SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS AND CHILD LABOUR IN LAFIA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, NASARAWA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Child labour remains a persistent challenge in many developing societies, driven by a complex interplay of socio-economic factors that compel children into premature engagement with the workforce. These factors include poverty, low parental education, unemployment, household size, and limited access to quality education. This study examined socio-economic factors and child labour in Lafia Local Government Area, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The objectives of the study were to determine the relationship between family size and child labour, investigate the ways in which parents' educational status contributes to child labour and analyse the contribution of parents' financial status to child labour in Lafia Local Government Area. The study adopted poverty theory and human capital theory. in explaining socio-economic factors affecting child labour. A descriptive survey design was adopted; questionnaire and interview guide was employed to gather data through multi-stage sampling technique. Data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), while frequency and percentages was used for the interpretations. Findings revealed that larger family sizes are correlated with higher instances of child labour. In families where economic resources are strained due to many dependents, children are often compelled to work to support the household. Parents with low or no formal education are more likely to perceive child labour as a necessary means of survival, often prioritizing immediate economic contributions over their children's education. The study concluded that socio-economic factors affects child labour in Lafia Local Government Area, Nasarawa state, Nigeria. Therefore the study recommended that the need for government to develop and promote access to family planning services to help families make informed decisions about the number of children they have. Government should develop economic assistance programmes, such as conditional cash transfers, that provide financial support to families contingent on keeping children in school.

Key Words: Child labour, Socio-economic factors, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

1.0 Introduction

Child labour remains a pervasive global issue, particularly in developing countries, where socio-economic factors significantly contribute to its persistence. It is defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, potentials, and dignity, child labour and often interferes with their education, health, and overall development International Labour Organization (ILO) (2017). Despite efforts by governments and international organizations to curb child labour, millions of children continue to engage in exploitative and hazardous work. Child labour has been a longstanding problem worldwide, disproportionately affecting countries with high poverty rates and limited access to quality education (International Labour Organization, 2023). According to the ILO (2021), approximately 160 million children, aged 5-17, were involved in child labour globally, with the highest prevalence in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Historical and socio-

economic dynamics contribute to the normalization of child labour in many communities. For instance, in low-income households, children often work to supplement family income, particularly in contexts where adult unemployment is high (Basu & Tzannatos, 2023).

Parental education level is another critical factor influencing child labour. Ray (2020), found that parents with limited education are less likely to prioritize schooling for their children, viewing work as a more immediate necessity. Family size also plays a significant role, as larger families often experience financial strain, compelling children to engage in income-generating activities. Furthermore, cultural norms and traditional practices in some societies reinforce child labour as a rite of passage or as a way to contribute to the household economy (Edmonds, 2017).

In developed countries, Child labour remains a critical issue, where socio-economic factors continue to influence its prevalence. While the problem is often associated with low-income regions, certain socio-economic conditions in developed countries such as poverty, immigration, and socio-economic inequality create environments where children are still vulnerable to exploitation. In countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and France, child labour, although less visible than in developing nations, persists due to these underlying factors. In the U.S., for example, child labour can be observed in sectors such as agriculture, entertainment, and retail, often exacerbated by families facing economic hardship or immigrants working in precarious conditions (Lund, 2018). Similarly, in the UK, the rise in insecure, low-wage jobs for adults can lead to children stepping in to support their families, particularly in marginalized communities (Graham & McCarthy, 2020). In Germany and France, migrant children and children in families with low social mobility are at risk of exploitation in informal sectors, such as street vending or domestic work, due to a lack of adequate social protection (Eurofound, 2022). The socio-economic factors driving child labour in these developed countries are often linked to broader structural inequalities, where systemic poverty, limited access to education, and the need for additional household income create conditions that push children into the workforce.

