

## Social and Health Consequences of Child Labour: Implications for Sustainable National Development in Nigeria

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**ABSTRACT:** *The adverse effects of child labour on the children's psychosocial development continue to pose grave concerns about the overall quest for sustainable national development in most low-income countries including Nigeria. Exposing a working child to sexual abuse and direct experience of ill-health status have been severally put forward by child protection specialists, researchers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international agencies. However, few studies have empirically documented its implications for a sustainable national development in the extant Nigerian literature. Hence, this study sought to examine the social and health consequences of child labour and its implications for a sustainable national development in Nigeria. Against this backdrop, a cross-sectional survey study was carried out in Shomolu Local Government Area of Lagos State, South-western, Nigeria. 400 Questionnaires were administered to all consenting children. The cross-sectional survey involved a four-stage sampling technique, a total of 389 children, 228 males, and 161 females, participated in the survey. Their age range was 6-17 years. Data were analysed using the descriptive statistic and Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) analytical tools to test the level of significant difference. Findings show a significant relationship between child involvement in child labour and experience of sexual abuse and exposure to the ill-health status at the level of (0.001) and (0.032) significant difference which is less than the p-value of 0.005. We recommended that implementation of child's right and protection policy should be given effective and adequate priority for Nigeria to be able to achieve a sustainable national development.*

**Keywords:** Child labour, sexual-abuse, ill-health status, sustainable national development

### Introduction

Child labour is a topical issue of global concern and is one of the unimaginable forms of child abuse and social neglect. However, identification of social and health consequences associated with it is very germane for targeted interventions, and more importantly policy options for sustainable national development in most of the low-income countries including Nigeria. Children are important resources to the nation's human capital development; however, such pool of human capital can be developed to an optimum level by providing them a safe and conducive environment. Hence, the protection of children from the economic violence of child labour is very critical to every effort towards a sustainable national development. No doubt, children all over the world by tradition gave a helping hand to their respective homes. This practical knowledge enriches and enshrines them. It avails them the opportunity to learn basic skills and to contribute to their family in a very decent way. This is not child labour. Ideally, the concept of a child, embedded in moral and legal practices, is that a child is a person who is in some fundamental way, not developed but

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rather developing (Schapiro, 1999). Sequel to these underdeveloped processes, adult parent or surrogate is therefore needed to act on children's behalf. They have thus bestowed with some special obligations including the obligation to protect, safeguard, nurture and educate children so that they can have a safer and better childhood and consequently a brighter future that can, in turn, transform the socio-economic development of any nation. Hence, this places a mandate for legal protection in a condition of freedom, dignity, and security on all the custodians of children within child protection system.

In the context of research, it is beyond the shade of doubt that politically, socially and economically child is the need of the future. The child is not only the future of a nation and its aspiration for sustainable national development but also, and mainly, its strength in reserve. The future of a nation is best secured if its children are healthy and active, educated and informed, disciplined and trained, as well as free from social prejudices and above all having a scientific outlook. (Bilal Ahmad Bhat, 2010). With this in mind, it is clear that children are the heart of social development and their wellbeing transform into the sustainable development of a nation (Pagare, 2004). They represent future leaders, workers, and parents. Thus, they are meant to grow up and be nurtured in a healthy family environment, in an ambiance of happiness, harmony, care, and understanding. As such, children should not be maltreated, exposed to danger, neglected, abused, exploited, worked long hours or deprived of their menu of a right to life, survival, development, education, association, and health (UNCRC, 1989, ACRWC, 1999, CRA, 2003 and CRL, 2007).

In contrast, child labour is any work that is capable of disrupting child's education or detrimental to his/her health, physical, mental and social development (UNCRC, *Ibid*). Child labour represents a situation whereby children perform domestic tasks in the home of a third party or employer under exploitative conditions (long hours with little or no payments). We recognize the fact that the definition of a child varies according to culture and customs. Therefore, we have adopted WHO definitions as received from Schenk and Williamson (2005). Thus, a child is being considered here as an individual younger than 18 years. By the same token, the definition of child labour was also recognized as being controversial among scholars. Therefore, child labour in the context of this study was operationalised as any type of paid work involved by an individual younger than the age of 18 years as a means of livelihood. Sustainable development as it were, is a development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need (Barbier, 1987; Anderson, 2002).

