



Underage and Unprotected: Psychosocial Effects of Child Labour on the Academic Performance of Learners in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT This article examined the psychosocial effects of child labour on the academic performance of form three learners in Masvingo province, Zimbabwe. It also aimed at identifying mitigation policies and measures designed to reduce negative effects of child labour on children's academic performance. Child labour is a sensitive and significant social and human rights problem growing in the world today. In Zimbabwe, child labour is found in several sectors including large commercial farms, communal areas, domestic work, small-scale mining and gold panning operations, micro-industries and the informal sector. To investigate the research problem, a qualitative phenomenological case study design was used with focus group discussions, interviews and observations as data collection instruments with ten form three learners and four teachers. The study is informed by Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory. Mixed feelings were noted on the psychosocial effects of child labour on academic performance. The study established that child labourers provided a source of income to sustain families although the majority of the participants opined that their working conditions were severe, often not providing the stimulation for proper physical, cognitive, personality and intellectual development. Furthermore, the study established that child labour does more harm than good to the cognitive development of form three learners. The study recommended that the government should take sound social security measures to take care of children affected by child labour. There is also a need to address the root problems of child labour and poverty.

INTRODUCTION

According to Hasnat (1995) as in Ahamed (2013) children have the right to be loved, cherished, educated, nourished, clothed, pampered and fostered. Hence, child labour is the denial of the right to enjoy childhood and achieve full physical and psychological development. Further, according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention (2010) cited in United Nations (UN) (2012), child labour is defined as: all children below 18 in harmful occupations or work activities in the labour market or their own household; all children undertaking work in the labour market or household interfering with their education; all children under 15 in full time employment; and all children under 13 in part time employment. In brief, the work or activities undertaken by children should not interfere with their education or pose any health threats (Grimsrud in Rena 2009). Chiketo (2012) supports the view that child labour is work that denies children an education or does not allow children to benefit fully from school. On the other hand, Bourdillion (2011) argues that not all work done should be classified as child labour and be targeted for elimination.

Child labour has been seen all over the world as a major obstacle impeding the development of the child in many areas of development, including education. According to UNICEF (2012), there are an estimated 250 million children aged 5 to 14 years employed in child labour worldwide doing work that is damaging to their mental, physical and emotional development. Furthermore, one in every six children aged 5 to 17 worldwide is exploited for child labour in its different forms (Chiketo 2012). Many of these children are forced to risk their health, education and their lives. The ILO (2010) cited in UN (2012) reported that in some developing countries nearly a third of the agricultural workforces is made up of children. A joint report by UNICEF and the government of Zimbabwe on the State of Women's and Children's Rights in Zimbabwe (2005-2010), indicates that between 220 000 and 250 000 rural households in Zimbabwe live in extreme poverty and constantly face food insecurity. These households include between 620 000 and 700 000 vulnerable children" (UNICEF 2012). A report issued by the United States Department of State points out that "Children in Zimbabwe are exploited in the worst forms of child labour" (United States Department of State 2011). An estimated 1,3 million Zimbabwe-

an children are orphaned. Of these, about 100 000 survive on their own in child-headed households, often working as street vendors (Chiketo 2012).

This study focuses specifically on child labour at farms and resettlement farms in Zimbabwe. Education can be defined as a tool for transmitting knowledge and skills for the individual so as to be a useful person to the society (Psacharopoulos, 1997). The psychomotor, affective and cognitive skills that are acquired by the individual through education are required to help the individual improve upon his living standards. This is one of the main reasons why every child must be educated (Patrinós and Psacharopoulos, 1997). Child labour has been seen all over the world as major obstacle impeding the development of the child.

