

**SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION STRATEGIES AND REHABILITATION
OUTCOME FOR VICTIMS OF CHILD LABOUR IN EGOR LOCAL
GOVERNMENT AREA EDO STATE**

BY

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**BEING A RESEARCH PRESENTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL
WORK, FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN
CITY, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
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OCTOBER, 2025

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research proposal titled “**Social Work Intervention Strategies and rehabilitation outcome for victims of child labour in Egor Local Government Area Edo State**” was carried out by **Eki Stella MAIKUDI–ERHENHI** with Matriculation Number: **PG/SSC0606269** in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of Master of Social work Degree in Social work (M.S.W.), Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State.

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Date

Dr. (Mrs.) H. E. Eweka
Head of Department

Date

DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to God Almighty for His strength, good health, and grace which enabled me to successfully complete this programme. I also dedicate this project to my parents, Late Mr. V. A. Erhenhi and Late Mrs. Esther Erhenhi, for their efforts and wonderful upbringing. Furthermore, this work is dedicated to my loving husband, Mr. Adamu Maikudi Yahaya, for his financial and moral support, and to my children of inestimable value, Maikudi Mainassara Esohe, Maikudi Maimurna Osamagbe, and Maikudi Mailafia Osarugue, for the joy, happiness, support, and understanding they offered throughout this programme.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the Social Work Intervention Strategies and Rehabilitation Outcome for Victims of Child Labour in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. Child labour remains a critical social problem that threatens the educational attainment, health, and overall development of children. It is driven by multiple factors, including poverty, unemployment, cultural practices, and family disintegration, which often expose children to exploitation, abuse, and long-term psychosocial challenges. Social work intervention offers a professional framework for addressing these issues by providing preventive, remedial, and rehabilitative support aimed at rescuing, protecting, and reintegrating affected children into society. The objectives of the study were to: identify the causes of child labour in Egor Local Government Area, examine the socio-economic and cultural factors influencing child labour practices, explore the effectiveness of social work intervention strategies in the rehabilitation of victims, assess the roles of families, schools, and communities in supporting rehabilitation, and investigate the challenges confronting social workers in implementing interventions. The study was anchored on the Ecological Systems Theory as theoretical frameworks. A quantitative survey research design was adopted. The study population comprised children engaged in child labour, their families, social workers, and community stakeholders within Egor LGA. A sample size of 400 respondents was selected using multi-stage sampling procedures. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire validated by experts in social work, while reliability was ensured through test–retest methods. Findings revealed that poverty, broken homes, peer pressure, lack of parental supervision, cultural practices, and economic hardship are major causes of child labour. The study further showed that while social workers play important roles in counseling, advocacy, rescue operations, and community sensitization, their effectiveness is limited by inadequate resources, policy gaps, and low institutional recognition. The study recommended, among others, that government should strengthen child protection policies, integrate professional social workers into community and school systems, and provide sustainable economic and educational support for vulnerable families. Communities and families should also be sensitized to their roles in preventing child labour, while NGOs and stakeholders should collaborate with social workers to improve rehabilitation outcomes.

Keywords: *Child Labour, Social Work, Intervention Strategies, Rehabilitation,*

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Globally, child labour is a critical issue, with the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimating that 160 million children are engaged in child labour, representing nearly 1 in 10 children worldwide (ILO, 2020). This phenomenon not only violates children's rights but also hinders their physical, mental, and social development. The ILO's 2021 report highlights a concerning increase in child labour due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated poverty and disrupted education (ILO, 2021). International frameworks, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, emphasize the need for comprehensive strategies to protect and rehabilitate affected children (UNICEF, 2021).

In Africa, child labour is particularly pervasive, with around 72 million children involved in hazardous work (World Bank, 2020). Factors contributing to this issue include widespread poverty, inadequate educational opportunities, and cultural norms that often view child labour as acceptable. The African Union has made efforts to combat child labour through various policies, yet challenges remain in effectively implementing these strategies (African Union, 2021). Social work interventions must focus on addressing both the immediate needs of child labourers and the systemic issues that perpetuate their exploitation.

Nigeria has one of the highest rates of child labour in Africa, with approximately 15 million children engaged in various forms of work (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). The interplay of poverty, lack of access to quality education, and socio-cultural practices contributes significantly to this crisis. The Nigerian government, along with NGOs, has

initiated several programs aimed at tackling child labour, including educational initiatives and community awareness campaigns. However, the effectiveness of these interventions varies widely, indicating a need for more targeted social work strategies (Nigerian Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2021).

In Edo State, particularly in the Egor Local Government Area, child labour is a pressing issue. A 2022 survey indicated that approximately 35% of children in urban areas of Edo are engaged in some form of labour, often in street trading or domestic work, which severely impacts their education and well-being (Edo State Ministry of Education, 2022). Local social work interventions must be culturally sensitive and community-oriented, addressing both the immediate needs of child labour victims and the socio-economic factors that drive families to rely on child labour.

In spite of the international and national commitments, the problem of child labour still persists. It is estimated globally that about 215 million boys and girls aged 5–17 were engaged in child labour 7 years ago, 115 million of them in hazardous work. Based on available statistics, it is estimated that about 21.6 million children, aged between 5 and 14 years, working in south Asia out of a total of 300 million children in this age group. In Nigeria out of the total number of 40 million 5-14 years old children 3.3 million are child labourers, (Leary, 2018). It is also equally important to note that every working child does not constitute to be a part of child labour, as child labour is associated with the presence of certain elements such as deprivation from school and cruelty (Amuda, 2021). Hence, ‘child labour’ is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development.” International conventions such as; ILO Convention 138 and 182 and UN Convention on

the Rights of the Child specifically deal with child labour and seek to abolish it within the shortest possible time.

As a consequence of child labour, children are deprived of their childhood, potential and dignity. It endangers their health and hinders their physical and mental development. Due to early entry into the labour force and lack of education they accumulate less human capital. Due to poor health and less human capital accumulation their productivity remains very low. Due to lack of skills and lower productivity they earn very less when they become adult. In this way a child inherits poverty and child labour from his or her parents and transfers it to his or her next generation. Thus poor families get stuck in a trap which leads to the intergenerational persistence of poverty and child labour (Okafor, 2020).

Children who work instead of attending school miss out on vital educational opportunities that could help them break free from the cycle of poverty (Omorogiuwa, 2021). This lack of education limits their future employment prospects and perpetuates a cycle where the next generation is also forced into child labour. Furthermore, the psychological toll on these children can be profound, leading to issues such as low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression. The societal implications are equally concerning, as child labour undermines national development by stunting human capital growth and perpetuating inequality (Okafor, 2020). This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of social work intervention strategies in improving rehabilitation outcomes for child labour victims in Egor Local Government Area, providing insights that can inform future policy and practice.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Child labour continues to be a significant challenge worldwide, with millions of children engaged in exploitative work that hampers their development and future opportunities. The incidence of child labour is particularly concerning, as many children are subjected to

hazardous working conditions, adversely affecting their physical and mental well-being (International Labour Organization (ILO, 2021). Despite various legislative measures and social intervention programs aimed at combating child labour, many affected children remain unreached, perpetuating cycles of poverty and social exclusion (UNICEF, 2022). The role of social work intervention strategies in the rehabilitation of these children is critical, yet there is limited empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of specific approaches within this local context.

According to Williams, Finke, Warren, Bazan, Walgen and Cohen (2022), work ranges from taking care of animals, planting and harvesting food, to being in many kinds of small manufacturing companies for auto repair, making of footwear and textiles. The authors further claim that more boys than girls work outside their homes. Girls often work as domestic maids. Being someone's house help can be very risky because they can be sexually abused, physically maltreated and emotionally tortured. Maids are cut off from friends and families. This is one reason why many youngsters do not attend schools.

Despite these opinions that have been articulated over the years, the above cited researchers were of the opinion that Third World countries cannot do without child labour. However, there have not been many scientific investigations, evaluations, or impact studies on the rehabilitation measures undertaken for victims of child labour in the study area. This research seeks to address the gap in understanding the relationship between social work intervention strategies and rehabilitation outcomes for victims of child labour in Egor Local Government Area. By evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies, the study aims to provide insights that can inform policy and practice, ultimately improving the lives of affected children in the region.

1.3 Aims and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to evaluate social work intervention strategies for the rehabilitation of victims of child labour in Egor Local Government Area Edo State. The objectives are to:

- i. identify various social work intervention strategies currently employed to address the rehabilitation of child labour victims in Egor Local Government Area.
- ii. evaluate the effectiveness of these intervention strategies in achieving positive rehabilitation outcomes for victims of child labour in Egor Local Government Area.
- iii. identify the barriers faced by social workers in implementing effective intervention strategies for child labour rehabilitation in Egor Local Government Area.
- iv. formulate evidence-based recommendations for enhancing social work intervention strategies for child labour victims and improve rehabilitation outcomes in Egor Local Government Area.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions will guide this study:

- i. What social work intervention strategies are currently being implemented to rehabilitate victims of child labour in Egor Local Government Area?
- ii. How effective are these intervention strategies in achieving positive rehabilitation outcomes, such as educational and psychological improvements for child labour victims?
- iii. What barriers do social workers face in implementing effective intervention strategies for the rehabilitation of child labour victims in this region?

