

IMPACT OF CHILD DOMESTIC LABOUR ON CHILDREN'S EDUCATION. A CASE STUDY OF LUSAKA CITY IN ZAMBIA

Patrick Chanda, M.Sc.
University of Zambia, Zambia

Abstract

Child labour constitutes a major social problem in Zambia. It not only harms the welfare of individual children, but also slows broader national poverty reduction and development efforts. Children forced out of school and into labour to help their families make ends meet are denied the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed for gainful future employment, thereby perpetuating the cycle of poverty. This study therefore sought to investigate the impact of child domestic labour on children's education in Lusaka City of Zambia. The study employed an exploratory qualitative case study design. Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Respondents were purposively sampled for study. Snowball sampling was also used to locate children. The results of the study showed that child domestic labour negatively affects school enrolment as parents send their children to do domestic work to supplement family income. Evidence also showed that for those who attempt to enrol, school attendance becomes poor and eventually they drop out of school to concentrate on work. Moreover, children's performance at school becomes very poor as they cannot concentrate on their studies and work at the same time. In terms of gender, many girls drop out of school as they are more engaged in domestic work than boys. However, results showed that domestic work enables children to find money to pay school fees and buy school materials. Child-sensitive social protection, free and compulsory education for all children should be the policy measures for elimination of child labour.

Keywords: Child, child labour, domestic labour, education

Introduction

Child domestic work is often accepted in the societies where it exists, and it is often viewed as a safe form of employment (Hesketh, Gamlin, Ong, & Camacho, 2012). However, child domestic workers may be especially prone to exploitation and abuse due to the invisibility and inaccessibility of the work setting. To this effect, the ILO has identified a number of hazards to which child domestic workers are particularly vulnerable (ILO, 2011). Some of the most common risks children face in domestic service include, long and tiring working days; carrying heavy loads; handling dangerous items, such as knives, axes and hot pans; insufficient or inadequate food and accommodation, and humiliating, inhuman or degrading treatment, including physical and verbal violence, and sexual abuse. These hazards need to be seen in association with the denial of fundamental rights of the children such as access to education and health care, the right to rest, leisure, play and recreation and the right to be cared for and to have regular contact with their parents and peers.

With regard to the effects of child labour on children's rights to education, empirical evidence has suggested that child labour is one of the main obstacles to education for all children, as involvement in child labour is generally at a cost to children's ability to attend

and perform in school (Guarcello, Lyon, & Rosati, 2008, p. 1). Child labour therefore adversely affects the academic achievement of the considerable number of children who combine work and school, often resulting in these children leaving school prematurely and entering into work. With no access to affordable and quality education, children are left to work, too often in dangerous and exploitative conditions (ILO, UNICEF, and the World Bank, 2009). Child labour not only prevents children from acquiring the skills and education they need for a better future, but it also perpetuates poverty and affects national economies negatively through loss of competitiveness, productivity, and potential income. Thus, withdrawing children from child labour, providing them with education, and assisting their families with training and employment opportunities can contribute directly to creating better work for adults (Stalzer, 2009, p. 23).

In Zambia, child labour constitutes a key obstacle to achieving universal primary education and other Millennium Development Goals. It not only harms the welfare of individual children, but also slows broader national poverty reduction and development efforts. Children forced out of school and into labour to help their families make ends meet are denied the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed for gainful future employment, thereby perpetuating the cycle of poverty (ILO, UNICEF, and the World Bank, 2009). Therefore, understanding the interplay between education and child labour is critical to achieving both Education For All (EFA) and child labour elimination goals in Zambia.

In spite of a large and rapidly expanding literature on child labour, there is not much empirical evidence on the consequences of child labour on children's schooling. Mainly, empirical literature on child labour in Zambia has focused on investigating and analyzing its determinants and extent, nature, effects on health, rather than the consequences on children's education. For example, empirical studies conducted by (Oyaide, 2000; and Matoka, 1994) have revealed the causes of child domestic work, conditions of work and gender dimension of child domestic work. However, none of them have unearthed the impact of child domestic labour on children's education in Zambia. To this effect, there is little evidence in the published literature on the impact of child domestic labour on children's schooling in Zambia.