For this reason the international labour organizations fundamental principle and right completely outlines the elimination of all forms of force and compulsory labour and the abolition of child labour as important for the achievement of good and sound child development,

The ILO identifies the most forms of child labour as that type of labour that jeopardizes the physical, mental or moral well being of a child, either because of its nature or the condition in which it is carried out (ILO 2002). These forms of child labour can be equated to slavery or practices akin to slavery and this includes child trafficking, debt bondage, force recruitment of children in armed conflict, prostitution, pornography and all forms of illicit activities. In Ghana for instance, child labour seems to be a major challenge affecting the education of most children especially those living in deprived and poverty stricken communities,

Child labour is rampant in Zimbabwe due to poverty, the breakdown of the family unit owing to HIV and AIDS and the inadequacy of the social services delivery system (Government of Zimbabwe Ministry of Labour and Social Services 2011; Robertson 2011). The recent economic crisis has had a serious impact on children, forcing most of them to subject themselves to exploitative labour practices. Dixon-Roman et al. (2013) also point out that parental income and other indicators such as socio-economic status are related to various educational outcomes. Work wise, children in Zimbabwe normally participate in one of three economic sectors: agriculture, industry and, or, the informal

economy. Agricultural work is by far the most common (UNICEF 2012). The use of child labour on farms has risen sharply with over 10 000 children estimated to be working in the agricultural sector alone.

It must be noted that Zimbabwean law does not provide free schooling or establish a compulsory age for education for children (US Department of State 2011). The lack of free and compulsory education may put children at risk for child labour practices as they are neither required to be in school, nor legally permitted to work. School fees are often prohibitively expensive and limit access to education (US Embassy-Harare 2010). According to Strakova (2008) children as young as age 12 who need help to pay school fees may work at local tea plantations to earn credits towards school fees. In such “earn and learn” schemes, tuition credits are earned based on the child’s ability to meet the production quota. The practice is also in direct violation of the Labour Relations Act (2002) cited in UN (2012) and ILO Convention 138 (2010) cited in UN (2012).

Several conditions including, but not limited to, lack of safety equipment (gloves, eye protection and breathing/ gas masks) and lack of training on the use and dangers of implements cause the relatively high rates of injuries, health problems, and fatalities among agricultural child labourers (Eneji et al. 2013; Duncan and Bowman 2008). The employment of children is economically exploitative and is likely to be hazardous to, or interfere with the children’s education. Further, it is harmful to the child’s health as well as physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development (Irving Fisher Committee (IFC) 1999).

According to Barros and Mendonca (1996), Psacharopoulos (1997), Cavalieri (2000), Gunnarsson et al. (2004) cited in Bezerra et al. (2009), factors that affect both child labour and school achievement occur at all levels of individuals, families, schools and communities. It also includes school availability, school infrastructure, parents’ education and family income. Other factors that are included are individual’s natural abilities for schools, community labour market conditions and low levels of parental participation in their children’s education and in their communities.

There is evidence that child labour limits a child’s human development. Child labour has been linked to greater grade retardation (Sed-

lacek et al. 2003; Rosati and Rossi 2001); lower years of attained schooling (Psacharopoulos 1997); lower returns to schooling and a greater incidence of poverty as an adult (Ilahi et al. 2000). According to the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (1998) learners who worked while in school experienced higher rates of behavioural problems such as alcohol and drug use and minor delinquency. According to Ahmed (2013), children are often denied their rights to education, leisure and play when they are forced to work. They are also exposed to situations that make them vulnerable to trafficking, drug abuse, prostitution, violence, exploitation as well as delinquency and truancy. This is further reinforced by Recently (2011) who stated that children are trafficked within Zimbabwe and to border towns and neighbouring countries where they suffer forced labour in agriculture, domestic service and commercial sexual exploitation. Furthermore children working as domestic servants may work long hours, often without a break and are at risk of harassment and sexual abuse.

The Zimbabwean government has put into place laws and regulations to curb and prohibit child labour. These include, but are not limited to, the Labour Relations Act 2002; the Children's Protection and Adoption Amendment Act of 2001 and the National Service Act of 1979. To address the child labour dilemma, the Government's steering committee has issued a national policy to serve as a guide for the subsequent implementation of an action program (US Embassy-Harare 2010). The action plan includes activities aimed at strengthening the analysis of child labour issues and the creation of a Directorate to co-ordinate responses to the findings of the analysis.