- iv. What evidence-based recommendations can be made to improve social work intervention strategies for better rehabilitation outcomes for child labour victims in Egor Local Government Area?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study will be of immense benefit to the government, social workers, parents and policy makers. The findings of this study will provide evidence-based insights into the effectiveness of current intervention strategies used in the rehabilitation of victims of child labour. It will help social workers to identify best practices, refine intervention methods, and adopt more context-specific approaches that enhance the well-being and recovery of affected children in Egor Local Government Area. The study will offer empirical data that can support the formulation and implementation of more effective child welfare policies at the local and state levels. By understanding the gaps in existing strategies and the challenges social workers face, government authorities can better allocate resources, strengthen enforcement mechanisms, and develop more sustainable child protection systems. NGOs and development partners working in the field of child protection and human rights will benefit from the study's findings by gaining a clearer picture of the intervention landscape in Egor LGA.

This knowledge can inform program design, improve service delivery, and foster stronger collaboration with social workers and community stakeholders. This study will contribute to the growing body of literature on child labour and social work interventions in Nigeria. It will serve as a valuable reference for students, researchers, and academicians interested in social welfare, child protection, and community-based rehabilitation models. By highlighting the causes, consequences, and solutions to child labour within Egor LGA, the study will promote greater community awareness and engagement. It may also influence

families to reconsider harmful practices and support rehabilitation efforts aimed at restoring the rights and future of their children. Ultimately, the study aims to contribute toward the improvement of rehabilitation outcomes for children who have experienced labour exploitation. Through better-designed and more effective interventions, these children will have improved access to education, healthcare, psychosocial support, and opportunities for a better quality of life

1.6 Scope of the Study

The research will be conducted specifically in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State, Nigeria, allowing for an in-depth examination of local contexts and conditions affecting child labour and rehabilitation efforts.

1.7 Definition of terms

Child labour: A variety of task carried out by children for lengthy periods of time that are harmful to their development, health and education or “any economic activities performed by a person who is under 18 years and which prohibit him/her From attending school”

Child exploitation; Refers to the exploitation of children through any form of work that deprives children of their childhood, interferes with their ability to attend regular school, and is mentally, physically, socially or morally harmful.

Poverty: Is not having enough material possessions or income for a person's needs. Poverty may include social, economic, and political elements.

Public perception: The thinking of the majority of the people. It is the collective opinion of the people of a society or state on an issue or problem.

Girl child labour: Is the high incidence of girls ages 5–17 who are involved in economic activities outside of education and leisure.

Emotional Depression: Is a state of low mood and aversion to activity. It can affect a person's thoughts, behaviour, motivation, feelings, and sense of well-being.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Preamble

This section focuses on the review of relevant literature. Not all child work is bad; some such work can teach skills as well as help provide support to children's families. Nevertheless, when child work is excessive and/or exploitative, it can increase health risks for the children (Castro, 2017), interfere with education, and can negatively impact a child's development.

2.1 Concept of Child Labour

Child labour not only increases unemployment rates in the short term for adults looking for work, in the long term, children are less employable due to their limited education, health restrictions and decreased skill attainment compared to those who have attended school or organized apprenticeships (Omorogiuwa, 2015). Their peers also have the advantage of professional and academic degrees. While in some cases these degrees do not mean that those who possess them are more skilled, degrees and certificates are often appreciated by employers because they guarantee proficiency and are at times mandated by the government and unions for employment. Child labourers are at a disadvantage because of their inability to get these degrees as easily as those who stayed in school (Human Right Watch, 2015). These factors exercises influence over the decision to allocate children's time away from schooling or towards work. Other factors include the location and distance to formal education centre, which can be used as a proxy for demand factor.

Specifically, poverty and illiteracy reinforced by traditional customs such as polygyny and preference for large family size were identified as root causes of child labour in Nigeria (Obikeze, 1986 & Oloko, 2019). Moreover, marital instability and family disorganization were also identified as contributory factors. Be that as it may, the first econometric study of National Child Labour Survey data also noted that these factors have an influencing behaviour on child participation in different child activity options (Okpukpara & Odurukwe, 2021). Kuti, (2016) opined that educated mothers are most likely be gainfully employed and may likely have less time to attend to her jobs at home, consequently resulting to the mounting of unnecessary pressure on the children especially the females to carry out these duties in their mother's absence due to her work, thereby depriving the child of needed rest and recreation activities necessary for their growth and developments. Scholars like Appel (2019) identified structural inequalities, while Nwabueze (2019) sees poverty and inequality as the major causes of street trading and child labour. Okojie (2018) postulated the causes to be an adverse economic environment, underemployment, massive retrenchment, unemployment and a poor quality of life. Nmom, in his book interpreting social problems and public issues in Nigeria (2021), contended that while poverty is often postulated as the principal cause of forcing children into child labour, a lack of social services at home, a lack of good housing, inadequate food and health care service, combine to compel parents to sell their children into child labour. The least privileged children, including children without families and/or without homes, are the most vulnerable to these social ills.

The economic constraints also force people to look for wealth at all cost to the detriment of their children. Oruwari, (2019) in her study of poverty among women and their households in Benin city, Adudu (2018) and Okojie, (2019) identified five factors, housing problems, illiteracy, unemployment/underdevelopment, low incomes, and

inability to cope with the needs of members of households, as indicators of the extent of poverty among women and consequently child labour Basu and Van (2018), Ugochukwu & Beshi , B.A, (2012) and Ahmed (2019) studies unanimously agreed that poverty is the main, although not the only cause of child labour, they went on to emphasize that despite extreme poverty, parents might not want to send their children for full time job. However, if the parents are hit by temporary economic crisis, then the additional income from child employment could be essential for survival

Children are normally hired as household servants. This is especially true for girls and sometimes for boys. When a child performs the normal work/domestic work at home, it is not called child labour (Bhukuth, 2018). Child labour is any work or employment which engages a child to work more in order to attain basic needs for his or her family. The employment ordinance defines child labour as any child below the age of fifteen years who is working. These children are working for long hours with low wages under harmful conditions which destroy their physical and mental development (Kihwelo, 2016).

Therefore, this study defines child labour as any economic activity which is done by a person under the age of 18 which prevents child from attending school. Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest numbers of children who are working as child labourer. Before September 2020, the Nigerian government had not yet implemented an effective national strategy to tackle this problem, and as result the problem still exists.

2.1.1 Concept of Child Labour

Poverty is the main reason for children to work. Nearly by 48 percent of Nigeria's population of 34 million is considered to be basically poor and about 27 percent live in horrible poverty and in households without sufficient income to meet basic nutritional requirements. Rural poverty is more explicit compared to urban areas. It has been

estimated that about 57 percent of rural populations live in poverty compared to urban (IPEC Country Profile United Republic of Nigeria, 2014). The deterioration of living conditions in rural areas has also encouraged people to migrate from rural to urban. Environment includes children and youth who are migrating to urban areas in order to search jobs and end up as child labourers. Child workers come from poor families. There are other factors in addition to poverty such as parental ignorance, which means lack of knowledge about education of children, particularly girls (Omorogiuwa 2015). Therefore in order to eliminate child labour, we first deal with the reduction of poverty (Wiener, 2019).

Child labour has been a global issue which is caused by inadequate levels of education, gender inequality, and health problems which leads to poverty (Nesi, 2018; Hindman, 2019). The UN Convention of Children's Rights states that child labour is dangerous and interferes with the child's development.

2.1.2 Causes of Child Labour

Poverty is most often cited as the primary cause of child labour. Evidence shows that the highest prevalence of child labour is found in lesser developed countries (Dehejia, 2022). Just as increased economic prosperity brought with it decreases in child labour in countries that are now developed, it would seem that promoting economic growth in lesser developed countries could also have positive spill over effects on child labour (Dehejia, 2022 & International Labour Organisation, 2016).

While it certainly plays a key role, limiting the definition of causes of child labour to poverty is too simplistic and risks encouraging solutions for combating child labour that are equally simplistic—or that suggest that little can be done to address the problems of

child labour before poverty is solved. Other factors, including the insights of labour supply theory, need to be taken into account when addressing child labour.

Poverty as a cause of child labour

There is evidence to support the claim that child labour decreases as poverty decreases. In a study of per capita GDP growth in Vietnam and its effect on child labour prevalence, Eric Edmonds has shown that a 9 percent per year growth in GDP was accompanied by a 30 percent decrease in child labour between 1993 and 1997. His research illustrates that there is a negative relationship between per capita income and child labour and further shows that increases in per capita income, all else equal, can explain up to 80 percent of the decline in child labour for households near the poverty line during this time period (Edmonds, 2014).

