ASSESSMENT OF UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (UBE) IN ERADICATING CHILD LABOUR IN MAKURDI LGA OF BENUE STATE: A POLITICAL ECONOMY APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

This paper employs a political economy approach to assess the effectiveness or otherwise of the UBE in eradicating child labour in the Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State. The paper adopted a cross-sectional research design where both primary and secondary sources of data were used. Primary data were sourced through questionnaires, oral interviews and authors' observations from sampled respondents using stratified random sampling. Secondary sources of data used include official publications of NBS. Meanwhile, descriptive and inferential statistics helped in the analysis of primary data as Pearson' chi-square was used to test the hypotheses at the 5% level of significance. The major findings show that the level of effectiveness of UBE in eradicating child labour in Makurdi LGA of Benue State is not significant, as the awareness of the UBE programme in the area is high, but the beneficiaries of the programme are few, and hence the programme is not effective. It is shown that there is no improvement in the factors affecting the effectiveness of UBE in Makurdi LGA of Benue State, which indicates, in other words, that so many factors continue to affect the UBE in Makurdi LGA, such as inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, lack of teachers/teachers' quality, cultural beliefs/tradition, and low community involvement in the UBE, among others. The paper recommends effective implementation of the UBE in the drive to eradicate child labour in Makurdi LGA of Benue State and beyond.

Keywords: UBE, Child Labour, Children, Eradication, Interventions, Challenges, Politics and Economy

Introduction

Child labour is any work that is harmful physically, mentally, socially, or morally to children and can deprive them of opportunities like schooling. It is any kind of work that deprives children of their childhood potential(s) and dignity. The United Nations Conventions on Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (2009) refers to a child as a person under the age of eighteen years who should be protected from violence, sexual

exploitation, and hazardous jobs. However, not all types of work done by children are regarded as child labour, especially in countries like Nigeria, where children work alongside their parents or guardians as a tradition (Lawrence, 2017). Varied reasons are given in existing literature on child labour. Meanwhile, the prevalence of child labour in countries of the world is deeply intertwined with poverty and economic disparities because poverty creates a breeding ground for child labour as families facing extreme economic hardship often resort to exploiting their children's labour as a means of survival. This is made worse by other root causes of child labour as they continue to draw a cycle of exploitation and stiffen efforts to eradicate the phenomenon, particularly in Nigeria. Thus, as Ndem et al. (2012) rightly observe, like what obtains in other less developed countries, so many factors are responsible for child labour in communities or localities, which include rapid population growth, high rates of unemployment, inflation, poverty, malnutrition, bad leadership, corruption, low wages, globalization, or others.

Ozoh and Chinecherem (2017) decry that the deplorable situations of most families in Nigeria have pushed the children out of their own homes to work in urban centres to earn money to assist their families with little or no prospect of them acquiring their formal education, which would have broken the cycle of poverty inherited from their parents. Thus, according to Togunde and Carter (2008) found that children of parents with higher socio-economic status are more likely to own businesses rather than to assist parents, and these children work fewer hours as compared to the children who belong to lower socio-economic status. ILO (1998) submitted, therefore, that 40% of street children are employed as sex workers. However, in many cases, unscrupulous adults take advantage of the vulnerability of children to engage them in hazardous labour. This, of course, is also due to inadequacies and weaknesses in national educational systems.

Thus, the International Labour Organization (2013) claims that families are a major factor in child labour across countries, as many children are unpaid workers in family enterprises that depend on family labour to survive. Many national laws and regulations, as well as international standards like Convention No. 138, allow exceptions in such cases, but even in family enterprises, children can be exposed to serious risks to their health and safety. It is with the foregoing background that Makurdi LGA of Benue State is considered by employing a political economy approach to examine the effectiveness or otherwise of the UBE in eradicating child labour in the area. The UBE has the major objective to promote the welfare of children by reducing child labour. Extant literature is hereby reviewed with a view to finding out the conceptual and empirical gaps in child labour before delving into the perspectives on the effectiveness or otherwise of the UBE in eradicating child labour in the area under study.