Child labour in Africa is a pervasive issue that impacts the well-being and development of millions of children across the continent. Various socio-economic factors contribute to the prevalence of child labour, including poverty, limited access to education, high unemployment rates, and cultural norms that undervalue children's education in favour of work (Fapohunda, 2022). In countries such as Ghana, Tanzania, Kenya, and South Africa, children are often engaged in labour-intensive activities such as farming, domestic work, and street vending to support their families. The economic pressure faced by impoverished household's forces parents to send their children to work rather than school, reinforcing the cycle of poverty (International Labour Organization, 2020). Additionally, Tadesse, (2019) maintained that the lack of adequate infrastructure and quality education in many African countries further exacerbates this issue. Socio-cultural beliefs, where work is seen as a form of socialization and a means of contributing to family survival, also play a significant role in perpetuating child labour.

Child labour in Nigeria remains a significant socio-economic challenge, driven by various factors that continue to perpetuate its prevalence in many regions. Socio-economic factors such as poverty, inadequate education systems, family structure, and unemployment contribute significantly to the persistence of child labour in the country. Poverty, in particular, remains one of the most crucial drivers, as many families rely on the income generated by children to survive (Adebayo & Ibrahim, 2020). Additionally, limited access to quality education and vocational training opportunities often leads to children being pushed into the workforce at an early age. Furthermore, in certain communities, cultural and societal norms may also play a role in normalizing child labour as a

means of contributing to family livelihoods (Basu & Tzannatos, 2023). The Nigerian government, along with international organizations, has made efforts to address child labour, yet the socio-economic conditions that fuel it continue to present obstacles to meaningful progress. The World Bank (2020) highlights that approximately 43% of Nigerian children aged 5–14 years are engaged in some form of economic activity, often in hazardous conditions. Moreover, the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2019) emphasizes that child labour in Nigeria is most prevalent in agriculture, domestic work, and street vending, with rural areas being particularly affected due to the scarcity of educational resources and economic opportunities.

In Nasarawa State, specifically within Lafia Local Government Area (LGA), the phenomenon of child labour continues to affect the social fabric and economic development of communities, despite national and international efforts to curtail it (ILO, 2020). Lafia LGA, as the capital of Nasarawa State, presents a unique case study in understanding the dynamics of child labour within a rapidly urbanizing middle-belt Nigerian setting. The area's demographic composition, characterized by a mix of agricultural and urban economies, creates distinct patterns of child labour that merit careful examination (Nigerian Bureau of Statistics, 2022). Ministry of Labour and Employment (2021) indicated that approximately 43% of children in Nasarawa State engage in various forms of labour, with higher concentrations in urban centres like Lafia. Therefore, this research examine the key factors contributing to child labour in Lafia Local Government Area, focusing on family size, parents' educational status and parents' financial status.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Child labour remains a significant socio-economic challenge in Lafia Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, Nigeria, with children engaging in various forms of exploitative labour, including street hawking, domestic work, and artisanal tasks. Several socio-economic factors contribute to this phenomenon, with family size playing a critical role. Large families often experience economic strain, making it difficult for parents to provide for their children's basic needs, thus compelling them to engage in labour to supplement household income (Akinwale & Adebayo, 2020). Additionally, in families with many children, parental resources such as food, healthcare, and education are often stretched thin, leading to prioritization of work over schooling. This cycle of poverty and child labour perpetuates intergenerational economic hardship, limiting children's opportunities for upward mobility (Oloko, 2019).

Parental educational attainment is another crucial determinant of child labour. Bhalotra and Heady (2023) have shown that parents with low or no formal education are more likely to perceive child labour as a necessary means of livelihood rather than a violation of children's rights. Educated parents, on the other hand, tend to value formal education and are more likely to invest in their children's schooling rather than subjecting them to labour. In Lafia, where literacy rates among parents remain low, many children are forced into economic activities at a young age, affecting their academic performance and overall development (Ogbuabor & Malaolu, 2021). Furthermore, parents with low educational backgrounds may often lack awareness of government policies and interventions designed to combat child labour, thereby exacerbating the problem.