The present study therefore sought to investigate the impact of child domestic labour on children's education from a human rights perspective. This study was guided by the following research questions: (1) What are the effects of child domestic work on children's schooling? (2) What policy measures should be put in place in order to address child domestic labour?

Research Design

This study employed an exploratory case study approach and qualitative research study to investigate the impact of child domestic work on children's education. Key (1997) affirms that qualitative research study produces more in-depth, comprehensive information and seeks to understand people's interpretations, perceptions and lived experiences. Zainal (2007) asserts that the case study method enables a researcher to closely examine the data within a specific context, and thus gives in-depth information on the subject under investigation.

This study therefore employed the case study approach and qualitative research study because the design enabled the researcher to explore and examine in-depth the lived experiences of child domestic workers in Lusaka City of Zambia. More so, qualitative case study allowed the researcher to collect data using different methods (such as interviews and document review) so as to provide the complete story (Neale, Thapa, & Boyce, 2006). The approach also allowed the researcher to use different sources of information (such as child domestics, parents and child protection officers) in order to obtain in-depth information about the impact of child domestic labour on children's schooling.

Sample Size and Sampling Design

Purposive sampling was employed because the researcher intended to get insightful information about the impact of child domestic labour on children's education. Snowball sampling was also employed as a back up to purposive sampling because child domestics were very difficult to locate in private homes in which they work. Bryman (2008) asserts that using snowball sampling, the researcher makes initial contact with a small group of subjects who are relevant to the research topic and then uses these to establish contacts with others.

According to Mark (2010), samples for qualitative studies are generally much smaller than those used in quantitative studies. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007) assert that sample sizes in qualitative research should not be too large as it may be difficult for the researcher to extract thick and rich data. Marshall (1996) affirms that an appropriate sample size for a qualitative study is one that adequately answers the research question.

In this study, the researcher purposively sampled 10 child domestic workers on the basis of their experiences. Specifically, children aged between 10 and 14 years were sampled for the study since the Zambian Constitution and the Employment Act set the minimum age for employment at 15. The study also purposively selected 8 parents and 4 child protection officers on the basis of their knowledge of child domestic labour. This sample size was easy to manage in terms of data analysis.

Data Collection Methods

Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were used to collect data from key informants, child domestic workers and parents. Kvale (1996) asserts that qualitative research interviews enable researchers to understand something from the subjects' point of view and to uncover the meaning of their experiences. Interviews also allow people to convey to others a situation from their own perspective and in their own words. Berry (1999) also asserts that in-depth interviewing is a type of interview which researchers use to elicit information in order to achieve a holistic understanding of the interviewee's point of view or situation. This method therefore allowed the researcher to ask open-ended questions, probe and ask follow questions in order to solicit for in-depth information from respondents. This method also allowed the research participants to freely express their views, feelings, opinions and share experiences. The face-to-face interview also enabled the researcher to take field notes during the interviews.

The researcher also conducted document study to collect data on the impact of child domestic work on children's education. Payne and Payne (2004) describe the documentary method as the techniques used to categorize, investigate, interpret and identify the limitations of physical sources, most commonly written documents whether in the private or public domain (Mogalakwe, 2006). In the current research, official and public documents, including reports from the Zambian government, articles, newspapers and organisational documents were used to give the researcher a deeper understanding of the subject under investigation. Document analysis enabled the researcher to formulate and refine research questions based on the existing knowledge on child domestic labour.

Data Analysis

Thematic content analysis was used as a method for analyzing qualitative data in order to allow the researcher to extract conceptual categories of data with similar meaning. This is called meaning categorization according to Kvale (1996). Thus, categories were established. Categories of data with similar meaning generated themes that were used to interpret data based on research questions. The themes summarized the meaning of the data which addressed the purpose of the study during interpretation of data.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues such as informed consent, privacy, confidentiality and consequences for the interviewee should be taken into account with any qualitative interview (Kvale, 1996). In this study, ethical issues were considered when carrying out this study as all the research participants were informed about the purpose of the investigation. Informed consent was obtained from individual children and their parents in writing in the local language which research participants understood better. The researcher also ensured that confidentiality and anonymity were employed in which the information collected was strictly used for research purposes.