In 2011, the government launched Phase 2 of the National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (NAP OVC 2) (2011-2015). Phase 2 includes a focus on equity and access to quality education for children. It aims to assist 80 000 people, including providing protection services to 25 000 children (Integrated Regional Information Networks 2011; Nyaira et al. 2011; UN News Centre 2011). The policy prescribes a three-pronged approach to assist at-risk children, including the provision of child protection and health services, delivering conditional cash transfers and continuing the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) Program

(US Embassy-Harare 2012). The BEAM program provides basic financial assistance to its enrollees for things such as tuition, levy and examination fees (Government of Zimbabwe Ministry of Labour and Social Services 2011).

The government launched and extended several social programs to address vulnerable children and increase educational access that could potentially have an impact on reducing the worst forms of child labour. The newly formed NAP OVC 2 provides a cash transfer program that encourages families to keep their children in school. The government of Zimbabwe, with funding from the European Commission and the governments of Netherlands, Sweden and Britain provided immediate food and health services to high-risk families, including child-headed households (Nyaira et al. 2011; UN News Centre 2011). The NAP OVC 2 also provides protection services for child victims of abuse, violence and exploitation. The BEAM Program, aimed at keeping children in school and recruiting children who lack access to school as a result of economic hardship, was also continued through NAP OVC 2. In 2010, the government of Zimbabwe received just over US\$15 million for secondary education through the BEAM Program in order to match the US\$15 million in contributions made by development partners, almost doubling what the government contributed to the BEAM Program in 2011. During the reporting period, \$45 million of the targeted \$75 million has been mobilized to support the NAP OVC 2 (UN News Centre 2011).

In addition to the BEAM Program and the NAP OVC 2, a second phase of the Education Initiative Fund was launched in 2011 to increase learning supplies in Zimbabwean schools through the fund. The government committed to buy 7 million textbooks in addition to the 15 million that have already been distributed since 2009. The second phase focused on expanding support to secondary schools, including a revised curriculum. The overall impact of these programs on the elimination of child labour is unknown (UNICEF 2011).

Given the above, the fight against child labour has gained international momentum and has become a major challenge for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The United Nations Convention on the rights of the Child of 1989, article 32 of the UN Convention and the

African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child of 1990 forbids the employment of children (UN 2012). Further Article 15 of the African Charter enjoin states to protect children from economic exploitation, and from work that threatens their health, education or development (UN 2012). Bourdillion (2011) opines that child labour persists when national laws or policies are lacking or are not effectively implemented. Thus, the research will explore the psychosocial effects of child labour on the academic performance of form three learners in Masvingo, Zimbabwe.

Theoretical Framework

This study is informed by Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory which suggests that a person's surroundings including their home, school, work, church, neighbourhood, culture and government have an influence on the way a child develops (Donald et al. 2010). The ecological model states that child development occurs within an interactive system of nested influences between the child and the environment. The ecological environment consists of the following five nested structures: microsystems, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem (Rathus 2006; Berk 2007; Donald et al. 2010). Children's microsystems will include any immediate relationships or organisations they interact with, such as their immediate family, school, peers, neighbours and caregivers.

Bronfenbrenner's next level, the mesosystem describes how the different aspects of a child's microsystem work together for the sake of the child (Donald et al. 2010). The exosystem level includes the other people and places that the child may not interact with often but still have a large effect on her/him, such as parents' work places, extended family members and the neighbourhood. Bronfenbrenner describes the macrosystem as the one that involves dominant social and economic structures as well as values, beliefs and practices that influence all other social systems. Finally, the chronosystem involves development over time that affects the interactions between these systems as well as their influences on the academic and intellectual development of learners (Donald et al. 2010).

Purpose of the Study

This study is important because it seeks to assess, examine and evaluate the psychosocial

effects of child labour on the academic performance of children in Zimbabwe. The aim of the study is to suggest sound social security policies, measures and solutions as well as reinforcing existing measures to make them more meaningful thus minimising consequences caused by child labour on the academic performance of learners.

Major Research Questions

The main research question for this study is: What are the psychosocial effects of child labour on the academic performance of form three learners in Masvingo province, Zimbabwe?