Despite existing researches on child labour in Nigeria, there are limited empirical evidence specifically addressing how family size, parental education, and financial status jointly influence child labour in Lafia Local Government Area. Most studies such as Okafor (2019), have focused on either poverty or education in isolation, leaving a gap in understanding the intersectionality of these factors in this specific context. This study intends to bridge this gap by providing a

comprehensive analysis of how these socio-economic variables collectively impact child labour patterns in Lafia. By doing so, it will contribute to policy formulation and intervention strategies tailored to reducing child labour through targeted support for vulnerable families.

1.2 Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. Is there any relationship between family size and child labour in Lafia Local Government Area?
2. In what ways does parents' educational status influence child labour in Lafia Local Government Area?
3. How does parents' financial status affect child labour in Lafia Local Government Area?

Conceptual Framework

Child labour: is defined as any work performed by children that deprives them of their childhood, interferes with their ability to attend and benefit from school, or is mentally, physically, socially, or morally harmful. It encompasses activities that are exploitative, hazardous, or otherwise detrimental to a child's development

Family size: refers to the total number of children and dependents within a household. Large family size is often associated with increased economic strain, which may compel parents or guardians to involve children in income-generating or domestic work to supplement household resources.

Parents' educational status: refers to the highest level of formal education that a child's mother and father (or primary caregivers) have completed.

Parents' financial status: refers to the economic position or wealth level of a child's parents or primary caregivers, usually measured in terms of income, assets, occupation, or overall ability to meet basic needs and maintain a certain standard of living. It reflects the family's capacity to provide for essential necessities such as food, shelter, healthcare, and education.

2.0 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Poverty Theory

Poverty Theory is rooted in the works of Adam Smith (1776) in his seminal work The Wealth of Nations. Modern interpretations and refinements have been contributed by economists and sociologists, notably Amartya Sen (1981) in Poverty and Famines, which introduced the idea of capability deprivation. The theory asserts that poverty creates circumstances where families rely on child labour for survival. Limited income forces households to prioritize short-term survival over long-term development, including education for children.

Poverty is a significant determinant of child labour. Families in low-income brackets often depend on their children to contribute financially or assist in subsistence farming, informal trading, or domestic work. Studies have shown that in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, where poverty rates are high, child labour prevalence is alarming (ILO, 2020). In impoverished areas, education is either unaffordable or unavailable. Children in such situations are more likely to work to support their families rather than attend school. Poverty Theory explains this as a cycle where lack of education perpetuates poverty, leading to further reliance on child labour (UNICEF, 2021). In some societies, child labour is culturally acceptable or viewed as a rite of passage. Poverty Theory highlights how economic desperation can normalize exploitative practices to meet immediate needs (Basu & Van, 2018). Economic downturns or crises such as inflation, unemployment, or natural disasters exacerbate poverty, pushing families to engage their children in labour (ILO, 2019).

Critics argue that poverty theory oversimplifies the complex interplay of factors driving child labour. For instance, it does not fully account for systemic issues such as poor governance, corruption, or globalization, which contribute to child labour. Also, the theory often ignores the agency of children and cultural norms that may not directly stem from poverty but still drive child labour practices.

2.2 Human Capital Theory

The human capital theory was developed by Gary S. Becker in 1964. The theory posits that individuals and societies derive economic returns from investments in education, training, and health, which are forms of human capital. According to this theory, education is critical to improving productivity and reducing socio-economic inequalities, including child labour. Child labour undermines the development of human capital because children engaged in work often sacrifice education and health, which are vital for personal and societal economic growth. The prevalence of child labour is influenced by several socio-economic factors. In conclusion, human capital theory offers valuable understanding into the socio-economic factors affecting child labour by emphasizing the role of education and health as investments in human capital.

3.0 Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, enabling the researcher to select respondents from the broader population. This approach involved drawing a sample using appropriate sampling techniques.

The study was carried out in Lafia Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. Lafia, also known as Lafian bare-bari, is the capital city of Nasarawa State, central Nigeria. Founded by Muhammadu Dunama in late 17th century on the site of a Koro (Migili) village. Lafia is populated mainly by the Eggon, Alago, Kanuri, Aho and Koro. It also has large populations of Igbo, Hausa, Mwaghavul settlers amongst other tribes. This is due to the hospitable nature of the indigenes and has made the city a miniature Nigeria.

