

CHILD LABOUR PRACTICES AND NEW VENTURE CREATION IN KADUNA STATE: CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

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Abstract

Child labor remains a pervasive issue globally, particularly in developing economies where poverty and lack of access to education drive families to rely on children's labor for survival. Hence, this study examines the relationship between child labor practices and venture creation in Kaduna State, Nigeria. Using a systematic desk review methodology, it synthesizes conceptual and empirical literature to address three research areas: agricultural, domestic, and street/service child labor. The analysis differentiates child labor from child abuse, explores its historical context, causes, prevalence, and associated challenges, and links these findings to entrepreneurial activity. The research develops a conceptual framework arguing that child labor significantly constrains new venture creation by limiting labor market availability, reducing educational attainment, and stifling the development of necessary entrepreneurial skills in the future workforce. The findings of the study reveal that promoting venture creation and economic development requires targeted policies that prioritize education, provide family access to capital, and create alternative livelihood opportunities. This study contributes to inclusive economic development discourse by highlighting the specific trade-offs between immediate labor practices and long-term entrepreneurial capacity, offering actionable insights for policymakers in Kaduna State and similar contexts seeking to align child welfare with sustainable economic growth.

Keywords: Child, Labour, Venture Creation, Conceptual Review

Introduction

Child labor, evolving from pre-industrial family work to systemic exploitation, remains a global socio-economic challenge. International frameworks like the International Labour Organization's (ILO) conventions (1973, 1999) recognize its harm to children's development, yet it persists in developing regions due to poverty, weak governance, and cultural norms (ILO, 2021).

In Kaduna State, Nigeria, child labor is prevalent, driven by poverty, limited access to quality education, and cultural acceptance of children's economic participation. Children are commonly engaged in street hawking, domestic service, agriculture, and artisanal work often viewed as survival strategies but detrimental to education and well-being. Despite national laws like the Child Rights Act, over 24

million Nigerian children are in labor, with northern regions like Kaduna disproportionately affected (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2017).

The relationship between this practice and economic development, specifically venture creation, is critically underexplored. While some argue early work exposure may build resilience, it predominantly limits educational attainment and stifles the development of formal skills, creativity, and innovation essential for sustainable entrepreneurship (Hisrich, 2019). Reliance on child labor may offer short-term cost savings for informal ventures but poses long-term risks to productivity, innovation, and social license.

This study, therefore, investigates how distinct forms of child labor in Kaduna State impact the foundation for new venture creation. It aims to inform policies that reconcile immediate economic pressures with long-term entrepreneurial development. Specifically, the study objectives are to:

- i. Examine the effect of agricultural child labor on venture creation in Kaduna State.
- ii. Ascertain the effect of domestic child labor on venture creation in Kaduna State.
- iii. Determine the effect of street and service child labor on venture creation in Kaduna State.

These objectives are guided by the following research questions:

- i. How does agricultural child labor affect the establishment of new ventures in Kaduna State?

- ii. How does domestic child labor affect venture creation in Kaduna State?
- iii. What is the effect of street and service child labor on venture creation in Kaduna State?

Methodology

This study employed a systematic desk review methodology to investigate the relationship between child labor practices and venture creation in Kaduna State, Nigeria. The approach involved a structured process of sourcing, screening, analyzing, and synthesizing secondary data.

The review was conducted in the following sequential phases:

Identification and search of relevant literature through targeted searches in academic databases (Google Scholar, JSTOR, Scopus) and the websites of key institutions (ILO, UNICEF, NBS, and UNICEF, 2021). Screening & Categorization for relevance based on titles and abstracts. Selected materials were then categorized according to the study's core themes (Hisrich, 2019; NBS, 2017). Variables such as, (a) agricultural child labor, (b) domestic child labor, (c) street/service child labor, and (d) venture creation dynamics in informal economies. Synthesis and Integration: Information from the categorized sources was synthesized to build a coherent narrative, compare findings, identify consensus and gaps, and develop the study's conceptual framework linking child labor typologies to venture creation outcomes.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria, to ensure quality and focus, the following criteria were applied: Inclusion: Publications from 2000–2023; peer-reviewed journal articles, official reports from recognized multilateral or Nigerian government agencies; scholarly books and book chapters; credible working papers. The geographical focus prioritized literature on Nigeria, with specific emphasis on Northern Nigeria and Kaduna State where available. Exclusion: Non-academic commentaries, unverified online articles, sources not available in English, and literature focused solely on child labor in developed economies without relevance to the Nigerian context. (ILO, 2021; UNICEF, 2021).

