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## **Relationship between Child Labour and Access to Education among Secondary School Students in Mukono District of Central Uganda**

**Dr. Sarah N. Oshi**

Director, Center for Development and Reproductive Health, Enugu, Nigeria

**Dr. Joachim C. Omeje**

Associate Professor, Department of Educational Foundations (Guidance and Counselling)  
Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria

**Dr. Daniel C. Oshi**

Medical Adviser, German Leprosy and TB Relief Association, Enugu, Nigeria

### ***Abstract:***

*This study sought to investigate the relationship among child labour and access to education, among secondary school students in Mukono District of Central Uganda. A sample of 600 secondary school students was composed through multistage sampling that involved stratified random sampling and simple random sampling. Data collection was done using a validated, pre-tested and reliable questionnaire. The key findings suggested that the relationship between child labour and access to education was positive and significant, and child labour participation may have accounted for 18% of the variation in students' access to education. The key conclusion is that Secondary school students in Mukono District were able to combine child labour with schooling. And that child labour may be mildly to moderately helpful in the education of secondary school students in poor communities in developing countries as exemplified by Mukono District although elsewhere this may not be so. It may therefore be helpful for researchers to treat discourses on child labour within contextualized local, social and economic conditions, and that participation of students in child labour in Uganda and similar settings should be carefully regulated by Government in order to protect children from exploitation and engaging in the worst forms of child labour.*

***Keywords:*** Child Labour, Access to Education, Children, Schooling

### **1. Introduction**

Child labour is seemingly widespread, diverse and complex, and apparently occurs in different parts of the world. It has, however, been suggested that it occurs more predominantly in the developing countries. It also seems to affect children of different ages and socioeconomic backgrounds, though it has been suggested that children from poor socio-economic backgrounds tend to engage more in child labour than children from richer socioeconomic backgrounds (Chepkwurui, 2004). Similarly, it has earlier been argued that household poverty could be one of the major factors driving children into child labour. (International Labour Organization (ILO, 2013). Child labour refers to the engagement in income-generating activity by a child whether in the family business or in businesses owned by others. Children may therefore choose, struggle or are compelled to participate in economic survival of their household by engaging in paid work (Myers, 1991).

Instructively, the way child labour is viewed may also depend on the social and cultural circumstances of the people involved as well as the level of development of a particular nation. According to an international Non-Governmental Organization (INGO) working in the area of child protection (Save the Children, 2008), child labour is generally defined in the context of child exploitation. Child exploitation refers to the use of children for someone else's advantage, gratification or profit which often results in cruel and harmful treatment of the child. The Republic of Uganda (1998) defined child labour as the involvement of children in tasks beyond their normal roles towards their own well-being and development as well as that of their families and communities, such tasks as may be allocated to them that do not conform to what they can handle by virtue of their age, gender and capability or lack of it, tasks that may cause children of 16 years and below to lose their rights and opportunities to health, education, skills training, proper physical and social well being ( Republic of Uganda, 1998). In this study, child labour is defined as any type of economic or non-economic activity in which children of 18 years and below may engage so as to obtain a wage or contribute to family welfare.

In Uganda, the prevalence of child labour appears to be quite high (United States Department of Labour [USDOL] 2009). A report by the International Programme on Elimination of Child Labour [IPEC]/Uganda Bureau of Statistics (IPEC/UBOS, 2001) estimated that 2.5 million children between the ages of 7 and 14, that is 38% of this age group, were engaged in economic activities. Further analysis by the Bureau also demonstrated that 15% of children were engaged in economic activities by age 7 and that over half of all Ugandan children were economically active by age 13. Children between the ages of 7 and 14 in rural areas were said to be three times more likely to engage in work than children in urban areas (45 % and 15 % respectively). Moreso, a study by Guracello, Rosati, Breglia & Ssenono (2008) revealed that over 1.76 million children between the ages of 5 and 17 were involved in child labour as defined by Uganda's national legislation.