Results

Effects of Child Domestic Work on Children's Schooling

This study explored the effects of child domestic work on children's schooling. Child protection officers who participated in the study said that child domestic work has adverse effects on boys' and girls' education. For example, one of the child protection officers said:

“Both boys and girls aged between 9 and 14 years old drop out of school and engage in domestic work in order to earn a living.”

Children dropout of school since they have to work in order to find money to meet their basic needs such as food, clothes, and moreover help parents to pay house rentals. In this regard, domestic work negatively affects child domestic workers' schooling as their attendance becomes poor and eventually children drop out of school to concentrate on work. For children who combine work and school, their performance at school becomes very poor as they cannot concentrate on their studies and work at the same time. Poor performance coupled with school drop outs entail that children's educational advancement is affected. The child protection officers added that enrollment is also affected as children opt for domestic work at the expense of education. To this effect, the right to education for children is affected negatively. The right to education is the key to enjoying other rights, and therefore if children are denied the right to education, it means they are deprived of other rights too. Such revelations indicate that child domestic labour has negative consequences on children's schooling because they stop schooling in order to work and make ends meet.

However, parents who took part in the research said that child domestic work positively affects children's right to education to some extent in that work enables children to find money to pay school fees and buy school materials. On a related issue, the responses from child domestic workers confirmed the information provided by the parents. All the child domestic workers indicated that domestic work enables them to earn money to supplement family income. Moreover, child domestics who look after their siblings provide money for them to go to school. In this way, domestic work enables children to have access to education. For example, one of the child domestic workers aged 14 said:

“I dropped out of school and decided to take domestic work because my parents are very poor. Thus, through domestic work I help my family to raise money to buy books and pay school fees for my siblings .”

In terms of gender, child protection officers said that more girls than boys drop out of school to engage in domestic work. This is because girls are perceived to be more hard working and trusted than boys. In this regard, employers want girls to work for them as compared to boys. One of the child protection officers remarked:

“From my experience, many girls drop out of school as they are more involved in domestic work than boys. This is because domestic work is perceived to be employment suitable mainly for girls since they are considered to be humble and hard working. To

this effect, girls are easily taken as domestic workers in private homes to do babysitting, cooking, sweeping, washing and other household chores.”

It emerged from this data that it is the gender aspect that matters as more girls are employed as domestic workers than boys. Moreover, majority of these girls dropout of school while others never even enroll for education. In this case, it could be deduced that child domestic labour negatively affects girls’ right to education since they are forced to do domestic work for the upkeep of their families at the expense of education. This in turn hinders inclusive education for all children as more girls than boys drop out of school. In the end, there is gender inequality in achievement of education. When the majority of the girls are not educated, they are deprived of the capabilities or lifelong skills which can make them to be competitive in the labour market. Consequently, domestic work denies girls better schooling opportunities which in turn result in child and family poverty as girls will always be employed in low class jobs that perpetuate the cycle of poverty. This therefore perpetuates gender, social and economic inequalities in the long run and, hence feminization of poverty.

Policy Measures for Elimination of Child Labour

The study sought to provide information on policy measures for elimination of child labour in Zambia. In-depth interviews with child protection officers indicated that Education For All (EFA) in terms of access and quality should be effectively implemented through existing educational and child policies. The government should therefore put in place good educational and child protection policies that can help children to go back to school. For example, one of the child protection officers said:

“The policy or legislation on universal primary education should be effectively implemented by government and other stakeholders. More so, free and compulsory education for all children should be provided.”

It also emerged from the data that the Zambian government and stakeholders should devise child-sensitive social protection policies and programmes that would cover orphans and vulnerable children who opt for domestic work as a means of sustaining their livelihoods at the expense of schooling. All the child protection officers indicated that the government should devise poverty reduction policies and programmes aimed at addressing poverty and other vulnerabilities that lead children to drop out of school and engage in domestic work.

