

Influence of Child Labour on Primary School Pupil's Enrolment and dropout: A Scoping Review

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ABSTRACT: Child labour is one of the major obstacles to the realization of universal primary education in low- and middle-income countries. Child labour deprives children of their chances to acquire the required skills for the development of their potential. This is akin to a child trying to prepare for an exam while carrying a heavy backpack of worries, fears, and distractions on their back which affects their desired outcome. This study provided an updated review of the literature on child labour's influence on primary school pupils' enrolment. Child labour literature was explored via a scoping literature review strategy. As a result of this literature review, child labour negatively impacts primary school enrolment. This study also revealed that child labour is the major contributor to primary school pupils' dropout. Finally, this review revealed that enforcing a minimum employment age of 15 and reducing the return to child labour without providing social supports such as conditional cash transfer to the poor household would facilitate an increase in children's dropout rate in developing countries. Based on the empirical child labour literature, more research is needed to be conducted using qualitative and quantitative measures to capture first-hand information to augment quantitative measures.

Keywords: child labour, primary school, pupils, pupil's enrolment.

ABSTRAK: Pekerja anak merupakan salah satu hambatan utama dalam mewujudkan pendidikan dasar universal di negara-negara berpendapatan rendah dan menengah. Pekerja anak melibatkan anak-anak dari peluang untuk memperoleh keterampilan yang diperlukan untuk mengembangkan potensi mereka. Ini mirip dengan seorang anak yang mencoba mempersiapkan ujian sambil membawa beban pikiran, ketakutan, dan gangguan yang berat di punggungnya yang memengaruhi hasil yang diinginkan. Penelitian ini menyediakan tinjauan terkini tentang literatur mengenai pengaruh pekerja anak terhadap pendaftaran murid-murid sekolah dasar. Literatur pekerja anak dieksplorasi melalui strategi scoping review. Sebagai hasil dari tinjauan literatur ini, pekerja anak memiliki dampak negatif terhadap pendaftaran murid sekolah dasar. Penelitian ini juga menunjukkan bahwa pekerja anak adalah penyebab utama putus sekolah pada murid-murid sekolah dasar. Terakhir, tinjauan ini mengungkapkan bahwa penerapan usia minimum bekerja 15 tahun dan mengurangi keuntungan dari pekerjaan anak tanpa memberikan dukungan sosial seperti transfer tunai bersyarat kepada keluarga miskin akan memfasilitasi peningkatan tingkat putus sekolah anak-anak di negara-negara berkembang. Berdasarkan literatur empiris pekerja anak, penelitian lebih lanjut perlu dilakukan dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif dan kuantitatif untuk menggali informasi langsung guna melengkapi data kuantitatif.

Kata kunci: murid, pendaftaran murid, pekerja anak, sekolah dasar.

INTRODUCTION

Child labour is a global issue that has existed over the centuries not only in the third world countries but also in some of the developed countries. Child labour is deemed destructive as it deprives children of childhood and inhibits

social mobility. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), child labour is “work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children and interferes with their schooling” (ILO, 2002). Child labour affects children's education cumulatively since it influences school attendance, skipping of classes, and long-term school completion (Boutin & Jouvin, 2022). Besides stifling individual children's educational advancements, child labour also hinders actualization of universal basic education, affecting the global village (Goulart & Bedi, 2008). This mean that the devastating effects of child labour is not limited to the households but has a significant influence in the global world.

The incidence of this phenomenon differs based on the nature of the country, since there are approximately 160 million children in the world classified as child labourers (UNICEF, 2022), which manifest as the result of an increase in poverty, political conflicts, and natural or forced displacement. This latest global estimate of child labour specifically stated that children between the ages of 5 to 17 years will engage in rigorous labour in 2020 in which 63 million girls and 97 million boys will engage in rigorous labour (ILO & UNICEF, 2021). ILO (2020) emphasized that 1 in 10 million children engage in child labour and 79 million children which is almost half of the population of child labour are involved in hazardous work which endangers their health, safety and psychological development. Prevalence of child labour is higher in rural areas as ILO and UNICEF (2021) estimated that 122.7 million rural children are involved in child labour unlike urban areas where 37.3 million children are involved in child labour.