Lafia is an agrarian society with the farmers taking full advantage of the fertile, well-drained arable land suitable for the cultivation of cassava, yams, millet, sorghum, rice, citrus fruits, palm produce, vegetables and livestock thus contributing to socio-economic development of Nasarawa State. The Local Government has 13 political wards as follows: Adogi, Agyaragun tofa, Arikya, Ashigie, Assakio, Bakin Rajiya, Chiroma, Gayamu, Keffin/Wambai, Makama, Shabu/Kwandere, Wakwa and Zanwa.

The population of Lafia Local Government Area, according to the 2024 population projection by NBS at 3.0% population growth per annum, was 590,000. Out of this figure, 310,000 were from 18 years and above, while 280,000 were below 18 years (NBS, 2024 population projection). This group was of interest to the researcher because they were adults who could provide adequate and reliable information about socio-economic factors affecting child labour in Lafia Local Government Area, Nasarawa State.

The Yamane's (1967) sample size determination technique was employed to determine the sample for the study.

The quantitative survey included 204 adult respondents, while 12 participants took part in the qualitative Key Informant Interviews (KII).

A multi-stage sampling technique was employed to systematically select representative samples from the diverse population of the area. This approach ensured that the study captured variations across different socio-economic and demographic groups while maintaining cost-effectiveness and feasibility. Self-administered questionnaire were used, with the closed-ended question style.

The data collected from the questionnaires was recorded on frequency tables and analysed using the frequency distribution and percentages. The percentages were used to show the demographic statistics and formula of the responses using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. The qualitative data for this research was analysed via manual content analysis. This was done by presenting the views and opinions of the key informants as expressed during the interview.

4.0 Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

4.1 Socio- Demographic Attributes of Respondents

Out of 204 respondents, one hundred and ninety-four (194) respondents participated in this study because other questionnaires were invalid as they were not properly filled, table 4.1 shows the socio-demographic attributes of respondents such as gender, age, marital status, occupation, level of education and religion.

4.1 Socio- Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 4.1: Socio- Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Frequency (N194)	Percentage
Sex		
Male	87	44.8
Female	107	55.2
Age		
18-28	48	24.7
29-39	51	26.3
40-49	81	41.8
50 and above	14	7.2
Marital Status		
Single	54	27.8
Married	101	52.0
Divorced	17	8.8
Widowed	10	6.2
Separated	12	
Occupation		
Trader	40	20.6
Civil Servant	38	19.6
Students	24	12.4
Farmer	92	47.4
Highest Level of Education		
No formal education	35	18.0
Primary	97	50.0
Secondary	35	18.0
Tertiary	27	14.0
Religion		
Christianity	133	68.6
Islam	48	24.7
Africa Religion	13	6.7

Source: Field work, 2025

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents on table 4.1 revealed key variables that can influence child labour dynamics in the study area. The sex distribution showed that 55.2% of the respondents were female, while 44.8% were male. This female majority may suggest greater female involvement or concern with child welfare issues, possibly due to caregiving roles traditionally assigned to women in many Nigerian communities. The implication is that female respondents may provide more nuanced insights into the socio-economic pressures that lead to

child labour. The age distribution indicated that the majority of respondents (41.8%) were between 40 and 49 years, followed by 29–39 years (26.3%) and 18–28 years (24.7%), while those aged 50 and above constituted only 7.2%. This suggests that the sample is largely made up of economically active adults who are likely to be parents or guardians of children. Their economic decisions, educational attainment, and occupational engagements may directly affect whether or not children engage in labour.

Marital status shows that most respondents were married (52%), with singles making up 27.8%, and the rest distributed among divorced (8.8%), widowed (6.2%), and separated individuals. Married respondents may represent stable household structures, although economic demands in such settings may be higher, potentially contributing to child labour as a support mechanism for family income. On the other hand, single-parent and unstable households (divorced, separated, widowed) may lack sufficient resources, thereby increasing the likelihood of child labour. Occupationally, nearly half of the respondents (47.4%) were farmers, followed by traders (20.6%), civil servants (19.6%), and students (12.4%). The dominance of farming as a livelihood indicates a largely agrarian community, where children may be involved in farm-related tasks either as a cultural practice or economic necessity. Farming communities are often associated with high incidences of child labour, especially where poverty is prevalent.