Discussion

Effects of Child Domestic Labour on Children’s Schooling

In this study, it was found that both boys and girls aged between 9 and 14 years old drop out of school and engage in domestic work in order to earn a living. Evidence therefore indicated that domestic work has adverse effects on both boys' and girls' schooling. In this regard, domestic work negatively affects child domestic workers’ schooling as their attendance becomes poor and eventually children drop out of school to concentrate on work. For children who combine work and school, their performance at school becomes very poor as they cannot concentrate on their studies and work at the same time. Poor performance coupled with school drop outs entail that children’s educational advancement is affected. More so, children's enrollment is also affected as they opt for domestic work at the expense of education. To this effect, involving children in domestic work denies them the right to education as guaranteed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates that primary and vocational education should be free, compulsory and accessible to every child (UNICEF, 2009, p. 79). Consequently, the right to education is the key to enjoyment of

other rights, and if children are denied the right to education, it means they are deprived of other rights that are associated with educational achievement.

The results of the current study were affirmed by Oyaide's (2000) study, which revealed that child domestics miss out on schooling and skills training opportunities. Similarly, a study conducted by Anti-Slavery International (2013) into the psychosocial wellbeing of child domestic workers (CDWs) in Togo and India, showed that child domestic work often completely excludes children from the education system, leaving them with little opportunity for social mobility since they lack skills required for them to compete in the labour market.

The results of this study were also collaborated by the study conducted by ILO, UNICEF and World Bank Group (2012) on the child labour situation in Zambia. The results revealed that child labour constitutes an obstacle to achieving Universal Primary Education and other Millennium Development Goals in Zambia. It not only harms the welfare of individual children, but also slows broader national poverty reduction and development efforts. Children forced out of school and into labour to help their families to make ends meet are denied the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed for gainful future employment, thereby perpetuating the cycle of poverty in the family. Moreover, child labour can lead to social vulnerability and social marginalization, and can permanently impair the attainment of personal and productive potential, in turn influencing lifetime patterns of employment and earnings, and generating important constraints to national development goals. Child labour therefore not only constitutes a serious violation of the rights of the children concerned, but also has clear broader consequences for national social development. Children growing up compromised educationally and developmentally by early involvement in work will be in a poor position to contribute to Zambia's growth as adults.

Stalzer (2009, p. 23) asserts that child labour not only prevents children from acquiring the skills and education they need for a better future, but it also perpetuates poverty and affects national economies negatively through loss of competitiveness, productivity, and potential income. Withdrawing children from child labor, providing them with education, and assisting their families with training and employment opportunities can contribute directly to creating better work for adults. Domestic work thus hinders inclusive education for all children since many children drop out of school because they have to work to supplement family income. Moreover, domestic work contributes to family poverty since children lack necessary education and vocational skills that they can use to fight poverty.

The implication of domestic work for children is that it denies them privileges and opportunities to acquire knowledge and lifelong skills which they can use to move out of poverty. In this regard, child domestic work is a violation of children's right to education even if children work in order for them to earn income to meet their basic needs. Consequently, domestic labour is harmful and not in the best interest of the children involved. The major long-term disadvantage is that it limits the opportunities opened to the child later on in life and it is harmful on the long run to the society at large because it generates a reservoir of future illiterate and unskilled labour force (Oyaide, 2000).

In terms of gender, the findings of the current study showed that more girls drop out of school and are more engaged in domestic work than boys. It is the gender aspect that matters because employers perceive girls to be humble and hard working. Thus, domestic work is perceived to be employment suitable for girls. Consequently, majority of these girls dropout of school, while others never even enroll for education since schooling is not appreciated by some families in the Zambian society. In this regard, girls' right to education is denied in that when children are forced to do domestic work for the upkeep of the family, they drop out of school and for those who combine school and work, their performance is very bad. This in turn hinders inclusive education for all children. In the end, there is gender

inequality in achievement of education. When the majority of the girls are not educated, they are deprived of the capabilities or lifelong skills which can make them to be competitive in the labour market. Consequently, domestic work denies girls better schooling opportunities which in turn result in feminization of poverty as girls will always be employed in low class jobs. This has potential to perpetuate gender, social and economic inequalities and injustice in the long run. Education therefore is the key to success and empowerment of individuals and communities at large. All in all, without education it is difficult for children and their families to come out of the vicious cycle of poverty.