The paper employs a political economy approach to assess the effectiveness or otherwise of the UBE in eradicating child labour in the Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State. The federal government has, over the years, adopted different approaches initiated at various times in the past. Programmes such as Operation feed the Nation of 1976, The Green Revolution Programme of 1980, Better life for Rural Women 1987, The Family Support Programme 1995, Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in 1986, Mass Mobilization for Social and Economic Recovery (MAMSER), Family Economic Advancement Programme, Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) in 1999-2000, National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in 2001, Subsidy Re-investment and Empowerment Scheme (SURE-P) in 2012, National Social Investment Programme in 2015, and Renewed Hope Agenda since 2023. The major objective of these programmes has been to eradicate poverty in the country (Itiveh 2022, Aibieyi & Dirisu 2010 and Agbara 2016). Unfortunately, these programmes failed to eradicate poverty, as poverty keeps

soaring high with every passing day, thus giving room for people to engage their children in works that will support the economy of the family.

In 1999 the Federal Government introduced the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme which was to provide free and compulsory education to every child of school age. This programme was observed to have not been successful in terms of implementation, as it has not guaranteed free education, compelling pupils/students to pay certain levies. In the area of eradicating child labour in the country, the he UBE programme has not made progress considering the increasing cases of child labour in the country, particularly in Makurdi LGA of Benue State.

In a bid to curb child labour using the legal instruments, the Nigerian government enacted child protection laws such as the Child Rights Act of 2003, the Child Protection Act of 2010 and the domestication of the Labour Act. The disparities in the definition of concepts in these laws vary, making it difficult for the full enforcement of the laws. Thus, efforts made in Nigeria have not yielded the desired outcome, as there are observed cases of child labour in different sectors, including the Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State. It became necessary. Therefore, that an assessment of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in fighting child labour in Nigeria should be carried out using a political economy approach as a justification for this study. The questions posed for the assessment were as follows:

i. How effective is the UBE intervention in eradicating child labour in Makurdi LGA of Benue State?

ii. Is there improvement in the factors affecting implementation of UBE in eradicating child labour in Makurdi LGA of Benue State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested using Pearson' Chi Square at a 5% level of significance:

Ho 1. The level of effectiveness of UBE intervention in eradicating child labour in Makurdi LGA of Benue State is not significant;

Ho 2. There is no significant improvement in the factors affecting implementation of UBE in eradicating child labour in Makurdi LGA of Benue State.

Conceptualization

According to Oli and Nweke (2021), child labour manifests itself in children being used wrongly to work in areas like armed conflict or as combatants and support workers in armed conflict; using children as domestic servants for extended hours, and many risk their health, safety, and moral well-being. This category does not include domestic work done or normal household chores done as a member of the family (Oli and Nweke, 2021).

There is also hazardous child labour carried out that harms the health and safety of children, such as physical, psychological, or sexual abuse, doing work underground, working under water, working at heights that are dangerous or in confined spaces; working with machines that are dangerous, working with materials

that are hazardous, working long hours, working at night, and many other types of child labour activities, which children are constantly subjected to (Oli and Nweke, 2021).

As observed further by Oli and Nweke (2021), all forms of child labour are unacceptable, such as child trafficking, in which children are taken away and put into child labour. This argument implies that child trafficking and child prostitution or pornography must be vehemently prohibited in children for societal growth and development. In most cases, some of these acts are not committed by children on their own, but they are forced or lured into such criminal acts as selling drugs, for instance, as end distributors of a larger business chain.

According to Dash (2013), there is no universally acceptable definition of child labour, as it means different things in different societies, and so defining it has always been contestable. Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989) refers to a child as every human being below the age of 18 years and calls for protection of the child from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social development.

Incidentally, the term 'child labour' is used synonymously with other terms like 'employed child or 'working child.' Child labour is any work done by a child for the gain or employment of children in a gainful occupation with a view to adding to the household maintenance activities. 'Child labour' is different from 'child work' because:

Child work' refers to occasional light work done by children, which in most societies is an integral part of the child's socialization process...helping parents at home and on family farms, children learn to take responsibility and acquire certain skills and prepare themselves for the tasks of future adulthood (2013, p. 42).