Since 2016, the progress against child labour has stagnated while the absolute number of children engaging in child labour has risen by over 8 million (ILO, & UNICEF 2021). This could be attributed to a decade of growing gaps between the rich and the poor which have forced millions of children out of school and into work (Cockburn, 2001). This has resulted in a decrease in school enrolment as these children find it difficult to combine school and work. Studies have indicated that children who work are more or less likely to enrol in school (Beegle et al., 2009; Guarcello et al., 2006). Furthermore, Putnick and Bornstein (2015) reported that there is significant negative relationship exist between child labour and school enrolment with strong indication that the relationship are more consistent for family work and household chores than work outside the home. However, other studies revealed that child labour has no significant relationship with school enrolment (No et al., 2012; Ravallion & Wodon, 2000). This means that child labour does not necessary lead to low school enrolment.

Different countries have adopted measures to reduce child labour's adverse effect on primary school enrolment. Studies conducted by Hoop and Rosati (2014) revealed that conditional and unconditional cash transfer has been impactful in lowering child labour as well as cushioning the impact of economic shocks that trigger household use of child labour coping strategies. Kozhaya and Flores (2022) revealed that implementation of a full school program has no substantial impact on school enrolment, rather it increases the hours of school activities allocated to schooling activities as well as at times decreases the child

labour hours. In the developed countries, increasing primary school enrolment has been seen as the mechanism of anti-child labour policies (U.S. Department of Labour, 2019) and many countries are making serious efforts in advancing the goal of universal compulsory primary education. However, in the developing countries, policies aimed at reducing child labour and enhancing school enrolment have not been able to have any significant impact.

The ILO and UNICEF (2021) graph shows child labour spread across the globe. Statistics indicate that child labour is higher in Asian countries and lower in Latin America. As shown in the graph below, eastern and South Eastern Asia recorded 37.2%, central and southern Asia recorded 35.3%, Northern Africa and western Asia recorded 28.1%, sub-Saharan Africa recorded 28.1 and Latin America and the Caribbean recorded 15.5%.

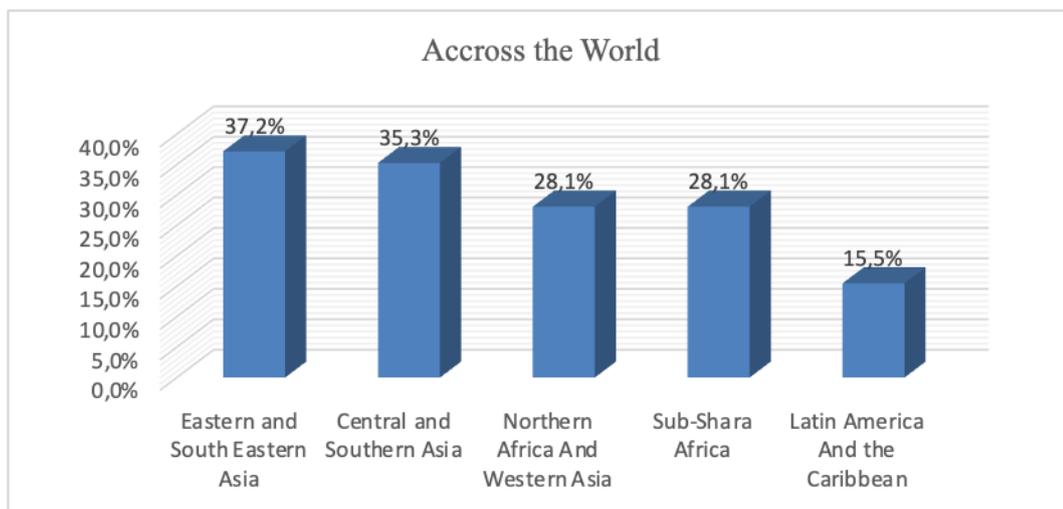


Figure 1. Child labour Spread Across the World (ILO and UNICEF, 2021)

Child labour could also contribute to primary school dropouts because of the difficulty in combining education and work at a tender age and a large number of these children are within the age of compulsory education. ILO and UNICEF (2021) statistics have shown that more than a quarter of children aged 5 to 11 and more than a third of children aged 12 to 14 who engage in child labour are school dropouts. This is because the majority of these children struggle to balance the demands of school and child labour at the same time, which in the end can cause them to compromise their educational opportunity. This has eroded the prospect of decent work among youth as well as their life potential. A study opined that what contributes to the high rate of children dropping out is parents' low value for the education of their children are more likely to drop out and engage in child labour (Islam & Hoque, 2022). This means that in some cases households view children's labour as the last resort to meet their labour needs.

In the ILO and UNICEF (2021) statistics, 35% of children who work as children have dropped out of school due to their involvement in child labour. The statistics also indicate that among these 35% that dropped out of school, 17.7% are aged 5-11 years, 35.2% are aged 15-17 years, and 53.2% are aged 15-17 years.