However, ILO (2004) estimated that in the year 2000, over 352 million children aged 5-17 were involved in economic activity all over the world. These children are susceptible to exploitation and all forms of abuse. These factors – lack of access to communities, to functional basic education and to appropriate social support – are amongst key enablers of child abuse (e.g. violence against children, trafficking in person and child labour) in Africa (see Wolfe, 1999). In the same vein, a quite number of children in Nigeria are not receiving education and leisure which are very profound for their physical, social and mental development. Indeed, implications of this precarious situation of Nigerian children for sustainable national development cannot be overemphasized both in theory and practice. Sadly, there are over 15 millions staggering child labourers in

Nigeria. One in every five children does not live beyond their fifth birthday (UNICEF, 2006, 2004). In terms of education, the report issued out by the nation's Ministry of education (Olatunji, 2006; Adeoye, 2007) indicated that 42.1 million Nigerian children eligible for primary education; just 22.3 million were in school. The remaining 19.8 million were out of school. The situation for secondary schools, where most adolescents fall into, was even very worrisome because of 33.9 million of children eligible for secondary education, only 6.4 million were in school. One can assume that it is not because parents are not willing to send their children to school, but because they lack the economic resources to execute a wish for a sustainable better future for their children (Emeka, 2010). Thus, child labour is one of the alarming social phenomenon confronting Nigeria quest for sustainable national development. It is however instructive to note here that, the problem of child labour became very critical in most low income countries including Nigeria in late 70s and early 80s due to the introduction of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) which marked the watershed of drastic economic melt-down with concomitant galloping inflationary gaps, incessant fall in revenue from oil, and high unemployment rates (Ebigbo, 2003). Consequently, was arching poverty that affected mostly the marginalized group (women and children), hence making them more susceptible to exploitation and all forms of unimaginable abuse and social neglect. Mac John Nwaobiala, of the International programme on the Elimination of child labour in Nigeria (IPEC, 2004) further analysed the gender ratio of this group of working children as 7.8 males and 7.2 females. According to him, six million of this fifteen million are not in school while 2 million are exposed to long hours of work (Nwaobiala, 2004). In addition, ILO/IPEC report (2008) further shed more light on the problem of child labour in Nigeria that though childhood is a critical time for safe and healthy human development. In contrast, child labourers in Nigeria are at a high risk of illness, injury and even death due to a wide variety of machinery, biological, physical, chemical, welfare/hygiene and psychosocial hazards, as well as from long hours of work and poor living conditions. The work hazards and risks that affect adult workers can affect child labourers even more severely. For example, physical strain, especially when combined with repetitive movements, on growing bones and joints can cause stunting, spinal injury and other lifelong deformation and disabilities. Children often also suffer psychological damage from working and living in an environment where they are denigrated, sexually harassed or experience violence and abuse. In addition, child labour has a profound effect on a child's future, denied the right to a quality education, as adults, they have little chance of obtaining a decent job and escaping the cycle of poverty and exploitation and this will concomitantly affect the quality of future labour, parents and leaders-comprising quest for sustainable national development. These worrisome statistics and conditions gave us insights into the problem of child labourers in Nigeria with several implications for national development. Although, some patterns of child labour like street hawking, can contribute to the economic growth and development in some way, however, the attendant consequences that are attached supersede the economic positive aspect of it. Risks like a motor accident, rape, kidnapping, extortion, sexual molestation, poor academic performance and involvement in other anti-social behaviours are not negligible within the context of both research and appropriate policy for targeted interventions.

Hence, the precarious situation of Nigerian children as highlighted above spur up in us a pertinent question on what could be the magnitude of the social and health consequences of child labour in Nigeria? Sadly, this has not received adequate attention in the extant Nigeria literature. This study thus intends to fill this lacuna. An understanding of the social and health consequences of child labour and relevant policy options must be based on the appropriate empirical study. It is against this backdrop that this study was undertaken. The general objective is to determine the social and health consequence of child labour in Lagos metropolis, south-western Nigeria as well as the policy options that should be pursued vis a vis its implications for sustainable national development particularly as Nigeria attempt to be one of the world largest economies in the year 2030. In specific terms, the objective of the study include: (a) to examine the socio-demographic characteristics of children in the study area; (b) to determine the relationship between children involvement in child labour and experience of sexual abuse; (c) to evaluate the relationship between children involvement in child labour and experience of ill-health status at work.