The implication of the foregoing argument for our study is that when children carry out light jobs occasionally as an integral part of their socialization or learning process to help parents or guardians at home and on family farms, it means they are simply learning and this cannot be described as 'child labour' but simply known to be 'child work.' Child labour comes in when children are being exploited or overworked or deprived of their rights to health, education, and childhood. "It impairs their health and their overall physical, mental, and social growth." (Dash, 2013, p. 42).

'Child work' involves light jobs that children learn to take responsibility for and which accord some respect to their right to health and education. It is also occasional and legal. Meanwhile, child labour involves hard and hazardous jobs, often exploitation, and entails deprivation of rights to health and education; it is constant and not occasional; long hours are involved, and it is illegal but involves some payment for their work (Dash, 2013). According to Ozoh and Chinecherem (2017), child labour covers the work done by children under the age of 18 to earn a livelihood for themselves or their families.

Forms of Child Labour

ILO reports common forms of child labour in Nigeria to include the following:

Agriculture: Agriculture is a major sector in Nigeria where children are involved in activities such as farming, herding, fishing, and domestic work on farms. They often work in hazardous conditions, using dangerous tools and pesticides, which can lead to health issues and compromised education opportunities.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that nearly 43% of children are engaged in agricultural activities in Nigeria. Thus, Adeoye, Agbonlahor, Ashaolu & Ugalahi (2017) observed that a larger percentage of children living in rural areas are engaged in agricultural activities.

Street Hawking: Street hawking is a prevalent form of child labour in Nigeria. It involves children selling goods or offering services on the streets. Children are often exposed to various dangers, including sexual exploitation, physical abuse, and trafficking. UNICEF estimates that over 15 million children (about twice the population of New Jersey) are engaged in street hawking primarily in urban areas in Nigeria. Hawking as a form of child labour is obtainable in every part of the country (Ibrahim, Talib, Paim & Gill, 2015; Bahago & Enem 2021; Ubajaka, Duru, Nnebue, Okwaraoha & Ifeadike, 2010; Okafor, Okafor & Ngini, 2018; Bisi-Onyeamachi, Chikani, Chime, Mbanefo, Nduagubum & Nwaezoke, 2022).

Mining and Quarrying: Nigeria is rich in mineral resources, and child labour in mining and quarrying is an alarming issue. These sectors involve children working in hazardous conditions, extracting minerals such as gold, coal, tin, and sand. They usually work long hours, exposing themselves to injuries, respiratory problems, and even the risk of the mine e collapsing. Child labour in the mining sector is largely due to poverty and inadequate alternative opportunities. The U.S. Department of Labor (2020) reports that child labour occurs in various mining and quarrying activities across Nigeria.

Domestic Work: Child labour in domestic work is another concerning form prevalent in Nigeria. Children are employed as housekeepers and perform tasks such as cleaning, cooking, childcare, and other household chores. Children often face exploitation, abuse, and work long hours without proper education and protection. Many of these children are taken from rural to urban areas and it is difficult to track their situation. The Anti-Slavery International reports cases of child domestic labour in Nigeria.

Informal Sector: Informal sector in Nigeria encompasses activities like street trading, car wash services, shoemaking, and tailoring. Child labour frequently occurs in these areas, with children involved in different aspects of production and service delivery. The ILO estimates that about 28.8% of children are in the informal sector in Nigeria. Child labour under this category includes burnt brick production (Ugbem 2019) and this is popular in Benue State, as pointed out by Ugbem (2019).

Ihejieto (2020) outlines some reasons why children work in sub-Saharan Africa to include sociocultural and economic reasons. Economically, children from poorer households' work, as their parents are faced with the dilemma of balancing the family's immediate survival needs against upholding child education, which carries anticipated future rewards. Therefore, either the child works for education or works for sustenance of the household.