Mukono District is one of the districts in Uganda in which children seem to be highly engaged in child labour in different sectors such as agriculture, fishing, and fishing, related activities, brick making, telecommunications, restaurant work and water fetching/selling to mention but a few (ILO/Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (ILO/MGLSD, 2008; Buyinza, Khainza and Bukenya, 2009; Walakira, 2010). It is worthy of note that children in the above mentioned age range usually fall in the category of children that ideally may have gained access either into primary school or secondary school.

Since the time of her independence in 1962, the Ugandan government has made several attempts to increase access to education not only at primary school level but also at secondary school level (Tanner, 2006). According to Bitamazire (2005) education is a major opportunity that contemporary societies like Uganda strive to provide for their children. In the pursuit of providing access to education for children, Ugandan government formulated an educational policy known as the 7 - 4 - 2 - 4 system of education.

The 7- 4 - 2 - 4 system of education comprises 7 years of primary school education leading to Primary Leaving Examination (PLE) certificate, four years of lower secondary school leading to the Ugandan Certificate of Education, Ordinary Level (O Level), 2 years of upper secondary school leading to the Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education respectively (Tanner, 2006). After this level, successful candidates usually move on to Universities and Colleges where they study for a period ranging from 2 to 4 years as the case may be. According to UNICEF (2006), access to education is viewed as the duty of governments and all stakeholders to ensure that children are able to enroll in classes at an appropriate age for each level or grade. Access to education has been defined in this study as the actual enrollment and commencement of studies in a class in a term.

Evidence, however, seems to show that there were gaps in access to education among the various age groups (Tanner, 2006). To address this gap, Ugandan Government introduced Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1997. The key policy thrust of the UPE was to make education accessible and relevant to the child (Tanner, 2006). At first, the target of UPE programme was to give free education to a maximum of four children per family (World Bank, 2002). Consequently, there were deficits in access to education and the government amended UPE in 2003 to cater for every child in the family (Bashaasha, Najjingo, Mangheni & Nkonya, 2011; International Programme for Elimination of Child labour- IPEC/Uganda Bureau of Statistics (IPEC/UBOS, 2001). Seemingly, the introduction of UPE, in spite of its shortcomings, culminated in large numbers of pupils graduating from primary school and qualifying to enter secondary school. Thus, there was the need for provision of access to secondary school education for these large numbers of primary school leaving children.

To further improve access to secondary education, Ugandan government introduced the Universal Secondary Education (USE) policy in 2007. The main objective of the USE policy was to increase access to secondary schools by providing tuition free secondary education for the first four years of secondary school (Community Development and Conservation Agency [CODECA] CODECA, 2010). Although the USE policy seemed to have increased enrollment into secondary schools since its introduction in 2007/2008, there may still be many children who do not have access to secondary school education in Mukono district of Uganda due to indirect costs of education such as school uniforms, textbooks/exercise books, school bags, sandals, costs of transport, lunch fees, PTA (Parents and Teachers Association) levies to mention a few (Education International, 2013; CODESA, 2010; UNESCO, 2006; Demir, Demir and Sevil, 2006).

Access to education is viewed as one of the key concepts in education (Geith & Vignare, 2004). In Geith & Vignare's view, access to education refers to having the right to participate in an education programme though whether this right can actually be exercised in practice depends on a number of factors including national/ regional education policy, household socio-economic status, etc. Another scholarly view on the concept of access to education is that of Kettley (2007). To Kettley, access to education has its roots in the concept of equality of opportunity. The author defines equality of opportunity as a way of ensuring that all differences in chances offered to children/people of different backgrounds (religion, race and class) are removed in order for the children to participate in education. Access to education has been seen by UNICEF (2006) as the responsibility of every national government to meet up with the challenge of making basic education available, more relevant and affordable for all children on the basis of equal opportunity. Access to education is, thus, viewed as the practical response of every national government to create schooling opportunities for all children, including those children who are involved in child labour (UNICEF, 2006). In applying the definitions and conceptualizations to this study, this study seeks to establish whether there may be a relationship between child labour and access to education and how this relationship may or may not hinder children from having equal opportunities to enroll in class at the appropriate age for the appropriate level. In this study, access to education is defined as a child's actual enrollment and commencement of studies in a particular class in a school. The main objective of this study was to describe the various types of child labour in which Secondary School Students in Mukono district participated in as well as exploring the nature of the relationship between child labour and access to education among Secondary School Students in Mukono district.