The results of Edmonds' study of child labour and its decline in Vietnam support the view that there is a minimum amount needed for the household's survival and that children work if that need is not met (Edmonds, 2014a). As reviewed above, Edmonds found that child labour dramatically declined after families had passed an established minimum poverty line and were, presumably, able to meet their household needs. In contrast, for households that had not met the minimum poverty line, child labour did not seem to vary despite rising GDP throughout the country (Edmonds, 2014). Although there is a clear correlation between poverty and child labour, it remains unclear whether it is strictly causal. Market failures, such as low returns to education or lack of access to credit, could also play a significant role in the level of child labour present. Such market failures are typically more prevalent in lesser developed countries, where poverty is also more common (Dehejia, 2022).

Broken Home/Divorce

The effect of divorce and separation on the welfare of the children is hazardous. Nwobi (1979) claims that the reluctance of husband and mothers in supporting themselves and their children often forces families of divorced mothers to suffer economic hardships. Children from broken homes are treated in discriminatory manners within the household by their step-mother/father who tends to give preference to his/her own children in distribution of household chores. These children do the worst forms of labour to keep up with family income. Some run away from home and prefer to fend for themselves. This led them into the hands of taskmasters. Eweniyi (2020) opines that continued disintegration of families makes children vulnerable to sexual assaults.

Unemployment

Analysis of labour statistics and employer surveys indicates that the prospect for employment in recent times across the globe has worsened. The high level of unemployment in Nigeria has led to so many atrocities like armed robbery, fraud, and widespread use of child labour. The unemployment rate in Nigeria increased to 23.90 per cent in 2011 from 21.10 per cent in 2020. Recently, Nigeria was grouped with Mauritania, Cape Verde and Cote d'Ivoire as countries with the most acute unemployment rate. The unemployment rate in Nigeria usually affects the economic development of the country and directly causes adverse effect on the family structure. In addition, economic hardship or recession and joblessness have a negative impact on children's socio-emotional functioning through the parent's behaviour towards the child. This often encourages children to participate in the worst forms of child labour to survive.

Socio-economic factors

The economic instability in Nigeria is a factor that encourages child labour. In most countries, the reason for child labour cannot be divorced from its economic and social significance. Child labour is a supplement to the income of poor families. For instance, many children work to augment the income of their parents in terms of household expenses especially during economic meltdown when many people lose their jobs. It is not so likely that a child whose parents are in good employment would engage in child labour. If it happens, it cannot measure up to the activities of children whose parents are out of work or on low wages.

In spite of the fact that child labourers in developing countries are not well paid, their little contribution to their family income cannot be underestimated in terms of giving financial support to their poor parents.

Family size

Family size is another cause of child labour in Nigeria. Evidence has shown that a larger household size reduces parents' investment in schooling for the children. That is, the increase in the size of a family invariably increases the probability that a child will become a child labourer. In other words, giving birth to many children increases the probability of at least some of them having to be in the labour market. This implies that large families are prone to high incidences of child labour.

The relationship between household size and child labour in rural areas in Nigeria depends largely on land holding. This is so common in the rural areas in Nigeria where parents are predominately farmers and illiterates. Parents in the rural areas in Nigeria who are farmers give birth to more children in order to get them involved in farming because they rely

more on their children to help them in cultivating their cash crops. However, most of these children end up as child labourers with no access to education. This increases the rate of child labour especially in its worst forms in the rural part of Nigeria.

Level of adult education

According to one study, 'parents represent 62 per cent of the source of induction into employment.' The level of adult education in Nigeria is another factor that can induce some parents to send their children out to work. There is a high tendency that educated parents would not want their children to work. This is unlike illiterate parents who may not know the value of education and as such send their children out to work to earn a living for themselves and for the family.

Educated parents, however, from personal experience of acquiring education understand the importance and value of education and would not want their children to be uneducated. Therefore, level of parental education is vital in influencing child labour

Culture

In Nigeria, cultural belief is another factor that influences children to work as labourers, the reason for this is not far-fetched, family affiliation is so common to Nigerians. The belief that working children are more responsible in life than those who do not work accounts for the reason some parents allow their children to work in family members homes early in life. Parents, who encourage their children to work as child labourers in their rich uncles and aunties homes, do it with the hope that such children will acquire training working with their uncles and aunties to prepare them for their adult occupation. However, these children end up as domestic servants to their rich uncles or aunties without the opportunity to go to school.

In some culture, sending children out to work is a traditional form of education or a socialisation process. Furthermore, in some cultures in Nigeria, there is the belief that child bearing is the essence of marriage, therefore, some parents encourage their married children to give birth to as many children as they can. Some of these children end up as child labourers, when their parents have no means of caring for them. This apparently increases the incidence of child labour.

In addition, some cultures discriminate against girl-children in terms of acquiring education, for social and economic reasons. This practise is common in the Northern part of Nigeria where girl-children marry early. In the Northern part of Nigeria, it is a belief that female children are not supposed to be educated; rather they are supposed to learn how to become good wives and home keepers. This has deprived many girl children from going to school and this has exposed them earlier than boys to child labour especially as domestic servants.

Access to compulsory, free education is limited

Lack of access to compulsory and free education is mostly common in rural areas because of limited accessibility to schools. Lack of access to schools in the rural areas, in addition to lack of enforcement of minimum age of employment has increased child labour in this part of Nigeria. Oftentimes, children seek employment simply because there is no access to schools and where there is access, it is not affordable. This has caused many children to seek employment instead of attending schools. Furthermore, political instability has caused a decline in the educational system of public schools from primary to tertiary education in Nigeria. Many times the schools are on strike and when they are not on strike, many of the teachers are lazy. Incompetence of teachers has resulted into low enrolment in schools.

According to Ogbeifum and Olisa ‘about 23 per cent of the over, 400,000 primary school teachers in Nigeria do not possess the Teachers' Grade Two Certificate’. This is even when the minimum requirement a person must possess to teach as a grade school teacher is the National Certificate of Education (NCE), yet many grade school teachers do not have Teachers’ Grade Two Certificate.¹³⁸ This has the consequence of discouraging children from attending classes, as some children consider going to school as a waste of time since going to school does not improve them due to the incompetency of some of their teachers.

Urbanisation

In Nigeria, rapid migration from the rural areas to urban cities is a factor that has increased the incidence of child labour in urban cities. This is a common factor across the globe. Generally, some parents leave the severity of agricultural working conditions of the rural areas for cities with their children with the hope of a better standard of living which often turns out to be impossible.¹⁴⁰ When the parents are unable to get a job, life becomes more difficult, thus, the children are encouraged to work as child labourers.

This movement from the rural places to the urban cities globally has been drastic in the last 40 years. In 1950, 17 per cent of the population of the developing world lived in urban areas.¹⁴² This increased to 32 per cent in 1988, in 2020, the population increased by 40 per cent and will be 57 per cent by the year 2025. This has forced children and their parents into urban poverty. Hence, children have no option than to work.

2.1.3 Consequences of Child Labour and Neglect

Child labour and neglect can affect all domains of development - physical, psychological, emotional, behavioural, and social - all of which are interrelated. The remainder of this

paper discusses the possible consequences of child labour and neglect identified in the research literature. The research reviewed included high-quality systematic reviews and primary studies with large representative samples in English-speaking countries. Adverse consequences are broadly linked to all labour types; however, where appropriate, associations are made between specific types of maltreatment and negative outcomes.

Child labourers are vulnerable to sexual abuse, health deterioration and exploitation. They are often victims of extreme exploitation in terms of working for long hours for little pay. Working conditions of child labourers are severe and often detrimental to their health and proper physical and mental development. According to a writer, 'many child labourers endure lives of pure deprivation.' The next paragraph discusses the health hazards; sexual abuse of child labourers and the exploitative nature of child labourers as some of the scarring effects of the worst forms of child labour.

Effect on Health

Extensive research has identified a strong relationship between child maltreatment and a range of mental health problems, with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) often reported (Gilbert C., 2019; Greeson V., 2011; Kearney, Wechsler, Kaur, & Lemos-Miller, 2020; Schore, 2022; Streeck-Fischer & van der Kolk, 2020). Recent research suggests that diagnosing children with PTSD does not capture the full developmental effects of chronic child labour and neglect and as noted previously, many researchers now prefer the term "complex trauma" (Cook T., & Cleaver, F., 2017; Price-Robertson, 2021). Maltreated children experiencing PTSD symptoms are also often found to be experiencing other disorders such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, oppositional defiant and conduct disorders, substance use, and anxiety, mood, psychotic, and adjustment disorders (Kearney, Wechsler, Kaur, & Lemos-Miller, 2020).

Child labour in its worst forms continues to pose a threat to the growth and development of working children. This is illustrated in a study by Omokhodion on the health hazards working children are exposed to as opposed to non-working children. The researcher interviewed children in Ibadan, Oyo State of Nigeria, to determine the difference between working children and non-working children. There were working and non-working children.