Children do not necessarily work because of abject poverty or because they lack shelter or food, but instead, children sometimes work to afford an education for themselves (Okoye, 2012) and siblings (Young Lives, 2018). Formal education is not only considered a means of realizing the child's ambition but also seen as a way to eventually escape from a household's low socioeconomic status. So, children in countries

like Ethiopia (Young Lives, 2018), Peru (Young Lives, 2018) and Ghana (Okyere, 2012) work in paid jobs to raise funds to pay school-related expenditures, such as buy books, uniforms and paying school fees. Working for education is quintessentially the lives of children on the street who school and work outside school hours.

Ironically, child labour negatively impacts on child education but may also be a lifeline that offers several children the opportunity to afford an education, as shown in the works of Okyere (2012) and Goto (2011) who separately found that poverty is not the sole reason for child labour but also other factors like the desire for education, production, technology, credit constraint and birth order (Ihejieto, 2020). Social norms and culture have also been suggested to play roles in the decision as to whether families send their children out to work. Basu (1999) points out the criticality of social norms in the context of child labour and concludes that the decision to send a child to work is partly a social norm. Nevertheless, the level of social stigma is dependent on the behaviour of other parents in the community (Ihejieto, 2020).

Wahba (2006) finds in Egypt that social norms, inequality, and adult wages are contributory factors to child labour as parents who were once child labourers engaged their children in the same practice more than those who never worked as children, and this explains the generational existence and trend of child labour in some communities and cultures. Similarly, in Brazil, Emerson and Souza (2003) indicate an intergenerational effect of child labour which is transmitted through parental education and household income. Child labour is, therefore, a product of so many factors. In Nigeria, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2024) finds that the total number of children in child labour is 24,673,484, aged 5 to 17 years old, which represents 39.2% of children in the age group. Moreover, about 14, 390,353 children, aged 5 to 17 years old, engage in hazardous work in Nigeria, representing 22.9% of children in that age group in the country. About 31,756 302 children aged 5 to 17 years old, engage in economic activities in Nigeria, representing 50.5% of children in that age group in the country. There are regional variations in the country whereby northwest zone of Nigeria has the highest child labour cases of about 6,407,102 and 3,266,728 children in hazardous work, aged 5 to 17 years old in the region. The Southeast region has the highest child labour rate in Nigeria, at about 49. 9%, where rural children work 2.3 hours more than their urban children counterparts. Thus, educationally, children not in child labour in these regions of Nigeria have a higher school attendance rate (81.4%) compared to those in child labour (75.1%). Consequently, 16.3% of children in child labour in Nigeria experience injuries in workplaces (NBS, 2024). Unfortunately, the existing body of literature on child labour hardly explains the prevalence of child labour in the Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State, which is our focal point in this paper.

Interventions in Combatting Child Labour in Nigeria.

Various policy interventions have been instituted in the fight against child labour in Africa, Nigeria, and Benue State in particular. Both preventive and curative measures have been taken in the fight against child labour in the country. Some of these interventions include poverty alleviation programmes, legislation, Universal Basic Education (UBE) schemes, and the establishment of enforcement agencies such as NAPTIP. In this paper, the main concern is on the effectiveness or otherwise of the UBE in eradicating child labour in the Makurdi LGA covered for study.

UBE and Eradication of Child Labour in Nigeria

Education creates wealth, enhances nation building, and reduces poverty. It is argued by many that the first step in the fight against poverty is education, which eradicates ignorance, creates knowledge and skills, which are applied in wealth creation. Considering the essential nature of education and given that many families in Nigeria cannot afford basic education for their children and wards, the Federal Government of Nigeria introduced Universal Basic Education to attend to the basic educational needs of the Nigerian child. The Universal Basic Education Programme was introduced in 1999 to enhance the provision of qualitative education by ensuring uninterrupted access to nine years of free and compulsory basic education for every child of school age. It was a modification or expansion in scope and operation of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme, which was introduced in 1976 (Oyelade & Abolade, 2018). Unlike the UPE programme which was limited to primary education, UBE extended its scope to include 6 years of primary education and 3 years of Junior Secondary education. The programme also included creative and vocational subjects in the curriculum to equip the learners (pupils/students) with vocational skills. As observed by Sule & Oluwale (2015), the idea behind UBE is that at the end of the nine years of basic education, every Nigerian child would have been properly equipped to contribute meaningfully to the development and growth of his/her immediate community. This can be done by putting the skills acquired during the period into action (Sule & Oluwale 2015).