### 1.1. Research Questions

Two research questions were posed to guide the study:

- a. What types of child labour activities do secondary school students in Mukono district participate in
- b. What is the relationship between child labour and access to education among secondary school students in Mukono district of Uganda

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Study Setting/Population

The study was carried out in Mukono District. Mukono District is located in Central region of Uganda. There are three (3) counties in Mukono District and 25 sub-counties. The counties are Buikwe, Nakifuma and Mukono. The counties are further sub-divided into sub-counties, parishes and villages. The study was carried out in all the three counties. This was done by first of all stratifying the district into 3 strata based on the already established administrative structure of counties. Giving a total of 3 counties, namely, Buikwe, Nakifuma and Mukono. Each county was considered a stratum from which secondary schools would be sampled. Second, simple random sampling technique through balloting was used to draw 2 secondary schools from each stratum. Third, in each of the selected secondary schools, 2 classes (senior 2 and senior 3) were purposively selected. The first reason for choosing these two classes was that they are middle classes in which students have already got used to their studies in the school compared to senior one which is the very first class in secondary school and as such students are just beginning to find their footing. Importantly too, some of them are just starting to stabilize in their studies. The second reason is that these two classes are not involved in major external examinations. Many head teachers do not usually welcome their students taking part in external extra-curricular activities that are not related to their preparation for the external examinations, as exemplified by taking part in a research.

Simple random sampling was used to draw 50 students from each class (senior 2 & senior 3) giving a total of 100 students per school. Since two schools were required from each stratum, 200 students were thus drawn from each stratum, consequently giving a total of 600 students drawn from the three (3) strata.

Mukono district is one of the districts with high levels of poverty and child labour related activities. Agriculture happens to be the main economic activity of the district and this comprises of intensive plantation growing, where cash crops such as Sugar Cane, Tea and Cocoa are operated by large companies. Mukono district is also characterized by intensive small-scale subsistence farming in which food crops such as Bananas, Cassava, Beans and Maize are cultivated by peasant farmers. Animal husbandry and brick making are also practiced in the district (Buyinza, Khainza and Bukenya, 2009).

### 2.2. Study Instrument

The instrument for data collection was a Structured Questionnaire. The questionnaire was composed of 54 items and was divided into two main parts. Part one was on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents such as age and class. Part two had two sections, namely, Sections A and B. Section A contained information on Secondary School Students' participation in child labour activities in Mukono district. Section B focused on eliciting information on Secondary School Students' access to education. The response options in Sections A and B were formulated or varied to include both positive and negative statements. The aim was to capture varied perceptions of the students about the relationship between child labour and access to education. The response options used were based on four point response scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) which were assigned weights of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively (for the positive options). The reverse of this weighting is the case for all negative statements.

### 2.3. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0. The data were presented as Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and these were used to analyze students' responses on their participation in child labour activities. Linear regression was used to analyze students' responses on their participation in child labour against their responses on access to education. To test the hypothesis, the t-test statistic in the regression model was used to test significance of the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. To test hypothesis One ( $H_0 1$ ), the t-test statistic was computed for the relationship between child labour and access to education. The decision point was the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, if the level of significance of the calculated t-test value was less than 0.05, then the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between child labour and access to education was rejected.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Secondary School Students' Participation in Child Labour Activities in Mukono District

A seventeen- item cluster of questions was used to answer research question one. The results of analysis are presented in Table 1.

