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## **Influence of Socio-Economic Support on Child Labour in the Sugarcane Growing Projects in Awendo Sub-County, Kenya**

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### ***Abstract:***

*The purpose of this study was to establish the influence of socio-economic support on child labour in sugarcane growing projects in Awendo Sub-County, Kenya. It specifically sought to: establish how literacy levels, family size and fertility rate influence child labour in sugarcane growing projects in Awendo Sub-County, Kenya. The study adopted a cross sectional descriptive survey design because it did not involve several rounds of monitoring and was thus cost effective. The target population were the household members living around the sugarcane plantations in Awendo Sub-County. The population of households around sugarcane plantations in Awendo Sub-county stood at 23,860. Krecjie and Morgan (1970) sampling technique was used to obtain a sample size of 378. A semi- structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data. Responses in the questionnaires were tabulated, coded and processed by use of a computer Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) programme. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were adopted. In conclusion, with regard to all the statements relating to socio-economic support and child labour; the highest mean of 4.0468 denoting large extent was obtained for family size; followed by a mean of 3.9620 denoting large extent for fertility rates. The variable with the lowest mean was literacy levels; with a mean of 3.6404 denoting large extent. Overall mean was 3.8831 denoting large extent. Therefore, socio-economic support influences child labour to a large extent in sugarcane growing projects in Awendo Sub-County, Kenya. The study recommends creation and strengthening of an independent authority to foster socio-economic development and track child labour in sugarcane growing projects.*

***Keywords:*** Child labour, socio-economic support, sugarcane growing projects

## **1. Introduction**

### ***1.1. Background of the Study***

Globally, the headline statistics show the continued prevalence of child labour in sugarcane growing projects around the world (Kowasky, 2016). More than 60% of all child labourers between the ages of 5-17 are found in Asia- Pacific region, 23% in Sub-Saharan Africa, 8% in Latin America and Caribbean and 6% in the Middle East and North Africa. Regionally, a report by Johnson and Crowley (2004) confirmed that child labour is most common in the developing regions of the world. However, Sub Saharan Africa has the highest proportion of child labour relative to its population. Senbet (2010) asserts that child labour in Sub Saharan Africa affects the psychological and physical well being of the child and further risks depriving the child of formal education. Child labour in East Africa is very common in the rural areas and is characterized by high population density, low earning opportunities, large family size, high dependency rate, patriarchal family structure and poor standard of education (Igbar, 2015). A study conducted in Egypt by Wahba (2006) sought to examine the influence of market wages and parental history on child labour. The study found low adult market wages as key determinants of child labour. The findings also indicated the importance of social norms in the intergenerational persistence of child labour; parents who were child labourers themselves are on average 10% more likely to send their children to work. In Kenya, the law under the Employment Act, 2007, and the Children Act, provides for protection of children including protection from the worst forms of child labour (Kenya Law Review, 2007). However, child labour still exists in many employment sectors in Kenya (Konditi, 2014). The reasons for its continuance are many folds and majorly include poverty and socio-economic factors (Konditi, 2014).

### 1.1.1. Socio-Economic Support

A number of Socio-economic factors determine and influence of child labour in the sugarcane growing projects which is a significant employer in many countries (Lingeve & Poipoi, 2012). Socio-economic factors like female literacy, fertility rates, family size, adult wage rates, diversification of the rural economy and female work participation rates, are also important determinants of child labour (Moyi, 2011). The extensiveness of supply and demand side factors makes eradication of child labour a very difficult task. Poor people tend to send their children to work to augment their income. Therefore, the socio-economic status is one of the important determinants of the supply of child labour (Lingeve & Poipoi, 2012). Hai, Fatima and Sadaqat (2010) in a study of the socio-economic conditions of child labour in the Balochistan coast of Pakistan, indicated that about 30% of the under age children were involved in fishing. Khanam (2003) carried out a study in Pakistan on the determinants of child labour and examined the socio-economic variables which affect the parents' decisions regarding children's time utilization. The study's major finding was that children from rich families and those from literate parents were more likely to go to school and less likely to get involved in child labour. A study by Cockburna and Dostieb (2007) on the effect of household asset profiles, economic development and poverty on child labour was done in rural Ethiopia. The study found that the demand for child labour varies substantially between households according to their asset profiles and household composition.