The goal of the UBE programme, according to Sule & Oluwale (2015), was to universalize access to basic education, engender a conducive learning environment and eradicate illiteracy in Nigeria. In 2004, the federal government enacted the compulsory Free Universal Basic Education Act. The Act was to put the programme into law to enable all the states and local governments in the country to enforce the implementation of the programme. The federal government outlined nine implementation guidelines to facilitate the successful implementation of its objectives. These guidelines include public enlightenment and social mobilization for full community involvement; data collection and analysis of human and material resources; Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation; Teacher recruitment, education, training, retraining and motivation; Provision of infrastructural facilities; Provision of enriched curricula; Provision of textbooks and instructional materials; Improved funding and management of the entire process. Despite the glorious benefits envisaged by this programme, its implementation phase has witnessed some setbacks, thereby receiving a series of criticisms. While some researchers such as Oyelede & Abolade (2018) blamed the low success rate of the programme on lack of political will by some state executives, others such as Leonard, Agwagah & Okoye (2022) and Olatunji & Ajero (2022) ascribed it to lack of competent teachers, inadequate funding, lack of infrastructural facilities and lack of motivation for teachers, as well as nonchalant attitudes of some parents and guardians, who, for some reasons, deny their children/wards educational opportunities. Leonard, Agwagah & Okoye (2022) assert that the Universal Basic Education Programme has not done much in giving access to free basic education to schoolchildren, and there are inherent challenges in effective implementation of the programme in Nigeria; hence, the objectives of the programme are still far-fetched. Similarly, Obum, Joseph & Akan (2018) observed that the formulated policy was good, including the strategies documented to attain the stated objectives of the programme; however, the implementation of the programme has fallen short of expectations.

According to Oyelade & Abolade (2018), the UBE programme helped in the mass enlightenment of many children and in the provision of pre-vocational skills for the beneficiaries; however, the government

could not provide adequate funds available for free education, which resulted in inadequacy of human and material resources and the quality of education.

A significant failure of the UBE programme is its inability to provide free education as stipulated in the Act. Leonard, Agwagah & Okoye (2022) stated that the programme's objective of providing tuition -free, universal, and compulsory education has not been adequately implemented as many parents are being observed paying fees for most junior secondary schools' students, including registration for the Basic Certificate Examination. The situation is also not different, as many levies are being paid in public primary schools and junior secondary schools by parents and guardians and so the UBE has never succeeded in eradicating the phenomenon of child labour across the country.

A concise conclusion reached by Okafor, Okafor and Ngini (2018), therefore, is that child labour is obviously a very serious developmental impediment in Nigeria because various homes are trapped in its web and the influence on the society is so visible and audible with its attendant dangerous effects. This implies that conscious efforts must be made to have the political will at all levels of government and non-governmental levels to implement or enforce the policies and programmes aimed at total elimination of child labour in Nigeria and that eradicating poverty is key to proper eradication of child labour in affected communities, such as the case in the Makurdi local government area of Benue State that is the focal point in this research paper.

Theoretical Framework of Analysis: Political Economy Approach

This paper opts for a political economy approach as a framework of analysis of the effectiveness of UBE in eradicating child labour in Makurdi LGA of Benue State. Political economy had its earliest intellectual pedigree in the works of scholars like Adam Smith, Thomas Malthus and David Ricardo. The approach studies how political and economic factors interact to shape decisions or policy making and resource allocation in a society. In the context of assessing policy interventions to eradicate child labour in Makurdi LGA of Benue State, political economy analysis is crucial to understand the underlying power dynamics in Benue State, interests and institutional frameworks that shape and influence policy design and implementation as well as its effectiveness or otherwise. Incidentally, by applying political economy analysis, one could identify key stakeholders and their interests in governance to understand the motivations, incentives and influence of actors like government officials, businesses, civil society organisations and community leaders.