### **Hypotheses**

**H<sub>0</sub>** There is no significant relationship between child involvement in child labour and exposure to sexual abuse.

**H<sub>0</sub>** There is no significant relationship between child involvement in child labour and experience of ill-health status at work.

### **Theoretical Underpinning**

#### **Poverty Theory of Child Labour**

Child labour as a result of poverty is one of the most common theories about the causes behind underage work. A majority of studies in developing countries including Nigeria show that poor families put their children in child labour more often than families in a better economic situation. Increase of the household income is one reason but it is also a safety strategy to even out the risk of losing economic income, for example with the loss of an adult income earner or a failed harvest. According to ILO (2010), child labour commonly may represent around 20 per cent of the household income, and as poor families spend the majority of its income on food, consequently the children's incomes are crucial. In many households not all income is equally allocated to meet basic needs. Income earned by the mother of the household is more likely to be available for the family than income earned by the father. Children's earnings given to mothers may therefore be more important for the family than the earnings gained by the father. It is common that children do think about such factors, they are fully aware of their work as an important part to support their family. Economic dependence of households on the work contributed by their children varies extremely, ranging from almost none in industrializing countries to nearly total dependence in families with an absent or disabled adult – common in many African countries being desolated by HIV/AIDS. Boyden J, Ling B, and Myers W (1998) indicate that the fundamental importance of child labour as a result of poverty is so widely accepted and well demonstrated that there is no need to question the theory. But, there exist disagreements about to what degree poverty is fundamental to child labour – if poverty was the sole determinant for child labour, the highest rates of child labour would be found in the poorest parts of the world. This is not always the case. The

relationship between child labour and poverty is varied, vague and indirect. If poverty would be the only determinant, the same patterns would be found over the world, but they are not. In rich countries it is often the opposite; children from high-income families are more likely to work. The explanation is that children from wealthier families have more work opportunities and are less exposed to ethnic and racial discrimination. A Brazilian study of economical active urban children compared a more industrialized wealthier area in south with a less industrialized, poorer area in north. The finding was that children in the wealthier south were much more likely to be involved in labour than were the children in the poorer north. The best explanation was that the well-situated environment in south provided more labour opportunities for children. Even if more children might have been looking for work in the northern poor area they could not find it. This is an example of the fact that increased prosperity in an area will not automatically reduce the prevalence of child labour. Children from wealthier families are sometimes more likely get involved in child labour as children of families owning land or small business may work more than children from poor families without any productive assets. It is common both in industrialized and developing countries to find children working in family business generating livelihoods well above the poverty level. In fact, most child labourers work within the home or in a family enterprise. Poverty itself may be an obstacle to work opportunities, for example it can limit the ability to pay for travel to and from the job-site. Most common is to think that poverty is an explanation for the flow of children into the labour market, but poverty can also be an important factor regarding the demand for child labourers. Employers with a bad economic situation often turn to child labour with the wish to keep their cost to a minimum, and poor children come cheap. Poor children have less education, fewer employment options and are less aware of their rights. The globalization of the market puts pressure on the prices and in the search for the lowest prizes child labour seems to be the cheapest option and this precarious situation often expose many low income countries including Nigeria to all sorts of vulnerable conditions such as sexual violence, abuse and neglects.

### **Health Belief Model of Child labour**

The Health Belief Model (HBM) is one of the most widely used conceptual frameworks for understanding health behavior. Developed in the early 1950s, the model has been used with great success for almost half a century to promote greater condom use, seat belt use, medical compliance, and health screening use, to name a few behaviours. The HBM is based on the understanding that a person- child labourer will take a health-related action (i.e., use pain killers) if that person- child labourer:

1. feels that a negative health condition (i.e., ill health status) can be avoided,
2. has a positive expectation that by taking a recommended action, he/she will avoid a negative health condition (i.e., using professional prescribed medication will be effective at preventing ill-health status), and
3. believes that he/she can successfully take a recommended health action (i.e., he/she can use approved medication/pain killer comfortably and with confidence).