The analysis was primarily qualitative and conceptual. Data extracted from the literature were analyzed thematically to identify recurrent patterns, causal relationships, and theoretical perspectives on how different forms of child labor influence factors critical to venture creation (Hisrich, 2019). A desk review methodology was deemed most appropriate for this study for several reasons: the sensitivity of the subject, the scope of inquiry, logistical feasibility, and the availability of rich literature on child labor in Nigeria (NBS, 2017; UNICEF, 2021).

Literature Review

This section of the literature review provides a comprehensive analysis of key concepts related to historical background, child labour practices and venture creation. This review synthesizes key concepts and

literature to establish a theoretical framework linking child labor practices to venture creation in Kaduna State.

Historical Background

Globally, child labour evolved from pre-industrial family work to widespread exploitation during the Industrial Revolution (Grantham, 2012), prompting early reforms like the UK Factory Acts (Glaister, 1999). The establishment of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1919 marked a key step toward global standards (ILO, 2018). Despite international conventions, child labour persists, driven by poverty and weak enforcement, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (Basu & Van, 1998; United Nations, 2016).

In Nigeria, child labour historically served as skill development within families (Oloko, 1992). Colonialism intensified its exploitative nature through demand for cheap labour in plantations and mines (Ademola & Akinlabi, 2008). Post-independence economic crises, including Structural Adjustment Programs, deepened poverty, pushing children into hazardous informal work like street hawking and artisanal mining (Ibrahim, 2009; Okpukpara & Odurukwe, 2006). Although Nigeria enacted the Child Rights Act (2003), implementation remains weak due to socio-economic challenges, corruption, and cultural norms (Akinrimisi, 2011; Olawale, 2014). This history has normalized child economic participation in specific sectors (NBS, 2017). For this study, three

prevalent and distinct typologies in Kaduna State are analyzed as key variables:

- **Agricultural Child Labor:** The most widespread form, involving children in farming, fishing, and livestock herding under often hazardous conditions.
- **Domestic Child Labor:** Encompasses children working as housemaids, caregivers, or errand runners within households, characterized by isolation and potential for abuse.
- **Street & Service Child Labor:** Includes street hawking, begging (e.g., within the *Almajiri* system), and informal apprenticeships, exposing children to urban risks.

Concept of child labour

Defining child labour is complex due to varying cultural and economic contexts. Some societies view adolescent work as skill development, distinguishing between acceptable 'child work' and exploitative 'child labour' (Omokhodion & Odusote, 2020). Scholars emphasize that harmful work deprives children of education and exposes them to physical and moral dangers (Rena, 2019; Moyi, 2021). For this study, child labour is defined as work that is mentally, physically, socially, or morally harmful, interfering with schooling and development (ILO, 2021). In Nigeria, economic hardship drives families to deploy children into activities like hawking,

neglecting detrimental effects on health and education.

Differentiating Between Child Labour and Child Abuse

While both harm children, they differ in intent and context. Child labour primarily involves economic activity, often as a survival strategy for impoverished families (ILO, 2017). It becomes abusive when it is hazardous or exploitative. Child abuse involves deliberate mistreatment physical, emotional, sexual, or neglect without an economic necessity (WHO, 2016).

Child labour typically disrupts education directly by consuming time and energy (ILO, 2017). Child abuse impacts education indirectly through psychological trauma (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1985). Legally, frameworks like the ILO Conventions and Nigeria's Child Rights Act regulate work conditions and prohibit hazardous labour (Akinrimisi, 2011). Child abuse laws focus on preventing harm and penalizing perpetrators. Culturally, some labour may be normalized (Oloko, 1992), whereas abuse is universally condemned (WHO, 2016). Addressing both requires distinct strategies: poverty alleviation and labour law enforcement for child labour, and protective legal frameworks and awareness for child abuse.