What recommendations can be made to attenuate the negative impact of child labour on the academic performance of form three learners in Masvingo province, Zimbabwe?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative phenomenological case study design in order to explore and present the psychosocial effects of child labour on the academic performance of form three learners in two secondary schools in Masvingo (a resettlement school and a farm school respectively). A qualitative phenomenological case study approach was used to highlight the specific issue and to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in the situation. A case study design was developed in order to gain insights into not only what was happening to children's access to schooling, but also why events might be happening in that way (Yin 2012; White 2012). Furthermore when the researcher desires to understand a complex social phenomenon, the case study permits the integration of as many methods as possible to explore a contemporary situation (Yin 2012). One of the advantages of the case study approach is that it allows the researchers to gain an understanding of social phenomena from participants' perspectives in their natural settings (McMillan and Schumacher 2010).

Sampling

The study was carried out in two secondary schools in Masvingo district, Zimbabwe. The

selection of the schools and the classes was purposefully done to ensure that the findings were authentic. The target population comprised students doing form three at the two secondary schools and also teachers teaching these pupils. A sample of ten form three learners comprising four males and six females as well as four teachers comprising 2 males and 2 females were purposively selected. The two schools are located in rural communities where employment opportunities for adults are limited and children are forced to seek opportunities to generate money to assist their families. Thus many of these learners are exposed to child labour.

Data Collection and Analyses

In addition to the intensive review of related literature, data was collected through interviews, focus group discussions and observations of the ten learners and the four teachers. The focus groups comprised two groups of learners—one group from each school. During the focus group discussions with the form three learners, the researchers created a social environment in which group members were stimulated by one another's perceptions and ideas. This technique was believed to increase the quality and richness of data, more than one-on-one interviewing could have done (McMillan and Schumacher 2010). The research instruments were validated and the credibility and trustworthiness of data was ascertained. An inductive approach to analysing the responses to interviews and focus groups as well as observations was undertaken to allow patterns, themes and categories to emerge rather than being imposed prior to data collection and analysis (Patton 2012). This identification of themes provided depth to the insights about understanding the individual views of the form three learners and their teachers on the psychosocial effects of child labour on the academic performance of form three learners.

Ethical Considerations

Permission to conduct the study was secured from Masvingo Provincial Education Office, Zimbabwe; from the selected school teachers; selected form three learners and their parents/guardians.

The participants were informed that their involvement in the study was voluntary and that

they were free to withdraw at any stage of the interviews if they were not comfortable. Participants were assured of anonymity in the research report.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The following themes/ subthemes were identified from the analysis of the interviews, focus groups and observations:

- ♦ Working conditions/physical/health problems
- ♦ Delinquent behaviour/drug abuse/sexual abuse/prostitution/early marriages
- ♦ Effects on well-being and schooling

Working Conditions /Physical/ Health Problems

The study established that working children become exposed to a multiplicity of diseases due to monetary constraints, the need for food, shelter and clothing that drives them into the trap of premature labour. Families temporarily withdraw their children from school to work in the fields so that they could increase their chances of earning income for the survival of the family. Teachers who participated in the interviews lamented that the working conditions are exploitative and severe, thus affecting academic performance of form three learners. Male teacher 1 posited:

“Children work on farms performing various farm duties such as weeding, harvesting crops and spraying chemicals on crops. The employers, who are farmers, do not provide protective clothing, so they are exposed to harmful chemicals. One boy learner in my class has an eye problem as a result of chemicals they spray to kill insects. Children working in agriculture suffer high rates of injuries. They suffer back injuries from hauling and carrying heavy loads of produce.”

In support of the above, female teacher 2 also echoed the following sentiments:

“Child labourers endure work conditions which include health hazards and potential abuse. Long-term health problems, such as respiratory disease and a variety of cancers, are common in places where children are forced to work with dangerous chemicals. Skin, eye and neurological problems occur in children exposed to pesticides. Because of poverty, these children are robbed of their education and

health in order to provide economic supplementation to their families.”