On working children, their ages ranged between eight and 15 years: ‘Fifty-nine (13 per cent) had reported fever, 36 (8 per cent) had visual problems, 28 (6 per cent) had skin lesions, 17 (4 per cent) had muscular and joint pains and five (1 per cent) had diarrhoea.’ Urinary schistosomiasis was observed in 25 (6 per cent) children, Malnutrition was more prevalent among working children as 74 (33 per cent) were underweight and 76 (34 per cent) were stunted while in non-working children 27 per cent of the children were underweight and 30 per cent were stunted. There was a great difference between working and non-working children. This is also common to children involved in agricultural activities, especially those children that work in cocoa plantation farms. Child labourers who work on cocoa farms suffer all kinds of body diseases and are exposed to chemicals working on the farms.

Mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety disorders, have consistently been linked with child labour and neglect, particularly for adolescents (Brown, Cohen, Johnson, & Smailes, 2019; Gilbert et al., 2019; Harkness & Lumley, 2018; Kaufman, 1991). In a review of seven large-scale studies, all studies showed a high association between child maltreatment and depression in adolescence (Harkness & Lumley, 2018). For example, the authors cited a longitudinal study by Brown and colleagues which found that children and adolescents who reported a history of labour or neglect were three times more likely to

exhibit a depressive disorder than non-maltreated children. Similarly, in a Victorian study of characteristics of children referred to a therapeutic health service for children who had been laboured or neglected (the Take Two Program), 62% of children met the criteria for at least one mental health diagnosis (Frederico, Jackson, & Black, 2018). Eating disorders, including anorexia and binge-purge behaviour (bulimia), may also be associated with child labour and neglect (Brewerton, 2017). Sexual labour has been widely linked to eating disorders in children and adolescents; however, experiencing other maltreatment types or multiple forms of labour and neglect have also been shown to increase the risk of developing an eating disorder (Brewerton, 2017)

Sexual abuse

Child labourers especially those working as domestic workers are vulnerable to physical, psychological and sexual violence and abusive working conditions. Recently, the ILO published a report on the world day against child labour outlining the abuses suffered by millions of children working as domestic servants in family homes. Children working as domestic workers are often maltreated, deprived of visiting their families and highly dependent on their employers. According to Constance Thomas, ‘the situation of many child domestic workers not only constitutes a serious violation of child rights, but remains an obstacle to the achievement of many national and international development objectives.’

Furthermore, many female domestic workers have been victims of unwanted pregnancy at a very young age because of sexual abuse. This has deprived some of them the opportunity to further their education and many young girls have become single mothers.

Exploitation

Child labour in its worst forms are highly exploitative. According to a UNICEF report, child labourers toil for long hours under dangerous and unhealthy work conditions. Conditions under which some child labourers work are hazardous. Most times, working children undertake work obligations that may be beyond their physical capability for long hours without eating. In addition, their earnings are consistently low compared to that of adult workers who engage in the same task with them. The reason for this is not far-fetched. This is because children lack the capacity to enter into a contract as provided for under section 18 of the Nigerian Child Rights Act (CRA) 2003. Employers obviously take advantage of this lack of capacity of children to enter into a valid contract to exploit child labourers. In addition, most times employers easily lay off working children without any considerations whenever there is economic recession.

It is a common knowledge that companies and factories prefer to employ children to work as contract workers than adults for their self-interest. Employers employ children to work in order to take advantage of them, maximise their profits and reduce labour costs. In some cases, some employers often refuse to honour their undertakings to pay children fairly after working. In most cases, after children had finished working without having agreed on the amount to be paid, the employers who appeared friendly before the children had started work often turned cold and threatening. Hence, the children have no option but to accept the small payment. This makes child labour in its worst forms highly exploitative and repressive.

Household Decision Making

Classic labour supply theory thus provides insight for why an individual may choose to work; but, the rationale for child labour is not as direct. The decision for a child to work is

sometimes made by the child himself, but often by the family as a whole and/or solely by the parents. Labour theory for decision making within households in general focuses on the decisions that parents' make with respect to their own work, assuming that children will not be included as part of the labour force (Umar, 2019). There are several different models that seek to explain the decision-making process by parents and within families when choosing whether or not to send a child to work. This includes intra-household bargaining, extra-household bargaining, and an altruistic model of individual and household decisions as they apply to deciding whether or not a child will work

Liquidity's Impact on Child Labour

Thus, poverty and market failures are probable causes for high levels of child labour in developing countries. Limited access to credit is one such market failure because it impedes a household's ability to smooth its consumption by borrowing when resources are constrained and paying back when resources are more readily available. Research shows that increasing access to credit can reduce poverty. For instance, in India in the late 1970's, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) initiated a 1:3 policy which required banks to open branches in three locations that previously did not have access to banking before opening in a location that already had a bank branch. Research suggests that this policy was instrumental in increasing rural access to credit and also reduced poverty in the regions that had increased access to formal credit (Ramachandran & Swaminathan, 2015, pp. 8-10). According to a 2021 study by Robin Burgess and Rohini Pande, during the time period of 1969 to 1990, a one percent increase in the number of bank branches in rural areas reduced rural poverty by 0.42 percent Davies, J. (2020).

Impact of Poverty on Child Labour

As poverty is considered to be one of the major determinants of child labour so tackling poverty may reduce child labour substantially. Akarro and Mtwewe (2011) argue that child labour is a reflection of poverty and therefore tackling poverty will have a positive impact on child labour. Fabre and Augeraud-Veron (2014) find that under bad economic conditions parents may decide to keep children away from school. In such a context, trade sanctions or repressive laws seem not to be the right solution to fight against child labour. It suggests that government policies have to act mainly on growth and poverty. The findings of Galli (2015) suggest that if the work of children is needed for meeting the essential needs of the family, any effort to reduce child labour must take into account that the income of families involved will be affected negatively and, often, they will be pushed below the survival level.

Therefore, it proposes income transfers and/or subsidies for poor families with children in school for effectiveness of child labour reduction programmes. Sen. (2022) finds that poverty is a robust determinant of child labour. The extent of child labour depends on the level of poverty and returns to schooling. And the hours of work drop drastically as the child moves above the poverty line. Wahba (2016) finds that low adult market wages are key determinants of child labour. According to him, a 10 percent increase in the illiterate male market wages decreases the probability of child labour by 22 percent for boys and 13 percent for girls.²⁵ Low adult market wages result in higher poverty rates and increase in illiterate adult market wages increases the household budget and thus it reduces poverty and consequently child labour.

2.1.4 Nexus between poverty and child labour

Child labour is both a cause and a consequence of poverty. Empirical evidence suggests there is a close relation between the two. Poverty causes child labour, being a means of survival, while child labour perpetuates poverty because of less human capital accumulation, low productivity and low wages. Rena (2019) finds out that the problem of child labour is closely associated with poverty and underdevelopment. It is often pointed out that poverty is the main cause for child labour in general. As in all the developing countries including Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Papua New Guinea, Ethiopia, Uganda, Mozambique, Malawi, Sudan, and Chad, the prevalence of poverty is high and therefore, child labour in these developing countries, particularly in Asia and Africa, does exist to a larger extent. The World Bank (2018) reports that the labour force participation rate of children aged 10 to 14 is highest, 30–60 percent, in countries with per capita income of \$500 or less (at 1987 prices). But it declines quite rapidly, to 10–30 percent, in countries with incomes between \$500 and \$1,000. Basu and Van (2018) offered a multiple equilibrium-based explanation of child labour, in which low income of the parents is the main cause of child labour. Galli (2015) finds out that poverty is the main determinant of child labour supply, and that child labour significantly increases the income and the probability of survival of the family.

This contribution is most of the time critical since children are sent to work when parents' earnings are insufficient to guarantee the survival of the family, or are insecure so that child labour is used as a mean of minimizing the impact of possible job loss, failed harvest and other shocks on the family's income stream. Several other studies (.Zaidi & Beg 2014; Siddiqi & Patrinos 1995, Sen 2016, Akarro & Mtweve 2017) also find poverty as the main determinant of child labour. One study finds there is a trade-off between child labour and

human capital accumulation. The findings of another study suggest there is a substantial evidence of positive human capital effects on relative labour productivity levels. Brown et al. (2022) finds that child labour makes those children, once grown, less productive than they would have been had they gone to school. In this way, child labour is not only a consequence of poverty but also a cause of it. Both reinstate each other. Thus, there exists a nexus between poverty and child labour which leads to the intergenerational persistence of poverty and child labour.

2.1.5 Strategies and Mechanisms to Combating Child Labour in Nigeria Legislation

Legislation is an effective tool in reducing the practice of child labour in Nigeria and in eradicating the worst forms of it. This is by making laws in compliance with the international standards on the protection of children and ensuring enforcement of the laws. Nigeria, to combat and campaign against child labour to achieve the ILO goal towards the total eradication of the worst forms of child labour by 2016, must adhere strictly to the ILO two core conventions on child labour. These conventions and their accompanying recommendations have formed the basis on which much of the legislation on child labour adopted by most of the state members of ILO is laid.