Linkage to Venture creation

Venture creation is defined as the process of identifying opportunities and mobilizing resources to establish and

manage new business enterprises (Hisrich, 2019). The conceptual relationship between child labor practices and this process is dual-faceted and predominantly negative: As an Input to Informal Venture Survival: In the short term, reliance on unpaid or low-cost child labor can reduce operational costs for family-based micro-enterprises and informal ventures in agriculture, retail, and domestic services. This creates a perverse economic incentive that sustains certain low-value business models. As a Constraint on Formal Venture Development:

The primary conceptual thrust of this study posits that widespread child labor undermines the foundational elements required for sustainable, innovative venture creation. Human Capital Depletion: It displaces education and formal skill acquisition, reducing the future pool of educated entrepreneurs and skilled workers. Market Distortion: It creates a reliance on exploitative labor practices, disincentivizing investment in technology, innovation, and formal business registration. Perpetuation of Poverty Cycles (Hisrich, 2019; ILO, 2021).

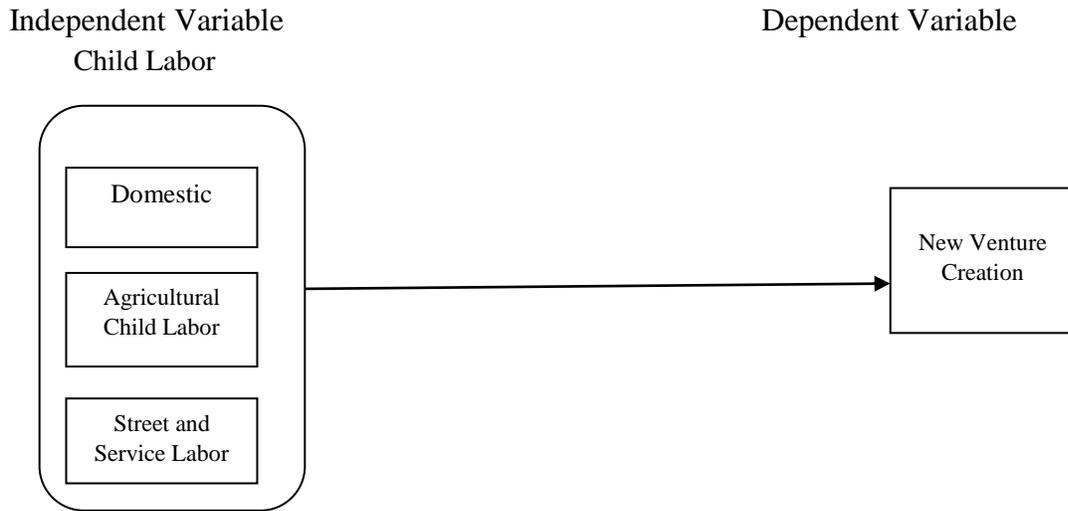
By limiting children's developmental potential, it constrains long-term consumer purchasing power and economic mobility,

stifling the market ecosystem for new ventures.

Conceptual Framework and Measurement

The study examines the independent variable child labor—through its three primary typologies (agricultural, domestic, street/service) and assesses their aggregate effect on the dependent variable. Venture creation will be measured conceptually through proxies indicative of a healthy entrepreneurial ecosystem: the rate of new business formalization, innovation capacity, and employment generation in the formal sector (Hisrich, 2019). The framework hypothesizes that high prevalence of child labor correlates negatively with these indicators, creating a structural barrier to transformative entrepreneurship.

The above literature reveals a tension between child labor's role as a short-term coping mechanism for subsistence-level economic activity and its function as a long-term barrier to sustainable venture creation and economic development (ILO, 2021; NBS, 2017). This review establishes the conceptual basis for investigating how specific labor practices in Kaduna State affect the underlying conditions necessary for entrepreneurial growth



Source: Researchers (2024)

The diagram above explain the relationship between the independent variable which is the child labour and it proxies variables, agricultural, domestic work and the street and service labour and venture creation. These three child labour practices can positively influence new venture creation among Children in Kaduna State with ‘policies such as free education, access to finance vocational training public enlighten, etc.