In concurrence to the above, during interviews and the two focus group discussions with the form 3 learners, both boys and girls highlighted the following challenges they encountered at the farms and resettled farms:

- ♦ Exposure to pesticides
- ♦ Working with machinery and sharp tools that are poorly maintained,
- ♦ Doing all household chores before and after school
- ♦ Lack of clean water, hand-washing facilities and toilets
- ♦ Beginning to work at very early ages between 10-18 years of age, compromising our education

The above also concurred with the issues raised by participants of a study in Limpopo Province, South Africa, who reported similar risks amongst child labourers in the agriculture sector. Ben-Chendo et al. (2012) conducted an investigation on household poverty and its effects on child labour in Nigeria and the findings are in line with the circumstances in Zimbabwe. Duncan and Bowman (2008) established that working increases the chances of children being afflicted by skin infections, poisoning, cancers, amputations and physical deformities. The study in Limpopo, South Africa also revealed that the children are exposed to various dangers such as using dangerous farming equipment, exposure to harmful chemicals and they spend a lot of time exposed to bad weather (Duncan and Bowman 2008). Streak (2007) confirmed the negative mental health impacts of labour on children. These included higher levels of anxiety and depression in working children, as compared with non-working children. Poor children are therefore denied the opportunity to develop their full potential and to play productive and equal roles in their families, and elsewhere, in the larger society (Bronfenbrenner cited in Donald et al. 2010).

The majority of the teachers interviewed purported that the children who engage in child labour tend to miss school more often because of illness such as eye, ear and nose infections as well as injuries to their hands and feet in particular. These children also have a much higher rate of accidents than other children and they are twice as likely to have impaired vision and hearing, iron deficiency, anaemia and lead in the

blood, which can impair brain functions (Chike-to 2012). Further the greater incidence of health issues among child labourers lead to increased school absenteeism, tardiness rates, incidence of illness during class, and rates of undiagnosed and or untreated health problems or disabilities (UNICEF 2011). Eneji et al. (2013) also concurs with this when they state that children in rural areas and in poorer homes drop out earlier compared to their more affluent counterparts. Thus, child labour not only causes damage to a child's physical and mental health but also keep them deprived of their basic rights to education, development, and freedom.

Delinquent Behaviour/Drug Abuse/ Sexual Abuse/Prostitution/Early Marriages

The study also observed that child labour puts both boys and girls in a much higher risk position of becoming exposed to all forms of abuses and exploitation thus compromising their academic performance. The study also established that most of the children who end up offering themselves for employment or engaging in illegal child work are victims of circumstances who get employed in search for survival. These are orphans in child headed families and children in extremely impoverished families whose parents are incapacitated to provide for them. The majority of girls expressed that pregnancy and marriage were a consequence of poverty as well as child labour and also key reasons for girls and boys being withdrawn from school.

During an interview, female teacher 1 stated that:

... Unplanned pregnancy rates are of great concern because teen mothers and babies face increased risks to their health especially in this era of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and their opportunities to build a future are diminished.

Measured against the Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, children who engage in child labour may look for attention in inappropriate places thus affecting their self-discipline (Berk 2007). For many families, the money that children bring home is what keeps the family going, under these circumstances; society may accept abuse in the form of child labour as justifiable.

Many small girls are even made to indulge in prostitution and engage in early marriages to make ends meet and cushion their families from the scourge of hunger and poverty. Girls

who were interviewed in this study echoed these sentiments:

“Kana tikasashanda tinofa nenzara, regai tishande tiwane mari, Chikoro hachiperi, ko tinodya mabhuku here? Vangani muno vakaenda kuchikoro vasina zvavanoita.” (meaning we do not mind working and being involved even in risky encounters because we need money, Schooling will always be there).

Togunde and Arielle (2008) cited in Ben-Chendo et al. (2012) state that children from the poor households that engaged in child labour activities faced some hazards such as abuse and rape which could affect their social, mental and physical development. Socially, children have been found to experience negative consequences to their educational development and performance.