Regarding education, 50% of the respondents had primary education, 18% had no formal education, another 18% had secondary education, and only 14% attained tertiary education. This educational distribution points to low literacy levels, which may correlate with limited awareness of child rights and labour laws. Low educational attainment also often constrains economic opportunities, possibly making child labour an economic survival strategy for households. In terms of religion, Christianity was the dominant faith (68.6%), followed by Islam (24.7%) and African Traditional Religion (6.7%). Religious beliefs may shape attitudes toward child upbringing, labour, and education. For instance, some religious or cultural doctrines may justify children's involvement in work as a form of discipline or socialization.

4.2 Relationship between Family Size and Child Labour

Table: 4.2 Respondents Response on Relationship between Family Size and Child Labour

Questions	Yes	No	Not Sure
Does having a large family size increase the likelihood of children engaging in labour activities?	132 (68.0%)	43 (22.2%)	19 (9.8%)
Are children from larger families more likely to work to support family income?	129 (66.5%)	54 (27.8%)	11 (5.7%)
Does the number of siblings in a household influence a child's involvement in labour?	122 (62.9%)	54 (27.8%)	18 (9.3%)
Are older children in large families more likely to work to support younger siblings?	149 (76.8%)	40 (20.6%)	5 (2.6%)
Are children from large families more likely to be sent to work by their parents compared to children from small families?	115 (59.3%)	65 (33.5%)	14 (7.2%)

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

The data in table 4.2 revealed that a significant percentage of respondents agreed that family size has a substantial influence on child labour. A majority of 68.0% answered yes to the question of whether a large family size increases the likelihood of children engaging in labour, while 22.2% disagreed, and 9.8% were uncertain. This suggests that in larger families, economic pressure is likely a driving force that pushes children into labour to support household needs. Similarly, 66.5% affirmed that children from larger families are more likely to work to support family income,

whereas 27.8% disagreed and 5.7% were not sure. This highlights the direct link between economic hardship in large households and the necessity of child contribution to income. These findings aligned with the response from some interviewee who stated that:

> When you have many children and limited income, you start thinking of how they can contribute. So, once they are old enough, we let some of them help with small jobs to support the family. With six children, it's not easy to provide for everyone, so the older ones help out by selling things after school **(Male; aged, 53 years; Makama ward)**

When asked if the number of siblings influences a child's involvement in labour, 62.9% responded yes, 27.8% said no, and 9.3% were unsure. This indicates that the competition for limited resources within large families may push some children into labour to meet personal or family needs. A notable 76.8% agreed that older children in large families are more likely to work to support their younger siblings, with only 20.6% disagreeing and 2.6% undecided. This suggests that birth order plays a critical role in determining which children are burdened with economic responsibilities, particularly in low-income, large-family settings. One of the interviewee noted that:

> We have to prioritize. The younger ones stay in school, but the older ones, especially if we cannot afford school fees, are asked to help out in our shop or on the farm. If I had just two or three children, I would prefer them to focus only on their studies, but now, we have to balance between education and survival **(Female; aged, 49 years; Wakwa ward)**

Finally, 59.3% of the respondents believed that children from large families are more likely to be sent to work by their parents compared to those from small families, while 33.5% disagreed and 7.2% were not sure. An interviewee narrated that:

> I think it is often true that larger families face more financial pressures, prompting parents to send children to work to help support the household **(Female; aged, 35 years; Chiroma ward)**