Type of child labour Activity	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remarks
Manufacturing	1.92	1.06	D
Fish factory	1.97	1.03	D
Restaurant	2.33	1.10	D
Retail-shop	2.56	1.11	A
Evening market	2.46	1.15	D
Farm	2.54	1.14	A
Plantation	2.55	1.15	A
Brick-laying	2.30	1.18	D
House-help	2.41	1.22	D
Garden	2.86	1.04	A
Hawking	2.06	1.16	D
Hairdressing	2.01	1.07	D
Communication	1.82	1.00	D
Transport	1.85	1.04	D
Car washing	2.01	1.13	D
Mechanic	2.14	1.38	D
Water selling	2.61	1.25	A

Table 1: Mean Responses and Standard Deviation of Types of Child Labour Activities in which Secondary School Students in Mukono District Participated (N= 600)

Key: A= Agree, D= Disagree

Data analysis aimed at ascertaining the various types of child labour activities in which secondary school students in Mukono district participated. Any item with a mean score of 2.50 and above indicated that the items were in agreement with the questionnaire items. And any item that gave a mean score below 2.50 indicated that the items were not in agreement. By the decision rule, a mean score of 2.50 and above suggests that 50% and above of the students indicated that they engaged in the child labour activity.

Results of Data analysis revealed that five out of the 17 child labour types had a mean score of 2.50 and above. The five child labour activities included working in garden (2.86 ± SD 1.04), water selling (2.61 ± SD 1.25), working in retail shops (2.56 ± 1.11), working on the plantation (2.55 ± SD 1.15) and working on the farm (2.54 ± SD 1.14). And as such these were in agreement with the questionnaire items. The rest of child labour types had a mean score below 2.50 and so were in disagreement with the questionnaire items. By the decision rule, a mean score of 2.50 and above suggests that 50% and above of the students indicated that they engaged in the child labour activity. On the other hand, a mean score below 2.50 indicated that less than 50% of the students took part in the child labour activity.

Furthermore, all the child labour activities had their standard deviation ranging from (1.00 to 1.38) indicating that these standard deviations were large relative to the mean scores of various child labour activities. This therefore implied that students' opinion regarding their participation in child labour activities did differ considerably.

#### 3.2. Relationship between Child Labour and Access to Education among Secondary School Students in Mukono District

This research question sought to determine the Relationship between students' participation in child labour activities and their access to secondary school education. Results of data analysis for this question were presented in Table 2.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.42	0.18	0.18	0.54

Table 2: The R and R<sup>2</sup> of the Relationship between Child Labour and Access to Education among Secondary School Students in Mukono District

The R, which is the Regression Coefficient would indicate the nature and direction of relationship between child labour and access to education while R-squared value (R<sup>2</sup>) would indicate the percentage of variability of students' access to education explained by their participation in child labour (see Table 2).

Results of data analysis indicated that relationship between child labour and access to education was positive (R= 0.42). This relationship was not only positive, but it was also moderately high. The results also indicated that as child labour was increasing, access to education was also increasing. The R<sup>2</sup> indicated that students' participation in child labour activities accounted for 18% of the variation in students' access to education.

To test the hypothesis, Linear Regression Analysis of the relationship between child labour and access to education was carried out. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 7.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	't' Value	P- value (2- tailed)
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Access to Education	1.503	.076		*19.751	.000
Child Labour	.363	.032	.424	*11.461	.000

't' is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 3: Results of the Linear Regression of the Relationship between Child Labour and Access to Education among Secondary School Students in Mukono District

From Table 3, t-value for child labour was 11.46,  $p = 0.00$  while t value for access to education was 19.75,  $p = 0.00$ . Going by the decision rule, since both significance values were less than 0.05, level of significance, the  $H_0$  that there is no significant relationship between child labour and students' access to education was, rejected.