The Health Belief Model is a framework for motivating people to take positive health actions that uses the desire to avoid a negative health consequence as the prime motivation. For example, ill health status like body pain is a negative health consequence, and the desire to avoid body pain/headache can be used to encourage childlabourer to shun hazardous labour so as to maintain a healthy lifestyle. It is important to note that avoiding a negative health consequence is a key element of the HBM. The HBM can be an effective framework to use when developing health education strategies. A large research study reviewed 46 studies of HBM-based prevention programs published between 1974 and 1984. The HBM-based programs focused on a variety of health actions (Becker, 1974). Central to this theoretical approach here is predominantly on prevention of childlabourers from ill-health related issues like body pains, headache, STIs/HIV/AIDs just to mention few. To be sure, Weston (2005) noted that any work children do for long hours, can be damaging to their health because the work can be abusive, exploitative or hazardous and it can have an adverse effect on their health status if proper preventive measures are not in place.

## **Materials and Methods**

### **Data and Methods**

#### **Research design**

This study examines social consequences of child labour in Shomolu LGA of Lagos Metropolis Nigeria. Thus, a non-experimental research design which consists of cross-sectional survey research method is employed to identify the significant social consequences of child labour in Lagos State, Nigeria. The association of key consequences such as working children exposure to sexual abuse, and experience of ill-health status are important dependent variables tested against the occurrence of child labour to enhance clarity and accuracy about the characteristic of each factor and its relationship with child involvement in child labour as the major independent variable in this study. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection in form of personal interview.

#### **Study Area**

This study was conducted in Lagos metropolis of Shomolu LGA, (South-western, Nigeria). Lagos state composed of 27 local government areas (LGAs) during the time of the survey in 2015. The area was purposively selected due to its high level of growing population as urban city coupled with the high concentration of commercial activities in this area that often encourage occurrence of child labour as noted in some of the previous studies conducted in South-western Nigeria (See, Fawole et al.,2003).

#### **Study Population and Sample Size**

The study employed a cross-sectional survey research method to generate its primary data based on the nature of the research theme and objectives. The questionnaires used in the survey were administered only to the consenting children between the ages of 6-17 years in the study area. A sample of 400 children was recruited for the study and as such, a total of 389 consenting children, 228 males, and 161 females,

however, participated in the survey. The proportion of the respondents selected was based on multi-stage and simple random sampling and specifically lottery due to the non-existence of sample frame (i.e. the list of all children between the ages of 6-17 years in Lagos State) in the study area as at when the study was conducted.

### **Sampling Techniques**

The sampling techniques used in this survey is four multi-stage random sampling technique-using the simple random sampling (lottery) method to select (400) four hundred (children between ages 6-17 years) respondents. The non-existence of a sampling frame (i.e. the list of all children between the ages of 6-17 years in Lagos State) necessitated the adoption of a multi-stage random selection technique for the survey exercise, and as such to enhance equal representative. The precise study location is Shomolu Local Government Area (LGA) of Lagos State which was purposefully sampled for the study due to limited available financial, material and human resources to cover the entire state. Shomolu Local Government (Lat. 6.540833° to 3.387222°) lies in the Ikeja Division of Lagos State, Nigeria. It has a population of about 403, 559 (NPC, 2006) and has a land area of 11.6km<sup>2</sup>. Hence, it is bordered in the South by Lagos Mainland, in the West by Ikeja and Mushin and in the East by the Lagos Lagoon. There are eight wards in Shomolu Local Government Area. The wards are Ward A (Onipanu), Ward B (Bashua), Ward C (Ijebutedo), Ward D (Orile/Alade), Ward E (Okesuna/ Alase), Ward F (Bajulaiye), Ward G (Igbari), and Ward H (Fadeyi/Igbobi). The people of Shomolu Local Government Area are predominantly Yoruba. They are composed of the Eko- Aworis and Ijebu. The local government has its territorial confines settlement like Somolu, Pedro, Bariga, Bajulaye, Morocco, Ilaje, Igbobi-Sabi, Obanikoro, Apelehin, Bashua, Igbari, Akoka, and Abule-Okuta. Large-scale commercial activities in the formal private sector, particularly printing press, are conducted in almost every available space while the arts and crafts of the cottage industries are veritable sources of substantial revenue. In the industrial sub-sector of the area, there are industries which provide employment for the inhabitants. These are part of the reason why this location was considered and selected for this kind of community-based study. The following stages were adopted in order to select the sample for the survey (i.e. the macro approach method).