4.3 Influence of Parents' Educational Status on Child Labour

Table: 4.3 Respondents Response on Parents' Educational Status on Child Labour

Questions	Yes	No	Not sure
Does a low level of parental education increase the likelihood of child labour?	119 (61.3%)	64 (33.0%)	11 (5.7%)
Are children of parents with no formal education more likely to be engaged in labour?	115 (59.3%)	69 (35.6%)	10 (5.2%)
Are parents with higher education more likely to prioritize their children's schooling over labour?	145 (74.7%)	41 (21.1%)	8 (4.1%)
Does the lack of parental education contribute to children working instead of attending school?	140 (72.2%)	48 (24.7%)	6 (3.1%)
Does parental education level affect the type of work children engage in?	136 (70.1%)	56 (28.9%)	2 (1.0%)

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Table 4.3 revealed a strong consensus among respondents that parents' educational status significantly influences the incidence of child labour. A majority of 61.3% agreed that a low level of parental education increases the likelihood of child labour, while 33.0% disagreed and 5.7%

were unsure. This suggests that parents with limited education may lack awareness of child rights, the long-term value of formal education, or alternative strategies for household income. During the interview session an interviewee state that:

> My education stopped at secondary school, so I struggled to get good jobs. Most employers want someone with a degree or skills. That limits how much I earn and makes it hard to meet my children's needs. Honestly, my lack of higher education is a big barrier. If I had gone to university, I would be having a better job now. Sometimes, I cannot even afford school fees or proper meals for my kids **(Male; aged, 56 years; Assakio ward)**

Furthermore, 59.3% affirmed that children of parents with no formal education are more likely to be engaged in labour, whereas 35.6% disagreed and 5.2% were uncertain. These points to a direct link between lack of parental schooling and the normalization of child labour as a survival mechanism. One of the interviewees noted that:

> I did not go far in school, so I see it as normal for children to help out. I did same growing up. My children help in my shop after school. It teaches them business skills early **(Female; aged, 51 years; Chiroma ward)**

Notably, 74.7% of the respondents agreed that parents with higher education are more likely to prioritize their children's schooling over labour, while 21.1% disagreed and 4.1% were unsure. This suggests that education fosters attitudes that value child development and formal learning over short-term economic gain. Similarly, 72.2% believed that the lack of parental education contributes to children working instead of attending school, with 24.7% disagreeing and 3.1% undecided. This highlights how educational disadvantage at the parental level translates into a cycle of limited opportunities for the next generation. Reacting to this, an interviewee stated that:

> I completed secondary school, so I know the importance of education. I do not support children working during school hours. I prefer they focus on their studies. I believe every child should be in school. If they work too early, they may lose interest in education. It should be discouraged **(Female; aged, 40 years; Wakwa ward)**

Lastly, 70.1% agreed that parental education affects the type of work children engage in, while 28.9% disagreed and only 1.0% were not sure. This implies that educated parents may restrict or regulate the kind of work their children do, possibly avoiding hazardous or exploitative labour, while less educated parents may be less discerning.

4.4: Effects of Parents' Financial Status and Child Labour

Table 4.4: Respondent's Response on Effects of Parents' Financial Status on Child Labour

Questions	Yes	No	Not sure
Does low parental income contribute to child labour in Lafia LGA?	149 (76.8%)	40 (20.6%)	5 (2.6%)
Do children from low-income families engage in labour more than those from higher-income families in Lafia LGA?	142 (73.2%)	44 (22.7%)	8 (4.1%)
Is child labour in Lafia LGA more common in households where parents are unemployed?	123 (63.4%)	59 (30.4%)	12 (6.2%)
Do parents with irregular income sources contribute to child labour in Lafia LGA?	147 (75.8%)	42 (21.6%)	5 (2.6%)
Does the inability of parents to provide basic needs push children into child labour in Lafia LGA?	122 (62.9%)	60 (30.9%)	12 (6.2%)

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Table 4.4 highlighted the significant influence of parental financial status on the prevalence of child labour in Lafia L.G.A. A large proportion of the respondents (76.8%) affirmed that low parental income contributes to child labour, while 20.6% disagreed and 2.6% were not sure. This indicates that economic hardship is a primary driver of child labour, as families seek supplementary income through their children's involvement in labour. During the interview, an interviewee expressed his view:

> We are comfortable but not wealthy. My wife and I both work full-time, and we have been saving for our kids' education since they were born. We prioritize public schools with strong academic programs rather than private education. We encourage our teenagers to work part-time during summers to build work ethic and financial literacy, but we do not expect them to contribute to household expenses or their college funds. Their primary job is to focus on academics **(Male; aged, 66 years; Makama ward)**

Another interviewee had a contrary opinion:

> We struggle financially due to medical debt from my chronic illness. My older child stopped school to work full-time for two years to help support our family. The younger one works weekends during the school year. It breaks my heart, but they have both had to grow up faster than their peers **(Female; aged, 52 years; Assakio ward)**

Similarly, 73.2% of the respondents agreed that children from low-income families engage in labour more frequently than those from higher-income families, while 22.7% disagreed and 4.1% were uncertain. This underscores the direct relationship between poverty and the necessity for children to work in order to support household survival. An interviewee during the interview session expressed that:

> I have observed that higher-income families often don't recognize certain activities as work. When a low-income child cares for siblings while parents work multiple jobs, we rarely count that as labour yet it is essential economic contribution that constrains their time and opportunities. Children from Low-income families mostly engage in street hawking, domestic work, farming, and sometimes even construction work **(Male; aged, 34 years; Adogi ward)**

On whether child labour is more common in households where parents are unemployed, 63.4% answered yes, 30.4% responded no, and 6.2% were unsure. This shows that unemployment within a household creates pressure that may compel children to work to fill economic gaps. A respondent affirmed that:

> When parents are jobless, children often become the alternative source of income for the family. The family often depends on the children to do small jobs like hawking or begging just to survive. I feel that if parents are working and earning, there is less pressure on children to provide income **(Female; aged, 32 years; Makama ward)**

Furthermore, 75.8% agreed that irregular income sources contribute to child labour, while 21.6% disagreed and 2.6% were not sure. This suggests that unstable earnings, such as from informal or

seasonal jobs, create inconsistent financial environments that can lead to reliance on child labour for financial continuity. Lastly, 62.9% of the respondents believed that the inability of parents to provide basic needs pushes children into labour, with 30.9% disagreeing and 6.2% unsure. This reflects how unmet fundamental needs such as food, clothing, and school fees force families to resort to child labour as a survival strategy.

4.5 Discussion of Findings

4.5.1 Relationship between Family Size and Child Labour

The study found that having a large family size increases the likelihood of children engaging in labour activities. This aligned with the argument that in households with many dependents, economic pressure often compels children to contribute to household income through various forms of labour. This aligns with the findings of Bhalotra & Heady (2023) that lower parental income significantly increases the likelihood of children engaging in labor. Similarly, majority of the respondents agreed that children from larger families are more likely to work to support family income. This is consistent with findings by Basu and Van (2018), who observed that in poor households, especially in developing countries, child labour is often a survival strategy. The economic necessity within larger families exacerbates the situation, leading to increased involvement of children in income-generating activities.

Furthermore, the study found that the number of siblings in a household influences a child's involvement in labour. This supports the position of Edmonds (2015), who noted that as the number of children in a family increases; the distribution of scarce household resources becomes more strained, thereby pushing children into the labour market to ease the burden. The highest affirmative response (76.8%) was recorded in relation to older children working to support their younger siblings in large families. This reflects the intra-household role expectations in many African societies, where older siblings often assume responsibilities that include economic support (Grootaert & Kanbur, 2015). Lastly, majority of the respondents agreed that children from large families are more likely to be sent to work by their parents than those from smaller families. This reflects a pattern where parents, faced with economic hardship and limited resources, may rationalize child labour as a necessary contribution to household survival (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, 2020).

4.5.2 Influence of Parents' Educational Status and Child Labour

The study found that a low level of parental education increases the likelihood of child labour. This aligned with the assertion of Ray (2020), who posited that the educational attainment of parents, particularly mothers, plays a critical role in determining whether a child participates in labour or attends school. Parents with limited education may lack awareness of the long-term benefits of education, leading them to prioritize short-term economic gains through child labour. Furthermore, majority of the respondents agreed that children of parents with no formal education are more likely to be engaged in labour. This is corroborated by the findings of Basu and Van (2018), who argued that uneducated parents are more inclined to send their children to work due to limited employment options and poor understanding of the value of education. The implication is that the absence of formal education in parents creates a cycle where poverty and illiteracy perpetuate child labour across generations.