In view of the importance of legislation in the eradication of child labour, especially its worst forms, the regulatory framework on child labour in Nigeria, its shortcomings and how it could be enforced to eradicate the worst forms of child labour in Nigeria is discussed in what follows. In Nigeria, the reason for the continued incidence of child labour is not with the laws but with effective implementation and enforcement of the laws. It is clear from the various sections of the laws below, that there are laws prohibiting child labour and protecting children from taking part in exploitative and hazardous work in Nigeria.

Section 28 of the CRA accordingly provides as follows:

--- (1) subject to this act, no child shall be

(a) subjected to any forced or exploitative labour;

(b) employed to work in any capacity except where he is employed by a member of his family on light work of an agricultural, horticultural or domestic character; or

(c) required, in any case, to lift, carry or move anything so heavy as to be likely to adversely affect his physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development; or

(d) employed as a domestic help outside his own home or family environment

(2) No child shall be employed or work in an industrial undertaking and nothing in this subsection shall apply to work done by children in technical schools or similar approved institutions if the work is supervised by the appropriate authority (Ahmad, 2012)..

Furthermore, section 29 of the CRA is the direct application of sections 59,60,61,62 and 63 of the Labour Act, which provides generally for the protection of children under the age of sixteen years. Section 30 of CRA further provides for prohibition of buying, selling, hiring or otherwise dealing in children for the purpose of hawking or begging of alms or prostitution.

(1) No child shall-

(a) be employed or work in any capacity except where he is employed by a member of his family on light work of an agricultural, horticultural or domestic character approved by the Minister; or

(b) be required in any case to lift, carry or move anything so heavy as to be likely to injure his physical development.

(2) No young person under the age of fifteen years shall be employed or work in any industrial undertaking:

Provided that this subsection shall not apply to work done by young persons in technical schools or similar institutions if the work is approved and supervised by the Ministry of Education (or corresponding department of government) of a State. Section 64(1) of the Labour Act provides the punishment section for anyone that contravenes the above section 59 of the Labour Act. It provides as follows:

Any person who employs a young person in contravention of sections 59 to 62 of this Act or any regulations made under section 63 of this Act, the proprietor, owner and manager of any undertaking in which a young person is so employed and any parent or guardian of a young person who permits the young person to be so employed shall be guilty of an offence and on conviction shall be liable to a fine not exceeding N100 (Barman, 2014)

Section 59(1)(a) of the Labour Act needs to be reviewed and amended, providing clarity on what type of work is considered as light work. This is because many employers take advantage of this section of the law and employ children to work. The reason for this is that the section does not state expressly what type of work can be regarded as light or to what extent a child can take part in agriculture or horticultural work.

In addition, the penalties laid down under section 64(1) of the Labour Act for the violation of the prohibition to employ children in hazardous occupations, is very low, the fine of N100 is less than a dollar. Thus, the above punishment section (s 59) needs an amendment.

Oftentimes, the fine is not imposed against perpetrators and when it is imposed, it not a sufficient punishment to deter employers from employing children as labourers (Bhatt, 2011). The parliament needs to amend the punishment section and impose a greater punishment for example, making child labour an offence punishable with imprisonment or imposing a heavy fine or both on anyone that employs a child below the statutory age of employment as provided for under the ILO.

Enhancing the socio-economic situation in the country

Many writers and researchers have given poverty as the major cause of child labour in Nigeria and across the globe. The poverty level in the Nigeria is due to the socio-economic situation of the country. Socio-economic problems as discussed in chapter two of this work is a serious factor that has warranted many children getting involved in child labour. Many children have been thrown to the street due to the lack of basic social amenities such as housing, health services, nutrition that are necessities for good living (Sanyal, 2019).

In alleviating poverty in Nigeria, the Nigerian government introduced the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) to eradicate poverty in the country. One of the schemes of the NAPEP entitled ‘In Care of the People’ aims to break the ‘intergenerational transfer of poverty and reduce vulnerability of the poor in the society.’ This programme however, have suffered continuity. Therefore, it is not able to achieve the purpose for which it was established.

It is the responsibility of the government to facilitate socio-economic development of the country by creating more jobs for its citizens and making provisions for social amenities. When there is economic change in the status of struggling families, it will also reduce the participation of their children in child labour. Furthermore, in balancing the economic

situation of the country with the population, there is a need for the Nigerian government to strategise on how to reduce the population. Apparently, the work status of children are influenced by family size and family status, that is, children from big and polygamous families are likely to work outside their homes. The Nigerian government should implement a policy on family planning to control the birth rate in Nigeria (Zastrow, 2014).

2.1.6 Social Work Rehabilitation Strategies for victims of child labour

There is a general consensus that rehabilitation measures are not so effective in reality. The phenomenon of the recycling of child labor divulges that rescued children again join the workforce after a certain gap either at the same place in the same city or at different places in different cities. Those who are concerned with the rights of children univocally agree that the right place for a child is in school. Consequently, it is social workers are committed to rescue children from work places to break the phenomenon of recycling of child labor and ensure the best of their rehabilitation and social integration. There are measures taken by the government to support rescued and released children under judicial interpretation and pronouncements (Bhatt, 2011).

The rehabilitation of victims of child labour from work places by social workers is a complex process that requires psychological, educational and vocational rehabilitation. A key element in this process is to change the child's dysfunctional attitudes - acquired during traumatic experiences-towards adults, work or their own self. This process involves several stages which include: establishing a rapport with the child; the success of this stage will have a direct impact on drop-out rate from the rehabilitation programme. The victims are "*involuntary clients*" as they do not ask for help or specialized support, such as counselling or psychotherapy (NASW, 2021). Assessing needs, resources and capacity; including conceptualizing the issue at hand in observable and measurable terms.

Designing a plan of activities for rehabilitation and reintegration, including setting the objectives of the rehabilitation programme and indicators / means of verification for quantifying progress (NASW, 2021). Its aim is to decrease those risk factors at the root of the child's involvement in child labour, and reinforce protection factors. Rehabilitation focused merely on integrating the child into the educational system is not enough to reduce the risk of re-victimization of that child and of his/her future children (NASW, 2021). The objectives of the psycho-educational, counselling or psychotherapeutic activities must be to develop some cognitive, social and emotional abilities, which should enable the child to adapt healthily to events in later life. Facilitating the change; each child has different capacities, needs and responses to services. Consequently, the more individualized the plan, the more multi-disciplinary its process of implementation, and the more often it is assessed and possibly modified, then the more likely it will succeed in rehabilitating the child (NASW, 2021). Ensuring continuous assessment (and deciding on possible changes in the plan of activities).

Reintegration

The process of reintegration of a victim of child labour is a long term one. It is wide ranging and includes family and community reintegration, as well as (re)schooling, reemployment, and other aspects (Jaya 2018). This multiplicity of needs justifies the use of case management and referral techniques for the services provided. In this context, it is important to establish timing and priorities, i.e. a child who has not fully recovered from his/her trauma is unlikely to succeed in school or in a new job; on the other hand a child who is making psychological progress will soon need to generate his/her own income, or to benefit from his/her own family's income (Jaya 2018). The question of when to start an economic empowerment component is further complicated by the fact that many national

and international assistance to victim is often time bound and specific, and does not offer the flexibility needed for a sustainable rehabilitation process. As previously underlined, it is therefore crucial for the case manager to provide regular updates to his/her mapping of services, in order to help facilitate more flexible services for the child (Jaya 2018).

The case management team should now either facilitate the complete reintegration of the child in his/her family and community, with particular focus on family reunification and identification / elimination of possible stigmatization, and or develop alternatives to reintegration outside the family if direct threats persist to the safety of the child (particularly in terms of exploitation).

2.2 Empirical Studies

Edmonds (2017) defined child labour as any work that is harmful to person .Also the Nigeria Department of Labour (2017) define child labour as “any economic activities performed by a person who is under 15 years and which prohibit him/her From attending school”. Child labour involves children being enslaved by being separated from their families, being kept out of school and exposed to serious hazardous work such as too much sitting, standing, carrying of too heavy weights and loss of sleep. Child labour concerns all activities which are done by children for the purpose of economic gain. In addition, many children are engaged in economic activities for low payment or no payment which are dangerous to their health (Omorogiuwa, 2018).

As Okpukpara and Odurukwe (2021) opined that over the years the use of child for labour outside the home has continued to change in form and character in Nigeria. A review of the many dynamics of child labour in Nigeria can be captured in this study in the following forms: The socio-demographic consequences of child labour according to the sectors of the economy where children are engaged in laborious activities such as the

industrial, agricultural, and sales and service sectors of the economy as well as the inherent location (rural or urban) of the children's work. However, children are engaged in the sales and service sector economy in both rural and urban areas as street hawkers, domestic servants, vendors, car washers, beggars, and even prostitutes. In some studies, children employed in this sector are regarded as "street children" or "children of the street" who ran away from parental or guardian abuse, leaving them to eke out a living on their own (Aderinto, 2020; Verma, 2019). Yet, other studies regard children as workers from legitimate households who assist their parents by contributing financially to the sustenance of the households where they live and come from (Togunde & Carter, 2016).