A political economic approach helps to analyse power dynamics by examining how power is distributed among stakeholders and how this affects policy decisions and implementation. Thus, political economy is relevant in assessing institutional frameworks by evaluating the capacity, effectiveness and corruption of government institutions, rules and regulations relating to child labour as in our case in this work. It examines resource allocation by tracing how resources are shared and utilized, including budgetary allocations, donor funding and private sector investments. Thus, by applying political economy analysis in policy interventions to eradicate child labour in Makurdi LGA of Benue State, one could identify potential bottlenecks and constraints by pinpointing political, social and economic factors that hinder the policy effectiveness in the area. Implicitly, a political economy analysis would help policymakers and stakeholders design and implement more effective interventions to address the challenges of child labour and other

related matters in the state, considering the complex web of interests, power dynamics and institutional constraints that shape the policy outcomes in the area.

Materials and Methods of the Study

Design of the Study: Cross-sectional Survey Design

The paper adopts a cross-sectional research design, which is characterized by the researchers reaching out to the respondents in their natural setting to collect required data for analysis and interpretation on the status of Universal Basic Education (UBE) in the Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State. The justification for this design is that it was difficult to study the entire population of Makurdi LGA, and thus a sample was taken for the analysis via the cross-sectional research design.

The Study Area

The study was conducted in the Makurdi local government area of Benue State, North-Central Nigeria. The major areas in Makurdi LGA captured for the study were Wurukum, High-Level, North-Bank, Wadata, Modern Market, Fiidi and Kanshio because these areas were observed to be infiltrated with different forms of child labour and they formed the major parts of Makurdi Local Government Area.

Study Population

The study population for this research was 472,000, which represents Makurdi LGA as of 31st December 2023, according to the Nigeria Metro Area Population Chart 1950-2023.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The study adopted the Slovin's formula for sample size determination. Thus, the sample was calculated as follows:

$n = N/ (1 + Ne2)$

Where:

n = sample size

N = Population

e = tolerable error term.

Given the population of 472,000 and an error term of 4.5%, the sample size (n) was calculated to be 442. The stratified tratified sampling technique was used to split the sample into various strata, such as children, parents/guardians, teachers, caregivers, school owners, government officials, informants, and civil society organizations or non-governmental organizations. These were selected across the major areas in Makurdi LGA, like Wurukum, High-Level, North Bank, Wadata, Modern Market, Fiidi and Kanshio. The rationale behind this sampling technique was that it was representative in nature, as it covered all the major

areas in Makurdi LGA, not just by area coverage but also by different classes of respondents, including the working class, community leaders, government officials, human rights activists, parents/guardians, school owners, and children.

The sample population of the study for this research therefore comprised four hundred and forty-two (442) respondents from the major areas in Makurdi under research (Wurukum, High-Level, North Bank, Wadata, Modern Market, Fiidi and Kanshio) to include the child workers, their parents or guardians, other adult witnesses in the study area, school proprietors, teachers or home caregivers, bus drivers and bus conductors, as well as all other respondents found to be working or labouring below the ages of 18 years.

Instruments for Data Collection

The instruments for data collection were broken into three: Structured questionnaire, questionnaire, open-ended questions for indebt interviews, and extant literature. The questionnaire was used to collect data from parents or guardians, teachers, and caregivers, and it consisted of two parts: Part one introduced the work and the research team to the respondents. and part two, which comprised six sections, solicited information from the respondents on the assessment of child labour interventions in the Makurdi Local Government Area. Open-ended questions were used for in-depth interviews with students or children under 18 years involved in activities of child labour, school heads, government officials, social activists, and relevant non-governmental organizations. Extant literature was gotten from reports, seminars, and online platforms of government agencies like the State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development in Benue, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), and others related to this study.

Data Collection Techniques

Both primary and secondary sources of data were used. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires, field observations, interviews, videos, and audio clips. Secondary data were obtained from relevant agencies such as the State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development in Benue, SUBEB, NAPTIP, and the National Bureau of Statistics, as well as publications in academic journals and periodicals. The research team met the respondents in offices, business areas, schools, households, communities, markets, parks, and other designated places for questionnaire administration such that each major area in the Makurdi local government area sampled for this research was covered.