#### 4. Discussion

Findings of this study indicated that five out of the 17 types of child labour, had a mean score of 2.50 and above. By the decision rule, these are the child labour types in which 50% or more of the students indicated that they took part in. These child labour types included working in retail shop outlets, working on the farm, working in plantations, working in the garden and water selling. On the other hand, child labour types with a mean score below 2.50 were 12 in number and these were activities in which less than 50% of the students took part. Standard deviation also indicated that they were large relative to the mean scores of various child labour types. This result indicates that students' opinions regarding their participation in child labour did vary considerably.

The above results may be a pointer to the fact that child labour activities in Mukono District are not homogenous and the number of students who take part in each child labour type or activity varies. In other words, while some types of child labour (for example, those with a score of 2.50 and above as shown in Table 1) seem to have attracted more students, other child labour types seemed not to appeal strongly to students. It is noteworthy that all the child labour activities had students who indicated that they took part in them.

Given the Ugandan context and Mukono District in particular, the above results are not surprising. These findings are similar to those by Chepkwuri (2004) who reported that all the students who took part in her study had also participated in child labour. However, though other reports have pointed to a high prevalence of child labour in Uganda they did not specify the educational status of the children (ILO/Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development [MGLSD] 2008). Indeed, White (2003) has observed that participation in the family business may be one of the factors that increase the participation of children in child labour.

Furthermore, students' participation in types of child labour with mean of 2.50 and above may not necessarily imply that children receive better rewards or remuneration from these types. They may take part in child labour because they have seen their peers engage in the activity and feel it is attractive to do so. Proponents of social learning theory uphold this view that children may take part in child labour because they observed others do so. Such proponents postulate that children that begin working because they have seen their peers work may do so because, in their perception, working may be helpful to the students who engage in it (Bandura, 1977).

Among the types of child labour that gave a mean of 2.50 and above, working in plantations and farms in Mukono District has also been documented by UNICEF (2004). The above findings also corroborate the findings by IPEC, Dorman (2008) in which the author opined that child labour in most developing countries, including Uganda in general and Mukono District in particular, is a rural phenomenon with most working children found in the agricultural sector where they tend to work mostly on plantations and farms. More often than not, the plantations belong to big companies while the farms may be family-owned (IPEC, Dorman, 2008; Buyinza, Khainza and Bukenya, 2009).

There is also the argument that children/ students, in addition to attending school, need to learn other essential skills such as farming and trading to prepare them for adult life. This thinking/argument tends to view students' work as beneficial on the premise that if students are encouraged to work it will reduce their vulnerabilities by equipping them with survival skills (Cunningham, 1995). In the specific context of Mukono district, students may become vulnerable in the event of unforeseen circumstances such as debilitating illness or death of a parent or guardian. It is therefore believed that allowing children to work will likely improve their chances of survival in the event their parent or guardian suffers chronic debilitating illness or dies. It is also believed that involving children in work at a relatively early age will prepare them to be economically independent members of the society when they grow up. The findings of this study suggest that all the students that took part in this study did participate in the various child labour activities. It also likely that students who participated in this study may have seen work as beneficial and a welcome development as they would perceive the work as helping to equip them with survival skills.

However, (White, 2003) would view the finding that all the students who took part in this study were working with concern because of his apprehension that working children get compelled to assume adult responsibilities while they are still children. In White's view, children taking on adult responsibilities may not be beneficial for their overall development.