### 1.1.2. Child Labour

According to Schrupf (2004), child labour is defined as work that has the potential to deprive children of their childhood, their dignity as well as harmful for their physical, moral and mental development. It involves long working hours, low wage rates and usually intolerable forms of abusive, exploitative and dangerous working conditions (Kordi, 2010). It also interferes with the children's education either by not allowing them to attend school, leaving school prematurely without accomplishing compulsory education or forcing them to combine school attendance with heavy work (Amssalu, 2003). So according to the ILO and UNICEF the distinction between child labour and child work depends on the child's age, working conditions, interference with education, type of work and number of hours performed by children (Kordi, 2010). The most significant child labour convention organized by International Labour Organization (ILO) required ratifying states to eliminate the worst forms of child labour, including all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the serfdom and forced or compulsory labour (ILO, 1999). The convention required ratifying states to provide the necessary and appropriate direct assistance for the removal of children from the worst forms of child labour and for their rehabilitation and social integration (ILO, 1999). It also required states to ensure access to free basic education and vocational training for children removed from the worst forms of child labour (ILO, 1999). According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2015) the agricultural sector employs an estimated 98 million children or 59% of the total number of child labourers worldwide. Along with other cash crops, sugarcane is one of those that feature consistently in policy initiatives, academic studies and media reports on the abuse of working children (ILO, 2015).

### *1.2. Statement of the Problem*

A great number of child workers are participants in the making of sugarcane particularly in the production steps of planting, harvesting and some hauling (ILO, 2005). Together with many adults including their parents and older brothers and sisters, they make possible the daily existence and operations of the sugarcane plantations (ILO, 2005). They are part and parcel of the labour force that propels the sugarcane industry. However, an undeniable reality has been that the sugarcane workers are among the most exploited sector and the children among them are more exploited than their adult companions (Moyi, 2011). Child labour perpetuates poverty across generations by keeping children of the poor out of school and limiting their prospects for upward social mobility (Ojuodhi, 2012). The levels of child labour in Awendo sub-county is between 10-15% (Department of Children service, 2016). This is very high considering that the ILO puts a red flag on any child labour levels above 8% (ILO, 2005). Moreover, the latest recorded dropout rate from secondary schools in Awendo sub-county stands at 35.4% (DEO, 2016). Since sugarcane growing is the main economic activity in the sub-county, could child labour be linked to the sugarcane growing Projects and the high drop-out rates? This is the gap that the study sought to fill by evaluating if socio-economic support influences child labour in the sugarcane growing Projects in Awendo sub-county, Kenya.

### *1.3. Purpose of the Study*

The study sought to establish the influence of socio-economic support on child labour in sugarcane growing projects in Awendo Sub-County, Kenya.

### *1.4. Objectives of the Study*

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- i. To establish how family size influences child labour in sugarcane growing projects in Awendo Sub-County, Kenya.
- ii. To assess how literacy levels influence child labour in sugarcane growing projects in Awendo Sub-County, Kenya.
- iii. To determine how fertility rate influences child labour in sugarcane growing projects in Awendo Sub-County, Kenya.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Socio-Economic Support and Child Labour

It is widely believed that child labour and parental education is intimately correlated (CCI, 2012). In fact, parental education is essential in eradicating child labour (Carol & Swinnerton, 2002). A serious lack of educational opportunities is becoming well understood as a major contributor to children's involvement in harmful work. Conversely, educators and others concerned with child labour have noted that parental education and a number of related factors contribute significantly to the difficulty of millions of children exercising their right to education or benefiting from it fully when they gain access. A growing literature argues that men and women have different preferences within households and the relative power of women in deciding how to spend household resources; including deciding on the level of investment in child quality; is increasing in their earning power. Basu (2001) showed that the relation of women's power and child labour is non-linear.