This study also established that parents, like their children, also engaged themselves in menial jobs, vending and temporary jobs which took too much of their time. The researchers noted that parents could not supervise their children’s homework thus exacerbating their academic pursuits. This breakdown of the learners’ microsystem leaves a child with no tools to explore other parts of the environment (Bronfenbrenner in Donald et al. 2010). Modesaotsile (2012) points out that parents have a fundamental responsibility to ensure that their children are at school and that their school work is done. All the teachers interviewed alluded to the fact that throughout the term, there would be a number of children from low socio-economic backgrounds who are absent from school for long periods because of child labour. Child labour with its goal to respond immediately to the basic needs of the household deprives the child of the time to focus on schooling.

In Zimbabwe, this has become a common crime particularly on account of the current socio-economic environment, There are however various organisations including Non-Governmental Organizations, that are fighting against child labour by helping children and imparting education among that part of society from where the majority of the child labour comes (ILO 2010 in United Nations 2012). This has gone a long way in easing the problem to a certain extent.

Effects on Well-being and Schooling

Children are denied their right to education because it is not free or affordable in Zimbabwe

and many other African countries (Ganga and Chinyoka 2010). Those who work prematurely and extensively may never receive the education or training needed to obtain a livable wage. They grow up to be uneducated and illiterate adults, who are either unemployed or underemployed in disorganised sectors with no power to bargain for fair wages (Ben-Chando et al. 2012). Like their parents, they are unable to support their children’s education (Modesaotsile 2012). So they send their own children to work, repeating the cycle of child labour and poverty.

This study noted that child labour is both a cause and a consequence of poverty. Male teacher 2 from a farm school echoed:

“...Having children working is depriving them of their rights to education. It is very difficult to teach and expect anything from tired learners. They do not have time to do their homework and to study after school. Child labourers who continue their schooling most frequently work for several hours before or after school. This results in these children often through sheer exhaustion, being unable to pay appropriate attention to their schoolwork.

Some learners were observed to miss lessons because of child labour. Thus the downward cycle of child exploitation and poverty continues. They lack opportunities to properly socialise with their peers.”

Overall, their self-esteem and learning activities are compromised (Ben-Chando et al. 2012). Some studies have found strong evidence of adverse consequences of child labour on achievement. Singh (1998), for example, reported that working long hours while in school did hurt standardized test scores and grades. Stern (1997) also found that working more than 15 hours per week while in secondary school led to lower grades, less time spent on homework, increased likelihood of dropout and a lower likelihood of entering post-secondary education. Similar findings are reported by Cheng (1995) and Anumaka (2013). Thereby, they are often forced into leading lives of poverty. Eliminating child labour is the key to achieving Education for All and alleviating poverty and child labour.

Patrinos and Psacharopoulos (1997) opined that employers capitalise on the docility of the children recognising that these labourers cannot legally form unions to change their conditions. Such manipulation stifles the holistic development of children. Eight out of the ten learn-

ers interviewed highlighted that their payment was in the form of food, clothing and payment of school-fees, uniforms or stationery. They posited that they were given money on very rare cases. Threlfall et al. (2013) pointed out that children who grow up in poverty are at a higher risk for school failure and dropping out. During interviews, some girls lamented:

“Exhaustion and malnutrition are common as a result of performing heavy manual labour- especially in the fields before and after school, working long hours in unbearable conditions and not earning enough to feed ourselves and our parents adequately, We are at risk of injury and diseases from livestock and wild animals. We also work as domestic servants in our own homes while taking care of the family’s needs.”

Unpaid child labour was also noted among families, where children engaged in domestic work, care for siblings, sick parents and relatives in order to save family income. This is in line with findings made by Ganga and Chinyoka (2010) in Chipinge, Zimbabwe. Girls who participated in this study said:

“...We do all the household chores like washing family clothes, cleaning the house, feeding young ones, cooking for the entire family, fetching firewood and water before we go to school, We do not have time to study as a result.”

The implication, as noted by these researchers, is that the children are overburdened by domestic chores and agricultural work thus negatively affecting their academic performance.