A significant 74.7% of the respondents believed that parents with higher education are more likely to prioritize their children's schooling over labour. This supports the argument by Emerson and Souza (2023), who found that educated parents often recognize education as a pathway to upward mobility and are thus less likely to allow their children to work at the expense of school attendance. Similarly, 72.2% of respondents agreed that a lack of parental education contributes to children

working instead of attending school. This reflects findings from Edmonds (2018), which indicate that parental illiteracy often leads to the underestimation of the risks and developmental consequences of child labour. In such contexts, education is not perceived as a critical investment, particularly when immediate household income is at stake.

Lastly, the study found that parental education level affects the type of work children engage in. Children from less educated families are more likely to be involved in hazardous and informal labour sectors, as noted by Okpukpara and Odurukwe (2016), who emphasized the correlation between parental education, household income, and children's involvement in various forms of labour.

4.5.3 Effects of Parents' Financial Status and Child Labour

The study found that low parental income contributes to child labour, suggesting that economic hardship is a primary driver compelling children to engage in income-generating activities. This is consistent with the findings of Okpukpara and Odurukwe (2006), who assert that poverty and economic instability are significant determinants of child labour in Nigeria. Furthermore, the study found that children from low-income families are more involved in labour compared to those from higher-income backgrounds. This supports the view that financial constraints often force children in poor households to work, sometimes at the expense of their education and wellbeing (International Labour Organization, 2023).

The study found that child labour is more prevalent in households where parents are unemployed. This aligned with Ugochukwu and Mordi (2022) suggesting that joblessness among parents increases the economic burden on households, thereby pushing children into the labour market to support family income. Additionally, the study found that parents with irregular income sources contribute to child labour. Irregular income often results in financial insecurity, which may compel parents to depend on their children's earnings as a survival strategy (UNICEF, 2023). Finally, the study found that the inability of parents to provide basic needs such as food, clothing, and education drives children into labour. This reflects the broader socioeconomic reality where inadequate household resources directly translate into child labour as a coping mechanism (Ekpenyong & Sibiri, 2021).

5.2 Conclusion

The study concluded that socio economic conditions have a significant influence on prevalence of child labour in Lafia Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. Evidence from the findings showed that large family size puts economic pressure on household thus forcing the children, especially older siblings to participate in labour activities to support the family income and thus to lighten the burden on parents. The study also concludes that the educational status of parents had a critical impact on influencing attitudes toward child labour as those parents with little or no education formally in school have a greater propensity to treat child labour as a survival mechanism and are less focused on emphasising formal education for their children. In addition, parental financial status was found to be one of the biggest determining factors of child labour as low income, unemployment and irregular income forcing the children of economically disadvantaged households into income generating activities to offset the basic family needs. These findings attest that deterioration of the child labour phenomenon in the study area can be attributed to the existence of structural socio economic deprivation which sustains the process of intergenerational poverty and the lack of opportunities for education and development for children.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were proposed in alignment with the three objectives:

1. There is need for government to develop and promote access to family planning services to help families make informed decisions about the number of children they have. This can include educational campaigns that highlight the benefits of smaller family sizes, particularly in terms of economic stability and child welfare.
2. Government should launch community-driven educational programmes focused on adult literacy and parenting skills. These programmes should emphasize the importance of formal education for children and educate parents on the long-term consequences of child labour. Create scholarship opportunities for parents who seek to further their education or who commit to keeping their children in school. These incentives can encourage parents to prioritize education and reduce dependency on child labour.
3. There is need for government to develop economic assistance programmes, such as conditional cash transfers, that provide financial support to families contingent on keeping children in school. This strategy can help alleviate immediate financial pressures that lead to child labour.

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