##### 4.1. Relationship between Child Labour and Access to Education among Secondary School Students in Mukono District

The finding of this study revealed that there was a positive and moderate relationship between child labour and access to education. indicating that as child labour was increasing; access to education was also increasing. This finding is similar to the findings reported by Bourdillon (2000) and Republic of Uganda (1998) which noted that school children may participate in child labour in order to get

money to pay for their school needs. Chepkwurui (2004) also reported similar findings, and posited that students who participated in her study obtained money from child labour to take care of indirect costs of schooling such as cost of text books, exercise books, pens, Uniforms, Sandals, school bags, meals, transport and other non-tutorial school levies since there were no tuition fees. Therefore, it is likely that the effect of child labour on access to education may be mediated by the cash wages received by the students in exchange for their labour. The cash received, as observed by Chepkwurui; Demir, Demir and Sevil; may be used to take care of other school requirements other than the school fees (that is, the indirect costs). There has been considerable evidence that indirect costs of education mentioned above have hindered children from going to school (UNESCO, 2006; Education International, 2013). It should be noted that UNESCO advocates elimination of child labour and providing education for all by appealing to major donor countries to take education for all a priority and such things as reducing military expenditure. There is however a need to realize that the appeal to donor countries and their possibility to provide education for all may not be achieved overnight. Therefore, by generating money for the indirect costs of schooling, engaging in child labour may improve access to education among secondary school students in Mukono district, especially those from poor social economic backgrounds.

It should be noted that the Government of Uganda introduced and implemented the Universal Secondary Education (USE) in order to increase access to secondary school education (Community Development and Conservation Agency (CODECA) (2010). However, the USE scheme principally covers the tuition fees for children leaving the households of the children to take care of indirect costs or school needs mentioned above (CODECA, 2010). As the evaluation of the scheme has revealed, many poor households cannot easily afford these indirect costs or needs (CODECA, 2010). Therefore, children may have to participate in paid labour to help raise money for the indirect costs of accessing education (ILO/Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development [MGLSD] 2008; Demir, Demir and Sevil, 2006; Chepkwurui, 2004).

According to (Marx & Engels, 1962) for the poor to ensure survival, they must involve their children in child labour. Marxist thinking suggests that because the poor lack important means of production, including land and capital, they must sell their labour, including that of their children in order to survive (Marx & Engels, 1962). In the context of this study, poor parents or guardians in Mukono District may allow their children or wards to participate in child labour perhaps to gain income that may be used to supplement the parents' income and hence be in a position to meet up with the indirect costs of schooling, as noted above. Contrary to the general assumption that no child can be at work and be at school at the same time (IPEC, Dorman, 2008), results of this study suggest that children's participation in child labour may not have a negative impact on their access to education. The results of this study are similar to the findings of Chepkwurui (2004) in Masaka District, southern Uganda in which she found that students combined work and schooling and that working seemed to have helped children of the poor to gain access to education.

Indeed, the results of hypothesis testing for this research question two seem to support the above findings. At the 5 percent level of significance, the t- value for child labour was 11.46,  $p=0.00$ . While t- statistic value for access to education was 19.75,  $p=0.00$ . With the rejection of the null hypothesis, it could be inferred that there was a positive and significant relationship between child labour and access to education.

## 5. Conclusions

The Study found that Child labour was not a homogeneous activity in Mukono district. Child labour involved various types of activities within the study district. The number of Secondary School Students who participated in each child labour activity varied across the different types of activity. Some child labour activities had at least 50% of the students indicating that they participated in them, with such activities having a mean response score of 2.50 and above.

Standard deviations were large relative to the mean scores of various child labour activities indicating that students' participation in various child labour activities did vary considerably.

The study found that there was a positive relationship between child labour and access to education among Secondary School Students in Mukono District. This suggests that as child labour was increasing, access to education was also increasing. The corresponding hypothesis indicated that the relationship between child labour and access to education was not only positive, it was also significant. This result indicated that Secondary School Students in the study district were able to combine child labour with going to school.

When dealing with issues of child labour and education, policy makers and researchers should take into consideration the socio-cultural & economic contexts of the children involved because, as seen from this Mukono study, what may be detrimental child labour in one place (Egypt) may seem to be helpful and a means of helping children of the poor not only to gain access to schooling but also to stay in school.

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