**In Stage one (1):** Shomolu Local Government Area of Lagos State has eight (8) political wards out of which four (4) political wards were randomly selected.

**Stage two (2):** Out of four (4) political wards selected were ten streets each randomly selected using simple random sampling technique specifically (lottery) and making the total number of streets selected forty (40) streets.

**Stage three (3):** Using the simple random sampling technique, ten houses were selected in each of the forty streets, bringing the total number of houses to 400. In selecting the ten houses, the number of each of the house in each street has been tiny in pieces of paper and ten pieces were randomly picked. The house number that was picked was selected for the study.

**Stage four (4):** In each of the house selected, the numbers of households were collected and using the simple random method, specifically the lottery method, a household was selected and an eligible respondent was chosen in each of sampled household based on a child within the age (6-17years) as stated under study population section.

### **Research Instruments**

A structured questionnaire is employed to collect primary data in the survey. A total of 400 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the study population through a method of personal interview. This was highly appropriated since the method avails us the opportunity to fill the questionnaire properly because many of the children may not fill it completely as expected without supervision. However, only 389 out of 400 questionnaires administered were found useful for the analysis. The survey was structured in such a way that adequate information was elicited on research objectives and hypotheses. Question asked bothered on five sections (A-E) the section A consists of respondents Socio-demographic background and their parents, section B focuses on circumstances leading to their involvement in paid work, section C was on social and health consequences of child involvement in child labour and section D bothered on their coping strategies while section E was on their general suggestions for policy options.

### **Data Collection**

The fieldwork of this was carried out between September and October 2015. This quantitative data were collected with the aid of survey method. Ten- (5) male and (5) female interviewers ( Social Work Diploma students) who have taken courses on research methodology were recruited from Department of Social Work, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Lagos for the administration of the questionnaires in the study locations. The reason for recruiting young students was because since the study focuses on children most of the respondents will feel free to discuss their involvement in economic activities with young individuals. These interviewers were trained for two days and their skills were pre-tested before the commencement of the major survey. Two supervisors, namely the principal author (Graduate student) and the correspondent author (Senior Lecturer) supervised and monitored all the activities of the interviewers on the field. At the end of each day of the survey, the principal author who always on the field usually review and edit the completed and returned questionnaires in order to check for internal consistency, completeness, and other validity issues on each of the returned questionnaires.

### **Data Analysis**

Data generated in the study are quantitative in nature; hence data analyses require descriptive and inferential analytical techniques. In order to achieve these, various analytical methods were employed to analysed and explain the generated data. The univariate analysis involved the use of the table, frequency distributions and percentages. The bivariate analysis in the same vein involved the use of Chi-Square statistical tool. These methods were used to test the hypotheses formulated on social consequences of child labour in Lagos State. The data collected were sorted and analysed with the aid of SPSS version 2.0.



### Ethical Consideration (Informed CONSENT).

Written and oral informed consent was obtained from the respective parents/guardians, and employers on behalf of the minor and confidentiality of the information were received. The responses which formed our data eventually were analyzed and interpreted in aggregate without any link to a specific respondent. Besides, the information was kept confidential and was used purposely for this research work and its publication.

### Limitation of the study

It was difficult to get appropriate answers from the children since most of them were minor and could not respond to the questions adequately. In addition, fear and anxiety forced them to remain silent, which led to misleading answers in some occasions. Much has to be elicited, hence, through observation. The researchers always endeavoured to avoid the notion which may miss-represent the findings. Some parents and guardians hid the information that the child is not an earning member but tried to pose that they send the child to work to overcome idleness and from being a victim of anti-social vices. It is instructive to note here that employers of child labourers were very hesitant of the interview as they considered the researchers as a government official deputed for collecting information about the abuse of child labour in handicraft. In fact, many declined their informed consent on behalf of the child. Majority of the children who engaged in child labour were from poor backgrounds.