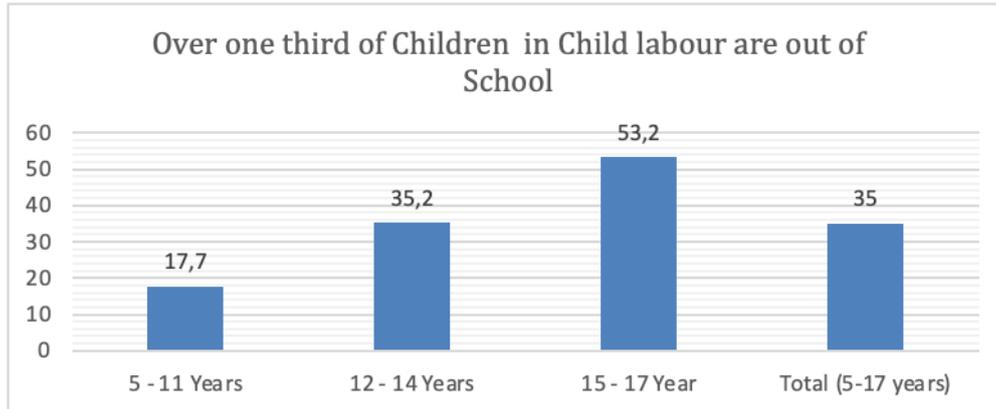


Figure 2. Age distribution of child labour (ILO and UNICEF, 2021)

Despite different measures at reducing child labour and school dropout, and enhancing primary school enrolment, many children still engage in child labour across the world as reported by (ILO & UNICEF, 2021). Hence, this current study aims to provide the current empirical findings on the influence of child labour on primary school pupils' enrolment and school dropout. Our review question that guided this study is what is the influence of child labour on primary school enrolment and dropout? We hope our findings will provide policy makers, educators, and parents with a better understanding of the adverse effects of child labour on primary school enrolment and dropout. This will facilitate the immediate formulation of policy that curtails child labour and eliminates school dropout, enhancing primary school enrolment.

RESEARCH METHOD

We conducted a scoping review to examine the influence of child labour on primary school pupils' enrolment and dropout rate. This scoping review protocol was registered on 15 April 2023 on the Open Science Framework (Available online: <https://osf.io/8b3ex/>). This study followed the three steps recommended by Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) for scoping review and search strategy (Jordan et al., 2019). Using this approach literature search was conducted on online databases such as EBSCO, PUBMED, EconLit, Web of Science and Scopus. Multiple inclusion criteria were applied to searching these databases. The key words used to search for these main variables include child labour ("child work", "child labor", and "under-age work"), educational enrolment ("school attendance" or "participation") and school dropout (out of school children). Studies without these variables were excluded from the study. Using snowball sampling, more studies were identified from the reference lists of the appropriate articles.

Studies used in this study were limited to those published in the English language from 2010 to 2023. Our major interest was in the studies showing that the population age ranges from 5 to 17 years which is the basic education age. Studies such as the influence of child labour on primary school pupils' enrolment or the influence of child labour on children dropping out were included. This population must engage in different kind of child labour such as hawking,

extraneous homework, casual work, unpaid work for family among others. Studies that included child labour age such as children less than 5 and greater than 18 were included. Studies that described child labour activities like slavery, debt bondage, prostitution, and drug trafficking were excluded. The selected articles were critically assessed by both researchers independently based on the above established criteria. At the end, 10 empirical studies met the criteria. Descriptive analysis of the results was used to analyse the findings. Majority of the studies selected were quantitative studies describing the variables and establishing the relationship between variables. Some of the studies were also qualitative which captured first-hand information from children who experienced child labour. We used the table to capture the elements of empirical research, including the year, author name, population, objectives, method, and results as recommended by JBI (Jordan et al., 2019)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

Child labour has been seen by scholars as the major factor that limits Universal basic education since poor households engages children in labour which obstruct them from attending school. Recent report from ILO (2021) show child labour is on the increase. Empirical studies show that child labour has a devastation effect on children's enrolments. Two empirical studies have revealed that child labour is negatively correlated with school enrolment (Kavugha, 2014; Putnick & Bornstein, 2015). According to Ali (2020), child labour accounted for 21% drop in primary school pupils' enrolment thereby lessening the percentage children enrolment in primary school. This is predominant in poor household with intensive occupation where parents trade-off children schooling with labour (Islam & Hoque, 2022). Child labour drives primary school children's dropout rate mostly among female primary school children (Xayavong & Pholphirul, 2018). The summary of findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Result of the Empirical Review

Author	Year	Sample	Study objectives	Method	Results
Lilian and Nairobi	2013	100	The study investigated the effects of various form of child labour on their primary school participation	Descriptive survey	The study affirmed that child labour adversely affected primary school pupils' participation in primary education.
Heyman n et al.,	2013	----	The study examined the relationship between minimum age of employment and secondary school enrolment.	Correlation al Research Design	The study revealed that a minimum employment age of 15 or higher was positively related with increased secondary school enrolment for girls.