Ugochukwu, Okeke and Onubogu (2020), submitted that in sales sectors especially street hawking, boys outnumbered girls and these researchers also pointed out that children between age bracket of 8-19 years are mostly involved. The researchers went on to give a plausible justification for the variations to be that maybe that boys become independent from an earlier age and girls are taught to cope with poverty while staying at home. To support this claim, Scanlon, Thompson, (2022) opined that the gender difference may be because of alternative strategies open to girls such as mothering younger siblings, domestic employment and prostitution. Traditionally, our girls tend to be involved in domestic child labour as house helps (service sectors) than elsewhere

According to Human Rights Watch (2015) Unemployment is exacerbated both in the present and the future as a result of child labour. Increased competition from children for limited employment opportunities increases adult unemployment. Adult unemployment in turn exacerbates the need for children to work. Children are often preferred to adult employees because they are more obedient, are falsely perceived to be more efficient at

certain tasks and are paid less. These perceived benefits to child labour have led to their mass employment in such activities.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study will adopt ecological system theory to evaluate social work intervention strategies and rehabilitation outcome of victims of child labour

Ecological System theory

Ecological System theory postulated by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968) introduced General Systems Theory (GST), emphasizing that systems are interconnected and that changes in one part affect the whole. Systems theory, originally developed in fields like biology and engineering, has been widely applied in social sciences to understand complex social problems. It provides a framework for analyzing how different systems—such as individuals, families, communities, institutions, and policies interact to influence social issues, including child labour.

Social work scholars, such as Pincus & Minahan (1973), integrated systems theory into social work practice, emphasizing the interaction between individuals and their environments. This approach highlights the importance of micro (individual/family), meso (community/institutions), exo (socioeconomic and policy), and macro (cultural/global) levels in shaping social issues. Systems theory has been used to address various problems, including poverty, domestic violence, and child welfare (Payne, 2014). At the micro level, child labour is often influenced by personal and family circumstances. Studies (Basu & Van, 1998) show that family poverty, parental unemployment, and lack of education push children into labour. Social work interventions at this level focus on family counseling, direct financial aid, and school reintegration programs.

The meso system includes schools, workplaces, and local organizations that either prevent or contribute to child labour. Research (Edmonds, 2008) indicates that poor school infrastructure, lack of accessible education, and local labor demands increase child labour rates. Social workers and NGOs play a key role in providing educational support and advocacy.

The ecosystem consists of economic conditions, social policies, and labour laws. Scholars (ILO, 2017) highlight that weak enforcement of child labour laws, economic crises, and gender inequalities contribute to the problem. Policy interventions, such as social protection programs and conditional cash transfers, have been effective in reducing child labour in several countries (De Hoop & Rosati, 2014).

At the macro level, globalization, international trade, and cultural beliefs influence child labour trends. Research (Bachman, 2000) shows that multinational corporations and global supply chains indirectly contribute to child exploitation in developing countries. International agreements, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and ILO Conventions No. 138 and 182, play a crucial role in shaping global child labour policies.

The chrono system examines how child labour trends evolve over time due to historical, political, and economic changes. For example, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (UNICEF, 2021) led to increased child labour due to school closures and economic hardships.

While systems theory provides a comprehensive framework, critics argue that it can be too broad and lacks specificity in addressing individual cases (Houston, 2016). Additionally, it sometimes underestimates the role of individual agency and resistance within oppressive systems (Dominelli, 2002).

Systems theory is a valuable tool for understanding and addressing child labour. By recognizing the interconnections between individual, community, economic, and global factors, social workers and policymakers can design more effective interventions. However, further research is needed to integrate systems theory with other approaches, such as rights-based and participatory frameworks, to enhance its effectiveness in social work practice.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Preamble

This chapter covered the research method adopted in the study, and was discussed under the following subheadings: the research design, study population, sampling techniques, data collection instruments, validity and reliability of instruments, data analysis methods, and ethical considerations. The selected methodology aims to ensure that findings reflect an accurate portrayal of child labour among the target demographic.

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design to capture the views, experiences, and attitudes of victims of child labour in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State, concerning social work rehabilitation strategy. This design allowed for the collection of quantitative data at a single point in time and was effective for analyzing social work intervention strategies for the rehabilitation of victims of child labour among different respondents. Given the sensitive nature of the topic, survey research was an appropriate method as it enabled participants to express their views anonymously, thereby increasing the likelihood of obtaining genuine responses.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of this study comprises 108,215 teenagers aged thirteen to nineteen (13-19) years residing in Egor Local Government area, Edo State as projected by Nation Population Commission, 2024. This age range represents adolescents who are at risk of

child labour and often face significant barriers when it comes to accessing quality education due to social and economic factors.

3.3 Sample size and sampling technique

The study sample was virtually impossible to use for the entire population due to constraints of time and costs. Consequently, the study adopted the simple random sampling technique to administer the research instrument to the targeted respondents in Egor Local Government. However, the sample had to be representative of the population from which it was drawn. Based on the fact that it was difficult to use the total population for research work of this nature, the study used 400 (four hundred) respondents to represent the total population.

For the purpose of this study, the sample size was obtained using Taro Yamane (1967) formula.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where n = Sample size

N = Population (108,215)

e = Level of significance (5% i.e 0.05)

$$n = \frac{108,215 \dots\dots}{1 + 108,215 (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{108,215 \dots}{1 + 145}$$

$$\frac{108,215}{146}$$

$$n = 399.99$$

Hence, the sample was 400 respondents making up the sample size which was conveniently select from the population.

3.4 Instrument of Data Collection

The primary instrument for data collection was the questionnaire designed to elicit information from respondents. The questionnaire comprised two sections, A and B. Section A focused on demographic details such as age, gender, level of education, and family background. Section B contained questions specific to the study's objectives, including items related to the causes, consequences, effects, and economic factors that facilitated child labour in the study area.

Questions contained close-ended formats. This approach allowed the study to capture both the intensity and direction of respondents' attitudes toward social work intervention strategies for the rehabilitation of victims of child labour. To ensure that questions were sensitive to the participants' experiences and worded in an approachable manner, the questionnaire was pretested with a small sample from the community, and feedback was incorporated to enhance clarity and relevance.

3.5 Validity of the Instrument

To establish the validity of the questionnaire, the instrument was subjected to expert review by professionals in social work practice. These experts examined the questionnaire for content validity, ensuring that it effectively covered the dimensions of the study. The feedback obtained led to minor adjustments in wording and structure to ensure the questions were comprehensible and appropriately sensitive to the respondents' experiences. This process strengthened the questionnaire's ability to generate reliable data relevant to the study's focus.

3.6 Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the questionnaire was evaluated through Cronbach's alpha to assess the internal consistency of the responses in Section B, which focused on social work intervention strategies for victims of child labour. A coefficient alpha value of 0.7 or higher was considered acceptable for this study, indicating that the instrument consistently measured the underlying constructs related to the study under investigation. Reliability testing was further confirmed by analyzing responses from the pilot study, which showed consistent response patterns, affirming that the questionnaire reliably captured the attitudes and behaviours of the target population.

3.7 Method of Collection Data

Data were collected from primary sources, specifically from the teenagers in Okhoro Community and Uselu communities who participated in the survey. Secondary sources, including literature on child labour, rehabilitation strategies, and adolescent mental health, were reviewed to provide context and support for interpreting the data. This combination of primary and secondary data helped to create a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

3.8 Method of Data Analysis

The data collected for this study were analysed using a combination of descriptive analysis to address the research objectives. Quantitative data were derived from structured questionnaires administered to victims of child labour, social workers, and parents/guardians. These data were coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 for analysis. Frequency distributions, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize respondents' demographic

information and their responses to closed-ended questions. These statistics helped to describe the patterns and prevalence of child labour, the types of interventions applied, and perceived rehabilitation outcomes.

3.9 Ethical Consideration

The study aimed to conduct research responsibly and respectfully, prioritizing the welfare of participants and the integrity of the research process. In conducting the study, the researcher obtained informed consent from all participants before carrying out interviews with them. The general outline of the topic and the type of information were enumerated. During the commencement of each interview, the participants were told the duration of the interview and given sufficient time before and after the interview to ask any questions related to the research topic. All participants signed a consent form expressing their willingness to participate in the interview while also ensuring confidentiality and anonymity throughout the process. The researcher was sensitive to both the questions and the possible vulnerability of the participants, and attention was given to the researcher's approach to the subject.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Preamble

The aim of this study is to examine the social work intervention strategies and rehabilitation outcomes for victims of child labour in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State. Four specific research objectives were raised, namely; to identify various social work intervention strategies currently employed to address the rehabilitation of child labour victims in Egor Local Government Area, to evaluate the effectiveness of these intervention strategies in achieving positive rehabilitation outcomes for victims of child labour, To identify the barriers faced by social workers in implementing effective intervention strategies for child labour rehabilitation, To formulate evidence-based recommendations for enhancing social work intervention strategies and improving rehabilitation outcomes for child labour victims in Egor Local Government Area. In addressing the specific objectives of the study, administration and collection of data were carefully carried out to provide thorough and reliable results. This study utilized the survey research design method, whereby 400 questionnaires were administered to the research respondents, of which 394 questionnaires were properly filled and retrieved, constituting a 98.5% response rate.