### Results, Findings, and Discussions

**Table 1: Socio-Demographic Status and Family Background of the Respondents N=400**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Age Group</b>		
Less than 6years	7	1.8
7-11years	189	48.6
12-17years	193	49.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Sex of Respondent</b>		
Male	228	58.6
Female	161	41.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Ethnicity Affiliation</b>		
Yoruba	281	66.6
Igbo	78	31.1
Others	23	1.3
Hausa	7	1.0

<b>Total</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Family Type</b>		
Extended Family	113	29.0
Nuclear	244	62.7
Single-Parent Family	32	8.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Family Income</b>		
Less than ₦50,000	174	44.7
₦ 51,000-₦100,000	73	18.8
₦ 101,000-₦150,000	23	5.9
₦ 151,000-₦200,000	15	3.9
₦201,000 and above	26	6.7
No response	78	20.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2015.

Four hundred questionnaires were distributed but 389 were collected and analysed given a response rate of 97%. Of the 389 respondents, a majority (49.6%) were in the secondary school age range of 12-17 years, while (48.6%) were in the primary school age range of 7-11 years. Sex distribution also shows that majority were males (58.6%), (Table 1). More than sixty-six percent of the respondents were Yoruba, while other ethnic nationalities constituted the remaining 33.4%. More than sixty-two percent of respondents were from monogamous family and nuclear family background (i.e. couples living together with their children). The majority of the respondents' 44.7% family earned less than ₦50,000 as income in a month while 6.7% respondents are from a family that earned ₦201,000 and above as income per month. The majority of the respondents were from low-income backgrounds.

### Testing of Hypotheses

**Table 2: Chi-Square Analysis Cross tabulation showing the relationship between Child Labour and experience of Sexual Abuse**

Do you involve in paid work as a means of livelihood?	Have you ever been sexually abused by customer/employer before?		Total
	Yes	No	
Yes	70 (43.8%)	90(56.2%)	160 (100.0%)
No	52 (66.7%)	26(33.3%)	78 (100.0%)

<b>Total</b>	<b>122 (51.3%)</b>	<b>116 (48.7%)</b>	<b>238 (100.0%)</b>
$\chi^2 = 11.022$ , $df = 1$ , $sig (p\text{-value}) = 0.001$			

**Source:** Field Survey, 2015.

From the table 2, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is thus rejected.

The result from the analysis revealed that the 122(51.3%) children interviewed in the study significantly reported that involvement in paid work as a means of livelihood have significantly, and consequently increase their vulnerability to experience of sexual abuse among working children compared to 116(48.7%) who said child labour has no implication for vulnerability to experience of sexual abuse among working children in the study area.

This is corroborated by the findings of Omokhodion et al (2003) study for WHO which indicated that there is a relationship between child involvement in labour and sexual harassment. Another submission from Onuzulike (2007) study supported this finding as indicated that child involvement in child labour has a correlation with sexual harassment which can manifest into unwanted pregnancies. Hence, the implications for this on our quest for sustainable national development is the fact that child labour has social implication- sexual violence against children can consequently lead to unwanted pregnancy among teenagers which can, therefore, interrupt their education and posits severe implications on their future ambition to become socioeconomically productive in their society especially through quality formal educational attainment for them to be able to break the vicious cycle of poverty in their family.

**Table 3: Chi-Square Analysis Cross tabulation showing the relationship between child labour and exposure to ill health status at work place**

Do you involve in paid work as a means of livelihood?	Have you ever experienced ill health at work-place before?		Total
	Yes	No	
Yes	56 (56.0%)	44 (44.0%)	100 (100.0%)
No	8 (32.0%)	17 (68.0%)	25 (100.0%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>64 (87.4%)</b>	<b>61(49.2%)</b>	<b>125 (100.0%)</b>
$\chi^2 = 4.611$ , $df = 1$ , $sig (p\text{-value}) = 0.032$			

**Source:** Field Survey, 2015.

From the table 3, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is thus rejected.

The result from the analysis revealed that the majority 64(87.4%) working children interviewed in the study significantly reported that involvement in paid work as a means of livelihood would significantly increase

the experience of children to ill-health status compared to 61(49.2%) who said child labour has no significant relationship with an experience of ill-health status among working children in the study area.

The result of this study is in consonance with several other studies that corroborated this assertion that it is logical to assume that there is a significant relationship between child involvements in paid work and an experience of ill health status (Ayaya & Esamai 2001; Nuwayhid *et al.* 2005; Omokhodion *et al.* (2003). In the same vein, Weston (2005) noted that any work children do for long hours, can be damaging to their health because the work can be abusive, exploitative or hazardous and it can have an adverse effect on their health status. The alarming and grim spread of HIV/AIDs infections among young population in Nigeria as recently reported (See, UNAIDS, 2016) can be traceable to a quantum of over 15 million Nigerian children who have been trapped in the quagmire of child labour (UNICEF, 2007). Thus, every effort to curb the spread of HIV/AIDs may not be completed especially among young population in Nigeria without an effective safeguarding and child protection policy in place to safeguard and protect children from all forms of violence against children in Nigeria, including child labour.