Variable Specification

Child Labour is a dependent variable while causes of child labour, child labour interventions in form of Universal Basic Education are independent variables.

Model Specification

The model for this study was specified as follows:

$$Y = \alpha + bX + \mu \quad \text{..... (1)}$$

Where:

Y = the dependent variable

α = intercept of the model (1)

b = coefficient of the model (1)

X = the independent variables

μ = Error term.

Data Analysis Techniques

The paper employed the use of descriptive and inferential statistics to analyse primary data and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 21) to analyse archival data. Descriptive and inferential statistics such as frequency counts, mean and percentages were used to describe the data presented in tables. Meanwhile, linear regression analysis was used in testing the hypotheses formulated in this study at the 5% level of significance. The next segment of the paper presents the analysis and discussions on the thrust of the arguments in this paper.

Results and Discussions:

In this section, efforts are made to analyze results and discussions on the effectiveness of UBE intervention in eradicating child labour in Makurdi LGA of Benue State. Thus, the tables that follow are drawn in line with the research questions and hence the declared objectives of the paper:

Effectiveness of UBE intervention in Eradicating Child Labour in Makurdi LGA

Assessment of the UBE programme in Makurdi LGA is as presented on table 1 with the implication that the awareness of the UBE programme in the area is high, but the beneficiaries of the programme are few. The assessment thus indicates that the programme is not effective. Consequently, the sample mean of 146 and standard deviation of 133.06765 indicate how far apart the responses are from each other. A very high standard deviation is an indication that the differences in opinions on the effectiveness of UBE intervention in eradicating child labour in Makurdi LGA under investigation are very wide, as 295 respondents (67.35%) also believe that UBE is not effective in Makurdi LGA of Benue State.

Table 1. Effectiveness of UBE intervention in eradicating child labour in Makurdi LGA.

Assessment	Respondents	%	Mean	Std. Deviation
Effective	104	23.74	146	133.06765
Ineffective	295	67.35		
Not sure	39	8.91		
Total	**438**	**100.00**		

Source: Field survey, 2024.

Incidentally, table 2 presents the challenges involved in the effective implementation of the UBE programme in eradicating child labour in Makurdi LGA. Inadequate funding is found to be the most

significant factor affecting the effective implementation of UBE with a response rate of 53.42% (234 respondents), followed by poor infrastructure, which accounts for 29.45% (129). Others are Lack of teachers/teachers' quality at 11.88% (52), cultural beliefs/tradition at 3.88% (17), and lack of community involvement at 1.37% (6).

Table 2. Factors affecting effective implementation of UBE programme in Makurdi LGA of Benue State

Cause	Respondents	%	Mean	Std. Deviation
Inadequate funding	234	53.42	87.6	94.94367
Poor infrastructure	129	29.45		
Culture/Tradition	17	3.88		
Lack of Community Involvement	6	1.37		
Lack of teachers / Teachers' quality	52	11.88		
Total	**438**	**100.00**		

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Test of Hypotheses

The decision rule for either accepting or rejecting the hypotheses all stated in the null form is to reject the null hypothesis if the p-value is less than α; otherwise, accept the null hypothesis. Meanwhile, the chi-square (X2) statistics for the variables as summarised in Table 3 were used to test the two hypotheses at a 5% level of significance.

Hypothesis One: The level of effectiveness of UBE intervention in eradicating child labour in Makurdi LGA of Benue State is not significant.

For effectiveness of UBE: X2 = 6, p-value = 0.199 while α = 0.05 (given).

The p-value of 0.199 is greater than α, which is 0.05;

Therefore, the decision is to accept the null hypothesis.