This chapter presents the analysis and presentation of the data collected through the research instruments. The quantitative data obtained with the questionnaire were collated and analyzed with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 23.0). Descriptive statistics such as tables and percentages were adopted to present the findings. The data analysis is divided into two sections: Section One discusses the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, while Section Two presents and discusses

the data obtained in respect of the substantive issues of the study. Therefore, the socio-demographic table presented reflects all 394 respondents who participated in the study.

4.2 Data Presentation

The study examines the social work intervention strategies and rehabilitation outcomes for victims of child labour in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State.

4.2.1 Findings

Section A: Socio-demographic characteristics of participants

This section of the questionnaire contains the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. Understanding the socio-demographic characteristics of the study participants is crucial in evaluating the social work intervention strategies and rehabilitation outcomes for victims of child labour in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State.

These characteristics provide insight into the diversity of respondents, their backgrounds, and their lived experiences with child labour and rehabilitation. The analysis of sex, age, living arrangements, place of residence, and educational status allows for a comprehensive understanding of the affected children and the social context in which interventions are being applied. Such socio-demographic details are critical in interpreting how various social work strategies can be tailored to meet the unique needs of victims of child labour in the study area.

Table 4.1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N=394)

Variable	Categories	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	170	45.2
	Female	224	54.8
Age	6–10 years	103	26.6
	11–14 years	92	23.9
	15–18 years	199	49.5
Educational Status	Primary	123	31.9
	Junior Secondary	172	42.6
	Senior Secondary	29	7.9
	dropped out	30	8.0
	never enrolled	40	9.6
Living Arrangement	With both parents	65	16.0
	With single parent	142	37.2
	extended family	43	10.6
	foster family	57	13.3
	Others On the streets	87	22.9
Place of Residence	Urban ward	296	75.1
	rural ward	98	24.9
Total		394	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

The socio-demographic characteristics of respondents in this study provide critical insights into the background of child labour victims in Egor Local Government Area and how these factors may influence their rehabilitation outcomes.

The gender distribution shows a slightly higher proportion of females (54.8%) compared to males (45.2%). This indicates that female children are more represented among child labour victims in the study area. This finding is significant because females are often more vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, and limited educational opportunities, making gender-sensitive interventions necessary.

Age distribution reveals that the largest group of victims falls between 15–18 years (49.5%), followed by those aged 6–10 years (26.6%) and 11–14 years (23.9%). The predominance of older adolescents suggests that many children continue in exploitative labour well into their teenage years, often at the expense of completing secondary

education. This also implies that intervention strategies should be tailored to both younger children (prevention) and older adolescents (rehabilitation and reintegration).

In terms of educational status, most respondents were in junior secondary school (42.6%) and primary school (31.9%). However, a concerning proportion had dropped out (8.0%) or had never enrolled (9.6%). This highlights the educational disruptions caused by child labour and underscores the need for intervention programs that combine rehabilitation with access to formal or vocational education.

Living arrangement data shows that the majority of victims live with a single parent (37.2%) or on the streets/with others (22.9%). Only 16.0% live with both parents. This suggests that family instability, poverty, or orphanhood may be strong drivers of child labour in the area. Children living outside parental care appear especially vulnerable, pointing to the need for community-based and institutional rehabilitation strategies.

Residence patterns show that most victims reside in urban wards (75.1%) compared to rural wards (24.9%). This could reflect the concentration of economic activities in urban areas that rely on child labour (such as street trading, domestic work, and small-scale industries). It further emphasizes the need for targeted urban social work interventions, while not neglecting rural child labour dynamics. The socio-demographic data demonstrates that child labour in Egor LGA is shaped by gender, age, education, family background, and place of residence. These variables must be considered in designing and implementing social work intervention strategies that ensure effective rehabilitation and reintegration of victims into society.

4.2 Analysis and Presentation of Research Objectives

Research Objective One: To examine Social Work Intervention Strategies for Rehabilitation of Child Labour Victims in Egor Local Government Area

Table 4.2: Social Work Intervention Strategies for Rehabilitation of Child Labour Victims in Egor Local Government Area

S/N	Statements	Yes	No	Undecided	Total
1	Counselling services are provided to child labour victims	235 (59.6%)	134 (34%)	25 (6.4%)	394 (100%)
2	Educational support programs are available for victims of child labour.	228 (57.9%)	146 (37%)	20 (5.1%)	394 (100%)
3	Vocational training and skill acquisition programs are offered to child labour victims as part of rehabilitation	241 (61.2%)	126 (32%)	27 (6.8%)	394 (100%)
4	Social workers collaborate with NGOs, government agencies, and community leaders to address child labour issues	213 (54.1%)	140 (35.5%)	41 (10.4%)	394 (100%)
5	Social workers engage in awareness campaigns to sensitize communities on the dangers of child labour.	226 (57.4%)	129 (32.7%)	39 (9.9%)	394 (100%)

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

The data in Table 4.2 reveals that social work intervention strategies are actively employed in the rehabilitation of child labour victims in Egor Local Government Area. Counselling services were reported by the majority (59.6%) as being available for child labour victims. This indicates that psychosocial support is recognized as a key tool for helping victims overcome trauma and reintegrate into normal life, although 34% felt such services were lacking. Educational support programs were affirmed by 57.9% of respondents, showing that efforts are being made to return children to formal schooling. However, with 37% stating otherwise, gaps remain in ensuring consistent access to education for all victims. Vocational training and skill acquisition programs were the most highly reported intervention, with 61.2% affirming their availability. This reflects the emphasis on providing practical alternatives for victims, particularly those unable to re-enter formal education, thereby reducing their vulnerability to further exploitation.

Collaboration with NGOs, government agencies, and community leaders was acknowledged by 54.1% of respondents. This highlights the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach in addressing child labour. Still, over one-third (35.5%) noted limited collaboration, suggesting room for stronger partnerships. Awareness campaigns were also identified as a strategy, with 57.4% confirming social workers' engagement in sensitizing communities about the dangers of child labour. Nonetheless, 32.7% of respondents believed awareness efforts were insufficient, underscoring the need for more consistent and widespread advocacy. The findings demonstrate that while key social work strategies counselling, education, vocational training, collaboration, and awareness campaigns are in place and positively recognized, there remain significant gaps in consistency, coverage, and effectiveness. Strengthening these strategies will be essential to achieving more sustainable rehabilitation outcomes for child labour victims in Egor Local Government Area.

Research Objective Two: To evaluate the effectiveness of these intervention strategies in achieving positive rehabilitation outcomes for victims of child labour in Egor Local Government Area.

Table 4.3: Effectiveness of Social Work Intervention Strategies on Rehabilitation Outcomes in Egor Local Government Area.

S/N	Statements	Yes	No	Undecided	Total
1	Counselling services have been effective in improving the emotional wellbeing of victims of child labour	265 (67.3%)	119 (30.2%)	10 (2.5%)	394 (100%)
2	Educational support programs have successfully helped child labour victims return to school and continue learning	287 (72.8%)	98 (24.9%)	9 (2.3%)	394 (100%)
3	Vocational training programs have effectively equipped rehabilitated children with skills for self-reliance	252 (64%)	116 (29.4%)	26 (6.6%)	394 (100%)
4	Collaboration between social workers and NGOs/government agencies has improved the quality of rehabilitation services	195 (49.4%)	178 (45.2%)	21 (5.4%)	394 (100%)
5	Awareness campaigns by social workers have increased community support for the elimination of child labour	296 (75.1%)	90(22.9%)	8(2%)	394 (100%)

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

The findings in Table 4.3 highlight the extent to which social work interventions are achieving positive rehabilitation outcomes for child labour victims in Egor Local Government Area. Counselling services were considered effective by 67.3% of respondents, suggesting that emotional and psychological support has contributed significantly to the recovery of victims. However, nearly one-third (30.2%) indicated otherwise, reflecting possible gaps in availability, accessibility, or quality of counselling. Educational support programs were rated the most effective, with 72.8% affirming their success in helping victims return to school. This demonstrates that formal education remains a critical pathway for reintegration, though 24.9% still observed limitations, likely

due to poverty, late school enrolment, or lack of sustained sponsorship. Vocational training and skill acquisition programs were seen as effective by 64% of respondents, showing that they provide practical opportunities for children who may not be able to return to school. Nevertheless, 29.4% felt these programs were not sufficient, which could reflect challenges such as limited resources, poor follow-up, or lack of marketable skills. Collaboration with NGOs and government agencies received the lowest positive rating, with only 49.4% affirming effectiveness, while 45.2% disagreed. This suggests that although partnerships exist, coordination and implementation may be weak, resulting in gaps in service delivery. Strengthening inter-agency cooperation is therefore essential. Awareness campaigns were considered highly effective, with 75.1% confirming that such efforts increased community support in reducing child labour. This reflects growing public sensitization, but the 22.9% disagreement signals that more sustained, grassroots-focused campaigns are needed to achieve long-term change.