Empirical Review

Empirical research underscores the persistent prevalence of child labor within Nigeria's informal economy, driven primarily by systemic poverty, cultural normalization, and weak regulatory enforcement. While these studies provide a broad contextual understanding, significant gaps remain regarding its specific impact on

entrepreneurial ecosystems, particularly in regions like Kaduna State.

Key Empirical Findings

The literature consistently identifies a short-term economic logic underpinning the use of child labor. Studies in Northern Nigeria (Abdullahi et al., 2017; Ibrahim & Suleiman, 2016) find that micro-enterprises and family-based ventures rely on children to reduce labor costs, thereby sustaining operations in contexts of severe resource constraints. This is especially pronounced in agriculture (Afolabi, 2020) and street trading. However, this immediate benefit is counterbalanced by long-term detrimental effects. Research indicates that this practice constrains human capital development, leading to higher school dropout rates and limiting the future pool of skilled labor (Eze, 2021; Okafor & Nwosu,

2018). Furthermore, it stifles business innovation and scalability, as ventures dependent on cheap, unskilled child labor have little incentive to invest in technology or formalization (Rahman & Adeoye, 2021; Olawale, 2015). The psychological toll on children, including abuse and stunted personal development, further degrades the quality of the future workforce (Ebigbo, 2013).

Critical gaps and motivations for the present study, despite this body of work, critical empirical lacunae persist, which this study seeks to address:

I Much of the cited research focuses on Nigeria broadly or other regions. There is a scarcity of empirical studies dissecting the unique socio-economic and cultural drivers of child labor within Kaduna State and their direct linkage to local venture creation dynamics.

ii While child labor is acknowledged as multifaceted, few studies empirically differentiate the distinct impacts of its various forms—agricultural, domestic, and street/service labor—on entrepreneurial outcomes. The mechanisms through which each type influences venture creation likely differ.

iii Existing literature often frames child labor as a general social or economic ill. There is limited empirical work that systematically analyzes it as a structural variable affecting the foundational conditions for venture creation, such as

innovation rates, business formalization, and the development of a skilled entrepreneurial class.

Synthesis and Direction

The empirical evidence establishes a clear, troubling trade-off: child labor functions as a coping mechanism for survivalist entrepreneurship while actively undermining the human capital and innovative capacity required for transformative, sustainable venture creation. This review highlights that prior research, though valuable, has not sufficiently bridged the conceptual link between specific child labor typologies in a defined locale like Kaduna State and measurable venture creation outcomes. Therefore, this study is motivated by the need to provide a targeted, disaggregated empirical analysis that clarifies these relationships, filling a crucial gap in understanding how remedial policies must be tailored to foster an ethical and robust entrepreneurial environment in Kaduna State

Conclusion

This desk review synthesized existing literature to analyze the complex relationship between child labor practices and venture creation in Kaduna State. The findings reveal a critical tension between short-term economic necessity and long-term developmental goals.

The study confirms that child labor prevalent in agriculture, domestic work, and street/service sectors provides immediate,

cost-saving labor for informal and family-run ventures, enabling their survival in a context of pervasive poverty. However, this apparent short-term benefit systematically undermines the foundational elements required for sustainable venture creation and economic growth. Primarily, it depletes human capital by displacing education and formal skill acquisition, thereby constricting the future pool of innovative entrepreneurs and a skilled workforce. Furthermore, it perpetuates a low-equilibrium business model that discourages investment in technology, innovation, and formalization, locking ventures into informal, low-productivity activities.

Ultimately, while child labor may subsidize subsistence-level entrepreneurship, it functions as a significant barrier to the development of a dynamic, ethical, and scalable entrepreneurial ecosystem in Kaduna State. Therefore, the study concludes that policies aimed at fostering venture creation must concurrently address the drivers of child labor. Effective strategies should integrate poverty alleviation, enforced access to quality education, and targeted support for adult-centered livelihood programs to break this cycle and build a foundation for inclusive and sustainable economic development.