On the other hand, both girls and boys who participated in the study supported child labour saying:

“...because we also lack school things such as uniforms, writing materials and school fees, In many cases we decide to engage in child labour because it is not useful going to school without such things. We would rather get money from working than going to school. After all schooling in our community does not reward.”

During focus group discussions, some form three learners supported the issue of child labour saying:

“...kana tikasashanda mumunda mev-abereki vedu tinodyei? Chikoro chinotipa sadza here?” (meaning that we need to work hard in the fields so that our families get enough food to feed us, Going to school should be second priority since people are not fed at school).

Sanchez et al. (2009) used information on 3rd and 4th grade learners in Latin America and found that in all ten countries tested, performance in mathematics and language tests was lower when the child worked outside the home, the impact became larger when the child reported working many hours rather than a few hours. Heady (2003) made use of a special Living Standards Measurement Survey in Ghana that included mathematics. Child work had relatively little effect on school attendance but had a substantial effect on learning achievement in mathematics and reading. In view of the findings that attendance was not affected, the adverse consequence of child labour on learning was attributed to exhaustion or lack of interest in academic performance rather than child time in school.

CONCLUSION

Given the foregoing observations and discussions, child labour is therefore a hindrance to the optimal functioning of form three learners in Masvingo. Every child has a right to education. Taking under age children out of the fields and into the classrooms is the correct strategy. Child labour is thus a societal problem that must be addressed by the microsystems of school, the families and the neighbourhood, the mesosystems (linkages) and the exosystems, as well as the macrosystems (political, ideology).

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the findings made in this study, it is recommended that all Zimbabweans citizens and stakeholders should work collaboratively to minimise the root causes of child labour (poverty, socio-economic instability, political unrest, land problem and the issue of international sanctions on Zimbabwe). Eradicating poverty, however, is only the first step on the road to eliminating child labour.

The Government of Zimbabwe needs to emphasize the child’s physical, psychological, and social health care whether at school or at the work site through periodic health checkups and health care visits by the department of Health. Collaboration must be enhanced between governmental and non-governmental institutions to provide better economic solutions for poverty and the main reason for child labor in particular. There has to be increased social and public

health awareness to the negative impacts of child labor through the media. The programs should aim at eliminating child labor from the Zimbabwean community, increase awareness to the negative impact of child labor among poorly educated parents and families and enhance the importance of education for children. These measures may eliminate child labour and provide better job opportunities once the learners completed their schooling.

The appropriate education system at schools needs to be enhanced through developing and using effective curricula. The new curricula should target and develop emotional, cognitive, social and psychological abilities of children. Further the use of effective teaching styles should be encouraged.

The government needs to establish a minimum age or specified length of compulsory study that is in line with international standards. Further, the Zimbabwean government should create a favourable policy and partnership environment to make basic education affordable or free and there is also a need for parenting education through the Departments of Education, Social Welfare and Non-Government Organizations with the aim of raising awareness regarding the need for parents to educate their children.

Awareness needs to be increased among leaders and decision makers at the education system in the Department of Education in Zimbabwe toward the benefits of using an interactive model of teaching and toward the negative consequences of using forms of psychological and physical child abuse at schools. The Government needs to enforce mandated basic education laws and increase awareness towards the importance of having children finish their basic education. Laws should also emphasize the parents' legal responsibility for their children's education. Teaching and education curricula need to create a healthy school environment that improves children's belonging to school and prevent delinquency, bullying and child labor among school children.

There is a need to create and support vocational education and training for children who have learning difficulties or who find academic work challenging. Further, there is a need to increase awareness among low educated and poor families regarding the benefits of education and the negative impact of child labour. This can be

done through periodic meetings at school with parents and guardians.

The elimination of all forms of abuse- physical, social, psychological and sexual child abuse must occur through developing an appropriate monitoring system. The government needs to enact the current anti- trafficking proposals to protect all children being trafficked for labour and sexual exploitation. There is a need for the government to establish a child labour inspection directorate. Finally, there is also a need for the government to harmonise the ILO labour laws with child rights laws and make it an offence to engage children 0-18 in any form of labour.

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