Gas	69	36.3%
Does Your Parent help with your school assignment?	Yes	44	23.2%
	No	146	76.8%
How many times in a day do you normally?	Once Daily	17	8.9%
	Twice Daily	125	65.8%
	3 Times Daily	42	22.1%
	4 Times Daily	6	3.2%
Valid		190	100.0%
Missing		0	
Total		190	
Subpopulation		42 ^a	

Source: SPSS Output

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Child Labour CH_L	.8474	.36058	190
what is the amount of your feeding per day and nature of apartment-(HH_Y)	1.2000	.40106	190
Parent or Guardian Level of Education-(EDU_L)	1.6105	.93486	190
how many are you in your House hold-(FAMILY_S)	1.8263	.37984	190
How punctual are you at school?-(SCHOOL_{PA})	2.1474	.85410	190
Did you migrate to Akure in the last one week or past 12 months?-(MIGR)	1.8684	.33893	190

Table 4- Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.944 ^a	.891	.888		.12084	.900

Table 5- ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	21.887	5	4.377	299.752	.000 ^b
	Residual	2.687	184	.015		
	Total	24.574	189			

Table 6- Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Childlabour	.511	190	.000	.430	190	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Source: SPSS Output

Table 7-Multiple Regression Analysis (SPSS) Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.492	.128		-3.856	.000
	what is the amount of your feeding per day and nature of apartment-(HH_Y)	-.157	.029	-.175	-5.380	.000

Parent or Guardian Level of Education-(EDU_L)	-.028	.013	-.073	-2.173	.031
how many are you in your House hold-(FAMILY_S)	.677	.038	.713	17.842	.000
How punctual are you at school? ?-(SCHOOL_{PA})	.065	.017	.155	3.932	.000
Did you migrate to Akure in the last one week or past 12 months? -(MIGR)	.105	.038	.099	2.734	.007

a. Dependent Variable: Child Labour

Table 8- Residuals Statistics^a

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	.0620	1.1112	.8474	.34030	190
Residual	-.21899	.78101	.00000	.11923	190
Std. Predicted Value	-2.308	.775	.000	1.000	190