Kavugha	2014	60	The study examined the impact of child labour access and participation on primary education.	Case Study	This study found that child labour has huge influence on school on children that combine work with education as it deprives them their fundamental right to access and participate in education.
Putnick and Bornstein	2015	---	This study evaluated the relationship between child labour with school enrolment in more.	Descriptive Survey	The study revealed that there is substantial negative relationship between child labour and school enrolment with more consistent for family work and household chores.
Njeri	2018	---	The study investigated the influence of child labour on pupils' participation in primary education.	descriptive survey design	It was found that child labour promotes economic freedom among primary school pupils, which negatively impacts their participation in education.
Xayavong and Pholphirul	2018	---	The study investigated the impact of child labour on school dropout	Descriptive study	According to the results, child labour, particularly among girls, significantly influences school dropout rates.
Ali	2020	384	The main objective of the study was to establish the effect of child labour on schooling.	Descriptive survey design	This study reported that child labour contributed to 21% drop in the enrolment of pupils in primary school. The study further revealed that child labour lessens the percentage of enrolment of children in primary school.
Bai and Wang	2020	----	The study examined the impact of return to work on child work and schooling outcomes.	Descriptive survey	The study found that a decrease in returns to child labour increases school attendance due to the countervailing price effect.
Vasey	2020	---	The study developed a of students' achievement in which students takes decision of enrolment study effort and	Secondary datasets of ENLACE test scores	The study revealed that prevention of students from combining work and school national dropout rate would increase by approximately 20% while

			labour supply taking cognisance of available schooling options and wage.		achievement would increase in mathematics and Spanish.
Islam and Hoque	2022	28	The study examined parents' behaviour in their decision making on their children practising labour or schooling.	Qualitative research	The study revealed that parents from the poor household with labour intensive occupation trade-off child's work with schooling.

Furthermore, two studies concluded that child labour adversely affects primary school children's participation in primary school, particularly those who combine work and education, depriving children of their fundamental right to participate in compulsory primary education (Kavugha, 2014; Lilian & Nairibi, 2013). A study that was carried out on mechanisms of curtailing child labour revealed that enforcement of a minimum employment age of 15 or above was positively related to an increase in secondary school enrolment especially for girls (Heymann, 2013). In contrast, empirical evidence from Mexico revealed that prohibiting students from combining school and work would increase child labour by 20% (Vasey, 2020). With respect to the financial benefit of child labour and its educational implications Njeri (2018) revealed that children that engage in child labour enjoy economic freedom especially primary school pupils which have adverse effects on their participation in school. In line with Njeri's finding, Bai and Wang (2020) reported that the decrease in the returns to child labour increases schooling due to the countervailing price effect.

Discussion

This study's discussion is based on the three main findings, which include that child labour negatively impacts primary school enrolment, that child labour is the major contributor to primary school pupils' dropout, and that enforcing a minimum employment age of 15 and reducing the return to child labour without providing social supports such as conditional cash transfers to the poor household would facilitate an increase in children's dropout rate in developing countries.

First, this study revealed that child labour negatively impacts school enrolment. This implies that child labour has a devastation effect on children's education because it disfranchises them from their rights to compulsory education. Child labour's negative impact on children's education outweighs the short-term benefits households derive from it. This review has shown that child labour is negatively related to children's enrolment in primary schools since it reduces the number of children that enrol in primary schools (Kavugha, 2014; Putnick & Bornstein, 2015). This means that child labour hinders children's literacy because it deprives children of their rights to compulsory education. This

finding equally depicts that child labour is a significant factor that hinders the actualization of universal primary education as stipulated by UNESCO. Despite the short-term gain of child labour by poor parents as an alternative source of income, it has a long-term damaging impact on the productivity of children in adulthood. This is because it perpetuates the cycle of poverty since engaging in work deprives children of valuable time of acquiring potential skills and knowledge to break out of poverty (Alewond, 2017 & Rahman et al., 2018). The prevalence of child labour is high in the middle and low-income countries must especially in the Africa and Asia countries and the rate is still on the increase (ILO & UNICEF, 2021).