Suggestions

To address child labor and foster a sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystem in Kaduna State, a multi-tiered strategy is required, engaging government, civil

society, and the private sector. The following suggestions are derived from this study's findings and are designed to disrupt the reliance on child labor while promoting ethical venture creation:

i. **Integrate Child Labor Prevention with Entrepreneurship Policy:** The Kaduna State Ministry of Commerce and Industry should mandate business development programs and access to micro-grants to include compliance with child labor laws as a core criterion. This links financial support directly to ethical business practices. **Launch a Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) Program:** Implement a targeted CCT program for families in high-prevalence sectors (e.g., rural agriculture, informal urban markets). Transfers should be conditional on children's verified school enrolment and attendance, directly offsetting the perceived economic loss of removing children from labor. **Strengthen and Specialize Enforcement:** Task the Ministry of Human Services and Social Development with establishing a dedicated Child Labor Monitoring Unit, equipped to conduct inspections in informal sectors and family enterprises, moving beyond reactive complaint-based systems.

ii. **Scale Flexible Schooling Models:** The State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) should pilot and expand flexible school schedules (e.g., evening classes, seasonal breaks aligned with farming cycles) in high-prevalence areas to accommodate children from labor-dependent households

without forcing a choice between school and family survival. Embed Entrepreneurial Skills in Secondary Education: Integrate practical, age-appropriate modules on financial literacy, ethical business management, and vocational skills into the senior secondary curriculum. This provides a constructive pathway for adolescent skill development that contrasts with exploitative labor.

iii. Facilitate Community-Led Alternative Livelihoods: NGOs, in partnership with community leaders (*Masu Sarauta*), should establish cooperative models for parents—particularly mothers—in sectors like agriculture and petty trading. These cooperatives can provide access to shared resources, bulk marketing, and microfinance, increasing adult income and reducing household dependence on child labor. Launch Targeted Behavioural Change Campaigns: Develop and disseminate culturally resonant messaging, through religious leaders and local media, that reframes success away from child economic contribution and toward education and ethical family enterprise.

iv. Create an “Ethical Venture” Certification and Support Fund: Donor agencies can seed a fund that provides technical assistance and start up grants to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that formally commit to child-free labor practices and demonstrate a positive community impact, creating market incentives for ethical venture creation.

These interconnected suggestions, can help stakeholders work systematically to dismantle the economic incentives for child labor while actively building the foundations for a healthier, more innovative, and sustainable entrepreneurial landscape in Kaduna State.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this desk review yield significant implications that extend beyond the immediate context of child labor, directly impacting the socio-economic and policy landscape of Kaduna State.

- i. Economic and Entrepreneurial implications the study implies that widespread child labor acts as a structural drag on sustainable economic development. By prioritizing short-term, low-cost labor over human capital investment, the state inadvertently suppresses the growth of a formal, innovative, and scalable entrepreneurial sector. This creates a low-equilibrium trap for venture creation, where businesses remain informal, unproductive, and reliant on exploitative practices, ultimately limiting job creation, tax revenue, and long-term economic diversification for Kaduna State.
- ii. Policy and governance implications, the persistence of child labor, despite existing legal frameworks, highlights a

critical enforcement and policy integration gap. The implication is that standalone child protection laws are ineffective without being embedded within broader economic development strategies. Policymakers must recognize that effective child labor eradication is inseparable from policies promoting adult employment, access to capital for ethical SMEs, and social protection. This necessitates a coordinated, multi-ministry approach linking the mandates of social welfare, education, and commerce departments.

- iii. Social and human capital implications, the review underscores that child labor is

not merely a labor issue but a profound human capital crisis. The systematic diversion of children from education to work results in a future workforce and generation of potential entrepreneurs lacking the foundational skills, creativity, and health required for a modern economy. This perpetuates intergenerational poverty and inequality, undermining social cohesion and the state's capacity for inclusive growth. Addressing child labor is, therefore, a prerequisite for building the skilled populace necessary to attract higher-value investment and innovation.

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