Emerson and Souza (2002) used survey data from Brazil and found that individuals who were not receiving adequate socio-economic support received lower levels of educational attainment and therefore shifted focus to earnings hence child labour. Using the Brazilian data again, Ilahi, Orazem and Sedlacek (2000) found that children who entered the workforce before the age of thirteen were facing several literacy cases in their respective schools. Although child labour does appear to reduce the productivity of schooling, the net effect of an extra year of schooling on adult wages is positive; hence socio-economic support; irrespective of whether or not the child works while attending school. Using Indonesian data, Galasso (2011) investigated variations in child labour as a function of the distribution level of education between mothers and fathers and she found some support for the view that children work less and study more in households where the mother has a greater education and weight in decision-making. Bhalotra and Attfield (2008) used data from contemporary rural Pakistan and established that education and work status of the parents indeed affected child labour. Another study done in the US by Moehling (2001) similarly investigated the impact of parental education on child labour in relation to the expenditure patterns of households. Her results were mixed, depending upon the category of expenditure in question but there was overall support for the hypothesis that children's involvement in child labour was largely influenced by parental level of education.

A study on influence of performance monitoring of employees of MFIs was done in Nigeria was done by Iopev and Kwanum (2012). The study adopted a survey research design to assess the influence of staff evaluation on employees of MFIs in Nigeria with particular emphasis on the staff productivity and score cards. To achieve the objective of the study, one hundred and ten (110) MFIs in Benue state were selected. An open-ended questionnaire was distributed to each manager of the selected MFIs and the data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that staff evaluation largely affected staff productivity. More so, about eighty four percent (84%) of MFIs strongly agreed. However, the study focused on MFIs and not Sugar companies; a gap the current study sought to bridge.

Literature reviewed with regard to socio-economic support and child labour revealed that gaps exist in the context and concept. Most of the studies done under socio-economic support and child labour were either done in Asian countries; mostly Brazil; or did not directly link socio-economic support to child labour.

### 2.2. Theoretical Framework

The study focused on the Theory of Subsistence Poverty.

#### 2.2.1. Theory of Subsistence Poverty

The theory of subsistence poverty by Basu and Van (1998) provides a critical assumption that children only work when the adult wage or adult income is too low to support the household's subsistence requirements also known as the luxury axiom. This assumption generates a discontinuous labour supply curve for a region: above a critical level of the adult wage, only adults work and below that level, adults and children work. The labour demand curve is a standard smooth downward sloping curve as long as we admit some degree of substitutability between adult and child labour in production.

It is straight forward to see that, in this theory, the labour market can exhibit multiple equilibrium. If the labour demand curve intersects both sections of the labour supply curve then there is a good equilibrium in which only adults work and a bad one in which children also work. The remarkable result of this is that, in this case, a ban on child labour can swing the economy from a bad to a good equilibrium. This theory informed this study since it focused on low flow of household income from parents as the main cause of child labour since children have to work to help increase the household income. The theory further informed this study by focusing on possibility of having a brief ban on child labour so that employers hire adults in order to increase household incomes.

## 3. Methodology

This study adopted a cross sectional descriptive survey design because it focused at one point in time. Cross sectional descriptive survey does not involve several rounds of monitoring and therefore is cost effective as well. The respondents were the household members living around the sugarcane plantations in Awendo Sub-County; who were supplied with questionnaires with the aim of getting their views regarding factors affecting child labour.

The population of households around sugarcane plantations in Awendo Sub-county is 23,860. Krecjie & Morgan (1970) formulae were used to pick 378 to form the sample size. A semi- structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data. The researcher obtained an introductory letter from the University and a research permit from NACOSTI before embarking on collection of data. The questionnaires were filled with the help of data assistants who personally administered them to the respondents. The questionnaires were collected for verification and data entry on a daily basis. Responses in the questionnaires were tabulated, coded and processed by

use of a computer Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) programme. Frequency tables, percentages and means were used to present the findings. The responses from the open-ended questions were reported by descriptive narrative. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were adopted.

#### 4. Results and Discussions

##### 4.1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic characteristics of the respondents focused on gender, age and level of education. The results are presented in the following sub-sections.

##### 4.1.1. Distribution of Respondents by Gender

The study sought to determine the distribution of the respondents by gender. The results are presented in Table 1.