### **Implication of the findings for Sustainable National Development**

The study has established that child labour has social consequences-exposure to sexual violence which has implication for a sustainable national development. It is instructive to note here therefore that exposing children to the economic violence of child labour have grave detrimental effects on their physical, mental and social development as documented in this study. Onuzulike (2007) further corroborated this finding that social consequences of child labour include but not limited to sexual violence, unwanted pregnancies, prostitution, smoking, robbery, truancy and poor academic performance among others. Hence, one can logically assume that child labour does not only have severe social consequences but also have implications for sustainable national development of every nation such that the health of many children in Nigeria is subjected to present and future risk because of the pressure to meet the present socioeconomic needs by involving in paid work for long hours and mostly in hazardous conditions in order to complement family meager income (Emeka, 2010). Many parents from socio-economic difficulty circumstances in Nigeria have traded the future of their children for immediate economic gain by substituting child's education for child hawking-child labour in order to meet up with the current hardship economic reality in the country. However, this precarious situation of many children poses a severe implication for our quest for national development because it often denied the children right to a quality education, as adults they have little chance of obtaining a decent job and escaping the vicious cycle of poverty, and exploitation while this will concomitantly affect the quality of future labour, parents, and leaders-comprising our quest for sustainable national development in the future. Since these children are the reserve future labour forces, parents, and leaders that would be in charge of the socio-economic and political transformation and progress of our nation.

In the same vein, this study has equally established that the works which children engaged in this study are usually repetitious and highly detrimental to their safety and health status. In addition, the adverse effects

from such work might impede child growth and invariably compromises every quest for a sustainable national development. Thus, it is logical to assume that children in this study usually have their health status been comprised as documented in this study. The implication of this finding on the quest for a sustainable national development cannot be overemphasized because this will invariably reduce the life expectancy and increase child mortality and morbidity rate in the country and in the long run, undermine the roles of our future human resources competency, and reduce the gross national productivity rate of the country. Hence, this will always compromise every quest for national development in Nigeria because these children are the nation's agents of socio-economic and political development in reserve.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has established that the social and health consequences of child labour as documented in this study have implications for sustainable national development because engaging these children in child labour can irrevocably damaged their personalities and have their general social well being compromised. Meanwhile, they represent the nation's agent for socioeconomic development capable of becoming the future workers, parents, and leaders in reserve. Since these children are the future of the Nigerian society, evidently sustainable development goal of the larger society is at present being compromised with the empirical findings of this present study which indicated that there is an association between child labour and experience of sexual abuse and exposure to ill-health status. However, for Nigeria to meet up in her quest for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and to become one of the fastest growing economies in the year 2030, certain recommendations for policy options were generated below from this study.

### **Recommendations: policy implications for sustainable national development.**

- We, however, recommended that CBOs, NGOs and other civil society should come up with synchronised initiatives and a network of social welfare support programmes to cushion the detrimental effects of child labour especially for children from a poor socio-economic background who may be combining schooling with working or completely out of school as a result of poverty. This could be done in collaboration with the three tiers of government to design a sustainable re-orientation and rehabilitation programme for children who have been or most likely been trapped with the quagmires of child labour in the country.
- Also, an appropriate implementation of child protection policy and safeguarding system that will not only embrace but also effectively enhance a child right-base approach to protect the right of the children cum providing social welfare programmes as part of sustainable development goals (SDGs) which must be strictly implemented beyond just being a toothless paper tiger as usual-to

avoid chasing shadow in an abstract environment which has always been the case in the Nigeria quest for sustainable national development. This can be done through enlightening the parents, surrogates, and guardians on the detrimental effects of child labour on child's health and social development.

- Finally, there is still need for more functional international intervention strategies and synergies in the country through international programmes for the elimination of child labour (IPEC) in Nigeria in order to fix up the missing link in her clarion call for sustainable national development, and quest to become one of the leading economies in the year 2030

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