Table 3: Effectiveness of UBE intervention in eradicating child labour and Improvements in the factors affecting implementation of the UBE in Makurdi LGA

Variable	d.f	X^2	Asymp. Sig.(2sided)
Effectiveness of UBE	4	6	0.199
Improvements in the factors affecting effective implementation of the UBE in Makurdi LGA	4	6	0.199

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 3 shows that the level of effectiveness of UBE in eradicating child labour in Makurdi LGA of Benue State is not significant. This is in line with the earlier findings from the respondents to this study that the awareness of the UBE programme in Makurdi LGA is high, but the beneficiaries of the programme are not many in the area, and hence the programme is not effective. Consequently, the sample mean of 146 and a standard deviation of 133.06765 indicate how far apart the responses are from each other. While a standard deviation of 133.06765 is very high, it is an indication that the differences in opinions on the effectiveness of UBE intervention in eradicating child labor labour in Makurdi LGA under investigation is very wide as 295 respondents (67.35%) also believe that UBE is not effective in Makurdi LGA of Benue State.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant improvement in the factors effecting implementation of UBE in eradicating child labour in Makurdi LGA of Benue State.

For improvement in the factors affecting effectiveness of UBE: $X^2 = 6$, p-value= 0.199 while α=0.05 (given).

The p-value of 0.199 is also greater than α which is 0.05, therefore, the decision is to accept the null hypothesis. Thus, as equally shown on table 3, there is no significant improvement in the factors effecting effective implementation of UBE in eradicating child labour in Makurdi LGA of Benue State and this indicates, in other words, that so many factors continue to affect effective implementation of the UBE in eradicating Child labour in Makurdi LGA of Benue State such as inadequate funding, with a response rate of 53.42% (234 respondents), followed by poor infrastructure which accounts for 29.45% (129). Others are Lack of teachers/ teachers' quality 11.88% (52), Cultural beliefs/ tradition 3.88% (17), and lack of community involvement 1.37% (6).

In the final analysis, the prevalence of child labour in Makurdi LGA of Benue State, and by extension, in Benue State is due to extreme poverty in the area and as reported by NBS, Benue State has a Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) of about 75% as of 31st December 2023. This means that 75 out of every 100 people are poor! Since poor people cannot conveniently cater for themselves and their dependents, most of them engage in child labour as an alternative means to augment their income to take care of their basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter. This accounts for the persistent increase in child labour which stood at 43% as at 2023. These findings are in consonance with those of Ibrahim, Talib, Paim. & Gill, 2015; Musa, 2023; Abdu, Rabiu & Usman, 2020; and Abieyi & Dirisu, 2010. Therefore, attempts to eradicate

child labour in Makurdi LGA using the UBE have not been effective due to the challenges involved, including poor infrastructure, and inadequacy of qualified and motivated personnel to implement the programme.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Child labour has impacted negatively on the physical, educational, social, and psychological wellbeing of children in Makurdi LGA of Benue State and Nigeria at large. While many, especially the low-income earners, see it as an alternative means to earn income to take care of their basic needs, its long-term consequences far outweigh the benefits as those children are exposed to different degrees of hazards which affect their development and sometimes cause physical injuries, contraction of sexually transmitted infections, or even death. Poverty, unemployment and economic hardships, which are the leading causes of child labor, have not got the desired attention. Efforts made are either being politicized or are being overwhelmed by high levels of corruption, thereby making them unsuccessful. Implementation of the UBE as child labour prevention intervention effort in Makurdi LGA had so far not been effective due to certain factors which can be improved upon to ensure its effectiveness. The fight against child labour is difficult but achievable with the support and sincerity of all the stakeholders.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

i. Poverty alleviation: Findings indicate that poverty is the largest cause of child labour, not just in Makurdi LGA but the entire Benue State, and by extension, Nigeria. Eradicating poverty will significantly reduce or even eradicate child labour and hence, is hereby recommended;

ii. Increased funding for the UBE programme to enhance its operational efficiency and effectiveness is needed in the entire Benue State;

iii. Massive recruitment of trained teachers for enhanced provision of adequately qualified and motivated personnel to improve the quality of education in the State will enhance operational efficiency of the UBE in Benue. Governor Hyacinth Iormem Alia's efforts at recruitment of primary school teachers in the second year of his administration were therefore the right steps in the right direction when successfully achieved.

iv. Community involvement in eradicating child labour through the UBE in Makurdi LGA of Benue State is hereby equally recommended.

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