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	169	49.4
Female	173	50.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

From the findings, as shown in Table 1, (173) 50.6% of the respondents were female. In summary, slightly more than half of the respondents were female. Moreover, the findings in Table 1 reveal that (169) 49.4% of the respondents were male. This means that slightly less than half of the respondents were male. The difference between the male and female respondents is (4) 1.17%. However, the margin of difference between the male and female respondents was minimal. Therefore, the study findings cannot be biased in favour of the women respondents. In summary, there were more female respondents than male respondents.

##### 4.1.2. Distribution of Respondents by Education

The study sought to determine the distribution of the respondents by education. The results are presented in Table 2.

Level	Frequency	Percent
UGRAD	26	7.6
PGRAD	12	3.5
OTHER	229	67.0
DIPLOMA	75	21.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by level of Education

From the findings, as shown in Table 2, (229) 67% of the respondents had achieved other levels of education other than undergraduate, post graduate and diploma. These include levels of education such as certificate, O-levels, form one education, form two education, form three education, class eight education and any other levels of education that fall below class eight. This implies that the highest level of education of the respondents in Awendo Sub-county falls in other categories different from diploma, undergraduate and post graduate. In other words the level of education in the area can be described as low. In addition, as shown in Table 2, (75) 21.9% of the respondents had achieved diploma qualification as the highest levels of education attained. This was the second highest percentage recorded with regard to the highest level of education attained. Therefore, a few of the respondents had achieved diploma levels of education.

From the findings, as shown in Table 2, (12) 3.5% of the respondents had achieved post graduate qualification. This was the lowest percentage recorded. Moreover, (26) 7.6% of the respondents had achieved under graduate qualification. This was the second lowest percentage recorded. Therefore, minority of the respondents had achieved post graduate and undergraduate levels of education. In summary, majority of the respondents had achieved other levels of education which do not include undergraduate, post graduate and diploma. This was followed by a few respondents who had achieved diploma levels of education. The second lowest number of respondents had undergraduate qualifications while the lowest number of respondents had post graduate qualifications.

##### 4.1.3. Distribution of Respondents by Age

The study sought to determine the distribution of the respondents by age. The results are presented in Table 3.

Age	Frequency	Percent
BLW21	28	8.2
ABV50	43	12.6
41-50	51	14.9
31-40	90	26.3
21-30	130	38.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Age

From the findings, as shown in Table 3, (130) 38% of the respondents were aged twenty one to thirty years. This basically implies that majority of the respondents were aged between twenty one to thirty years and were therefore young and vibrant; having the energy and impetus to take part in the study. In other words, majority of the respondents were aged between twenty one to thirty years and therefore had an advantage of the real social experience in the area. In addition, as shown in Table 3; (90) 26.3% of the respondents were aged between thirty one to forty years. This basically implies that a good number of the respondents were aged between thirty one to forty years; having an advantage of attaining the maturity and experience with regard to the real economic situation in the area. From the findings, as shown in Table 3; (51) 14.9% of the respondents were aged between forty one to fifty years while (43) 12.6% were above fifty years. However, the lowest percentage recorded were those of respondents aged below twenty one years who were (28) 8.2%. This basically implies that elderly respondents aged above forty one were more than the younger respondents aged below twenty one years. In summary, majority of the respondents were aged between twenty one to thirty years and therefore young and vibrant while minority of the respondents were aged below twenty one years.

#### 4.2. Descriptive Statistics

The study sought to establish the influence of socio-economic support on child labour in sugarcane growing projects in Awendo Sub-County, Kenya. The range of response for each statement was 1=Not at all; 2=Small extent; 3=Medium extent; 4=Large extent; 5=Very large extent. The results are presented in Table 4.