Second, this study revealed that child labour is the major contributor to primary school pupils' dropout. This means that the major source of pupil's dropout from school is engaging underage children in work that are tedious for their age which derives them valuable time meant for learning thereby resulting to high rate of failure and school dropout. According to European Commission (2020) globally 97 million boys were in child labour at the early year 2020 which is almost a ratio of 1 in 10 male children. This means that in extreme cases of child labour, they deprive children both male and female children of their educational opportunities because most of these children who are exposed to hazardous work find it difficult to cope with their learning activities. Therefore, they end up preferring to work or engage in apprenticeships instead of furthering their education. The finding of this study aligned with the finding of Xayavong and Pholphirul, (2018) who revealed that child labour is responsible for the increasing rate of children's dropout rate mostly among female primary school children. The current situation is not only limited to female children, the majority of male children within school age equally engage in child labour such as apprenticeships after school hours, hawking and other mangier jobs to assist their families. This finding is in consonance with the findings of Rawat et al., (2020) who revealed that child labour is the foremost problematic situation that enhances the rate of school dropout among school children. Hence, there is a need to formulate a policy measure in order to curtail the high rate of prevalence of child labour in low- and medium-income countries. In addition, this study affirmed the findings of Musa et al., (2023), that reported that the socioeconomic consequences of child labour comprise children's health and school dropout in North-Eastern Nigeria.

Third, on the measure to curtail child labour prevalence, this research disclosed that reducing the return to child and enforcing a minimum employment age of 15 or higher would reduce child labour and increase enrolment in school. This measure could be effective depending on social support services policies formulated to support the households of these children's parents by the government to augment the financial gains they derive from child labour. If the measure is not well enforced with adequate social support measures such as conditional cash transfer to the poor household, rather than enhancing school enrolment, it will induce a high rate of school dropout since the majority of these children are from poor neighbourhoods. This

finding aligns with the findings of Shanan Shanan (2023), who reported that constraints imposed on the labour supply of their children and the increase in their expected skills contributed to enrolment. Shana's finding equally indicates compulsory schooling laws and child labour regulation played a significant role in the demographic transition in the US. The finding of this current review disagrees with the finding of Vasey (2020), which revealed that preventing students from combining work and school increases the national dropout rate by 20%. This is because poor households with labour intensive occupations would prefer work to school since they perceive child labour as an alternative source of income which augments their financial deficiency. This means that the students from these households are more likely to leave school to pursue work, making them more likely to drop out in the long run. Further, the financial burden of paying for school can also contribute to students dropping out, as it may not be feasible for them to pay for school if they are unable to work.

The strength of this review lies in utilising a scoping review approach to establish the current devastating impact of child labour on school enrolment and dropout as it unveiled its negative impacts on primary school enrolment, a major contributor to school dropout, and the effectiveness of enforcing a minimum employment age as a measure to curtail school dropout. However, this current review has inherent limitations. First, due to the scoping review methodology adopted, this review did not assess the weakness or strength of the research design of the included studies, which is applicable in a systematic review. Second, this study reviewed articles published in English; hence, other articles published in foreign languages were excluded due to language barriers.

CONCLUSION

Child labour is a global problem that affects millions of children. This study is the first of its kind that explores the influence of child labour on primary school enrolment using a descriptive review lens. This review affirmed that child labour is negatively associated with children's enrolment in primary schools. This means that despite the short-term benefits of child labour for families in the cycle of poverty, child labour has a devastating effect on both parents and the child involved in the long-run since it deprives the child of all the opportunity to acquire fundamental education required for skill advancement at the appropriate age. The review revealed that child labour is the root cause of out of school children in developing countries. This is because the majority of households allow their children to combine work with school as a source of alternative income in order to support their families financially. In an extreme case whereby, the child may not be able to cope due to low grades, the child may likely to drop out of school. The multiple effect of child labour is that it does not only deprive children of their right to acquire fundamental education, it deprives the global community of emerging human capital that is would be required to derive the knowledge economy.

Finally, this review highlighted measures to reduce the prevalence of child labour which include enforcing a minimum employment age of 15 and

reducing the return to child labour. These measures could only be fruitful if there is a simultaneous social support policy that is focused on assisting low-income earners in easing their financial burden associated with their children's education. Child labour is a social problem that deprives the millions of children of their right to compulsory education and exposes them to adverse life-threatening jobs at a tender age. Further review should extend the scope of this study by reviewing studies conducted in other foreign languages in order to bring to the fore, the state-of-the-art of the devastating effect of child labour in primary school enrolment.

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