Robeyns (2005, p. 95) asserts that "what is ultimately important is that people have the freedoms or valuable opportunities (capabilities) to lead the kind of lives they want to lead, to do what they want to do and be the person they want to be". However, child workers lack the freedoms or capabilities which may be regarded as possibilities or opportunities of realizing their full potential because they engage in domestic work at the expense of education. Thus, without these capabilities or opportunities, child domestic workers cannot be free from abuse, exploitation and more so they cannot access human rights such as the right to adequate standard of living, decent work and equal pay, social security and good health. Domestic work is therefore harmful to children's wellbeing and development because it limits children's freedoms or capabilities, more so schooling opportunities and subsequent skills training which they can use to achieve their desired goals. This is because children are forced to drop out of school to concentrate on work to make ends meet. This has long-term consequences on future aspirations, freedoms, privileges, choices and opportunities for children and the community at large.

Despite that domestic work negatively affects children's schooling, children's right to education is also positively affected to some extent in that domestic work enables children to find money to pay school fees and buy school materials. Moreover, child domestics who look after their siblings provide money for their siblings to go to school. In this way, domestic work enables children to have access to education. To this effect, child domestic work has both positive and negative effects on children's schooling.

Policy Measures for Elimination of Child Labour

It emerged from this study that child domestic labour has adverse effects on children's education. Thus, policy measures for elimination of child labour ought to be put in place by the Zambian government. The results of the current study therefore indicate that Education For All (EFA) in terms of access and quality should be effectively implemented through existing educational and child policies. In this regard, the government should put in place good educational and child protection policies that can help children to go back to school. Specifically, the policy or legislation on universal primary education should be effectively implemented by government and other stakeholders.

The findings of this study were affirmed by empirical evidence provided by ILO, UNICEF and the World Bank Report (2009, p. 64-67) on understanding children's work in Zambia. The evidence suggested that the single most effective way to stem the flow of school age children into work is to extend and improve schooling, so that families have the opportunity to invest in their children's education. Empirical evidence therefore pointed to a number of possible policy measures for extending and improving children's schooling in Zambia. These policy measures should include, provision of free and compulsory education for all children in State schools and State-assisted community schools. Thus, there is a need to introduce legislation making basic schooling compulsory in Zambia, as a sign of national commitment to universal enrolment, and so that parents have a legal obligation to send their children to school and the State a legal obligation to ensure that children stay there. The empirical evidence provided by the ILO, UNICEF and World Bank Report (2009) also

indicated that important policy measures should include the provision of educational materials such as exercise books, pencils and uniforms for free or at subsidized rates and for those who cannot afford them, and the elimination of all formal and unofficial school fees.

Data from the current study also indicate that the Zambian government should devise child-sensitive social protection policies and programmes that would cover orphans and vulnerable children who opt for domestic work as a means of sustaining their livelihoods at the expense of schooling. The results indicate that the government should devise poverty reduction policies and programmes aimed at addressing poverty and other vulnerabilities that lead children to drop out of school and engage in domestic work.

The findings of this study were corroborated by empirical work done by the ILO, UNICEF and World Bank (2009). Empirical evidence indicated that policy measures for elimination of child labour should include the expansion of social cash transfer schemes to targeted households to reduce household vulnerability. Developing and strengthening community-based social safety mechanisms can also be important to yield needed benefits to vulnerable households. Therefore, community-based measures such as community savings groups, and micro-credit initiatives, should be promoted and expanded, especially targeting poorest households. Child transfers, targeting pre-school children, offer another potential way forward in this context. The capacity of community based care initiatives supporting those who look after children made vulnerable by HIV should be also strengthened, to ensure that the burden of care is removed from children to ensure they do not work and can attend school.

Conclusion

It is established from this study that domestic work negatively affects child domestic workers' schooling as their attendance becomes poor and eventually children drop out of school to concentrate on work. Children's performance at school also becomes very poor as they cannot concentrate on their studies. More so, children's enrollment is affected as they opt for domestic work at the expense of education. In terms of gender, child labour hinders inclusive education for all children as more girls than boys drop out of school to become domestic workers. Therefore, achievement of gender equality in education is negatively affected. To this effect, involving children in domestic work denies them the right to education as guaranteed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Domestic work is therefore a violation of children's right as it is not in the best interests of the child.

The only way children can be protected from abusive and exploitative child domestic labour is to send them to school so that they can acquire the knowledge and vocational skills that are needed for better employment opportunities. In this regard, the government should provide free and compulsory education as this would ensure that all vulnerable children who cannot afford to pay school fees have access to education.

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