	Question item	VLE	LE	ME	SE	Not at all	Mean	SD
1	Literacy levels	(106)31.0%	(134)39.2%	(22)6.4%	(33)9.6%	(47)13.7%	3.64	1.36865
2	Family size	(140)40.9%	(124)36.3%	(44)12.9%	(22)6.4%	(12)3.5%	4.046	1.0546
3	Fertility rates	(125)36.5%	(145)42.4%	(26)7.6%	(26)7.6%	(20)5.8%	3.962	1.12881
	<b>Mean of mean and SD</b>						<b>3.8826</b>	<b>1.184</b>

Table 4: Socio-Economic Support and Child Labour

When the respondents were asked if family size has been a driving force leading to increase in number of child labourers in the sugarcane growing projects, a mean of 4 was obtained denoting large extent. This implies that the respondents believe that family size to a large extent leads to increase in number of child labourers in the sugarcane growing projects in Awendo Sub-county. When the respondents were asked if fertility rates influence number of children involved in labour in the sugarcane growing projects, a mean of 3.9 was obtained denoting large extent. This means that the respondents agreed that fertility rates influence to a large extent the number of children involved in labour in the sugarcane growing projects in Awendo Sub-county. When the respondents were asked if literacy levels influence number of children involved in labour in the sugarcane growing projects, a mean of 3.6 was obtained denoting large extent. This implies that the respondents believed that literacy levels influence to a large extent the number of children involved in labour in the sugarcane growing projects in Awendo Sub-county. The overall mean was 3.8826 denoting large extent. Therefore, socio-economic support influences child labour to a large extent in sugarcane growing projects in Awendo Sub-County, Kenya.

#### 4.3. Discussions

In conclusion, with regard to all the statements relating to socio-economic support and child labour; overall mean was 3.8826. Literacy level recorded a mean of 3.64 which was below the overall mean. Therefore, literacy level was considered not to have any negative effect on child labour in the sugarcane growing projects in Awendo Sub-county, Kenya.

The other two variables had means above the overall mean. The highest mean of 4.0468 was obtained for family size. Therefore, family size was considered to have the highest negative effect on child labour in the sugarcane growing projects in Awendo Sub-county, Kenya. Fertility rate had a mean of 3.9620 which is above the overall mean. Therefore, fertility rate was considered to have a negative effect on child labour in the sugarcane growing projects in Awendo Sub-county, Kenya.

### 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

#### 5.1. Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to establish the influence of socio-economic support on child labour in sugarcane growing projects in Awendo Sub-County, Kenya. The overall mean was 3.8826 denoting large extent. In conclusion, the influence of socio-economic support on child labour in the sugarcane growing projects in Awendo Sub-County is to a large extent.

The first objective of the study sought to establish how family size influences child labour in sugarcane growing projects in Awendo Sub-County, Kenya. A mean of 4.0468 denoting large extent was obtained for family size. In conclusion, the influence of family size on child labour in the sugarcane growing projects in Awendo Sub-County is to a large extent.

The second objective of the study sought to evaluate how literacy levels influence child labour in sugarcane growing projects in Awendo Sub-County, Kenya. A mean of 3.6404 denoting large extent was obtained for literacy levels. In conclusion, the influence of literacy levels on child labour in the sugarcane growing projects in Awendo Sub-County is to a large extent.

The third objective of the study sought to find out how fertility rate influences child labour in sugarcane growing projects in Awendo Sub-County, Kenya. A mean of 3.9620 denoting large extent was obtained for fertility rate. In conclusion, the influence of fertility rate on child labour in the sugarcane growing projects in Awendo Sub-County is to a large extent.

### 5.2. Recommendations

The study found out that the influence of socio-economic support on child labour in the sugarcane growing projects in Awendo Sub-County is to a large extent. Therefore, the study recommends creation and strengthening of an independent authority to foster socio-economic development and track child labour in sugarcane growing projects. Moreover, the study recommends that the government initiates development projects in Awendo sub-county in order to improve the socio-economic situation hence minimize child labour.

### 5.3. Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study included: It was not easy getting information from some respondents due to fear of repercussions or lack of incentives. However, the researcher clearly outlined the objectives of the study before embarking on any data collection. The specific areas considered as sugarcane growing projects were swampy and muddy and therefore not easily accessible. However, the researcher planned to interview the respondents in the dry season when the rain was scanty.

### 5.4. Areas for Further Research

From the study and subsequent conclusions, the researcher recommends further research to be conducted on the effect of family size on performance of family projects in Awendo Sub-County, Kenya.

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