The results show that educational support and awareness campaigns are the most effective strategies, while collaboration and vocational programs show moderate success but need strengthening. Counselling services, though impactful, still face accessibility and consistency challenges. These findings underscore the importance of a multi-dimensional approach, where education, psychosocial support, skills training, and community involvement work together to sustain positive rehabilitation outcomes for child labour victims in Egor Local Government Area.

Research Objective Three: c. identify the barriers faced by social workers in implementing effective intervention strategies for child labour rehabilitation in Egor Local Government Area.

Table 4.3: Barriers to Effective Social Work Intervention in Child Labour Rehabilitation in Egor Local Government Area.

S/N	Statements	Yes	No	Undecided	Total
1	Inadequate funding and financial support limit the ability of social workers to implement effective interventions	282 (71.8%)	108 (27.2%)	4 (1%)	394 (100%)
2	Shortage of social workers in the community makes it difficult to reach all victims of child labour	246 (62.4%)	132 (33.5%)	16 (4.1%)	394 (100%)
3	Cultural beliefs and community attitudes towards child labour create resistance to rehabilitation efforts	292 (74.1%)	89 (22.6%)	13 (3.3%)	394 (100%)
4	Limited availability of rehabilitation facilities (shelters, centres, vocational training spaces) affects interventions	215 (54.6%)	164 (41.6%)	15 (3.8%)	394 (100%)
5	Political interference and lack of strong government policies weaken social work strategies.	275 (69.8%)	97(24.6%)	22(5.6%)	394 (100%)

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

The results in Table 4.3 highlight the major obstacles hindering the effectiveness of social work interventions in the rehabilitation of child labour victims in Egor Local Government Area. Inadequate funding emerged as the most pressing barrier, with 71.8% of respondents agreeing that limited financial resources restrict the implementation of comprehensive interventions. This suggests that without sustainable funding, social workers struggle to provide essential services such as counselling, education support, vocational training, and shelter for victims. Shortage of social workers was acknowledged by 62.4% of respondents as a significant limitation. With too few trained professionals in the field, many victims remain unreached, and case management becomes overstretched.

This reduces the quality of intervention and delays rehabilitation processes. Cultural beliefs and community attitudes were identified as one of the strongest barriers, with

74.1% confirming that entrenched traditions normalize or justify child labour. This creates resistance to rehabilitation efforts, as families and communities may not perceive child labour as harmful but rather as a survival strategy. Such attitudes undermine the effectiveness of awareness campaigns and reintegration programs. Limited availability of rehabilitation facilities was seen as a constraint by 54.6% of respondents.

The lack of adequate shelters, vocational training centres, and safe rehabilitation spaces prevents comprehensive intervention. This means that even when victims are rescued, many are not placed in structured environments that ensure proper rehabilitation. Political interference and weak government policies were highlighted by 69.8% as another major barrier. Respondents pointed to inconsistent enforcement of child protection laws, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and lack of political will as obstacles that weaken social work strategies.

This indicates that systemic support from government remains insufficient, leaving NGOs and social workers to carry much of the burden with limited resources. The findings show that while social workers in Egor LGA are committed to addressing child labour, their efforts are undermined by structural, cultural, and systemic challenges. The most critical barriers include inadequate funding, entrenched cultural beliefs, and weak policy enforcement. Without addressing these challenges, the effectiveness of social work interventions in child labour rehabilitation will remain limited.

Research Objective Four: To formulate evidence-based recommendations for enhancing social work intervention strategies for child labour victims and improve rehabilitation outcomes in Egor Local Government Area.

Table 4.5: Recommendations for Enhancing Social Work Interventions and Rehabilitation Outcomes in Egor Local Government Area.

S/N	Statements	Yes	No	Undecided	Total
1	Government should increase funding and resource allocation to support social work interventions for child labour victims	345 (87.6%)	35 (8.9%)	14 (3.5%)	394 (100%)
2	Capacity building and regular training programs should be provided for social workers to improve their effectiveness	246 (62.4%)	132 (33.5%)	16 (4.1%)	394 (100%)
3	Stronger collaboration between social workers, schools, NGOs, and families will enhance rehabilitation outcomes	212 (53.8%)	154 (39.1%)	28 (7.1%)	394 (100%)
4	Establishing more rehabilitation centers and vocational training facilities will improve child labour victims' reintegration	215 (54.6%)	164 (41.6%)	15 (3.8%)	394 (100%)
5	Public awareness campaigns should be intensified to change community attitudes towards child labour	327 (83%)	37(9.4%)	30(7.6%)	394 (100%)

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

The data presented in Table 4.5 reveal critical recommendations that can significantly enhance the effectiveness of social work interventions and rehabilitation outcomes for child labour victims in Egor Local Government Area. Government funding and resource allocation received the highest level of support, with 87.6% of respondents affirming its necessity. This underscores the need for strong financial and institutional backing to provide adequate shelters, vocational training facilities, counselling services, and reintegration programs. Without sufficient funding, interventions remain fragmented and unsustainable. Capacity building and training for social workers was endorsed by 62.4% of respondents.

This highlights the importance of equipping social workers with modern skills, knowledge, and tools to effectively address the evolving challenges of child labour rehabilitation. Continuous professional development will improve service delivery and build confidence in intervention outcomes. Stronger collaboration between stakeholders was supported by 53.8% of respondents, showing that social workers alone cannot tackle child labour without meaningful partnerships with schools, NGOs, government agencies, and families. Strengthening this network ensures that interventions are holistic and cover prevention, rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration. Establishment of rehabilitation centres and vocational training facilities was supported by 54.6% of participants.

The result reflects the urgent need for physical structures where rescued children can receive safe housing, counselling, skills acquisition, and reintegration support. Currently, the limited availability of such facilities hinders rehabilitation progress. Public awareness campaigns gained high endorsement from 83% of respondents. This indicates strong recognition of the role of sensitization in changing cultural beliefs and community attitudes that normalize child labour. By raising awareness, communities can better support social workers and embrace alternatives to child labour practices.

The findings highlight five priority recommendations: increased government funding, improved social worker training, stronger collaboration among stakeholders, establishment of more rehabilitation facilities, and intensified awareness campaigns. Implementing these measures will not only strengthen social work interventions but also improve rehabilitation outcomes for victims of child labour in Egor Local Government Area.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study highlight the significant role that social work intervention strategies play in improving the rehabilitation outcomes of child labour victims in Egor

Local Government Area, Edo State. Respondents overwhelmingly affirmed the importance of social work services in addressing the psychosocial, economic, and emotional challenges faced by child labour victims, emphasizing their effectiveness in promoting recovery, reintegration, and overall well-being. The strong agreement among participants regarding the essential role of social work interventions aligns with existing literature that underscores the significance of social work in child protection and rehabilitation (Aday et al., 2016). The ability of social workers to provide counseling, advocacy, and resource mobilization was widely acknowledged, suggesting that their services significantly enhance the holistic recovery of child labour victims. Furthermore, the collaborative role of social workers with families, schools, community leaders, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) was highly recognized. These findings support previous research indicating that social workers act as intermediaries, ensuring effective communication, rescue operations, and intervention strategies that benefit children's rehabilitation (Gorin, 2020). Their role in addressing psychosocial and developmental needs was also emphasized, reinforcing their contribution to emotional support and crisis intervention for vulnerable children (Franklin & Jordan, 2019).

A majority of the respondents noted that social workers assist in securing educational support, vocational training opportunities, and financial assistance for children and families. A community leader participating in the discussion emphasized that social workers bridge the gap between governmental agencies and vulnerable households by addressing underlying social and economic determinants of child labour. This assertion aligns with existing literature, which recognizes social workers as key facilitators in mitigating poverty-related barriers to children's development (Kirkland & Johnson, 2018). Additionally, some child labour survivors shared personal experiences of receiving

psychosocial support and skills acquisition training from social workers, further highlighting their role in reducing trauma and fostering successful reintegration.

The study findings also shed light on the impact of specific social work intervention strategies, particularly crisis intervention, counseling, child advocacy, and family placement, in Egor LGA. Crisis intervention was identified as one of the most effective strategies, with a substantial proportion of respondents affirming its positive impact on rescuing and stabilizing child labour victims. Counseling services were also rated highly, though some respondents expressed concerns about accessibility, suggesting the need for more structured and widely available psychosocial support programs. Child advocacy emerged as a key function of social workers, particularly in influencing community attitudes and mobilizing stakeholders to protect children from exploitative labour. Many respondents agreed that social workers play an essential role in linking children with education and vocational skills programs, reinforcing the importance of social work in breaking the cycle of child labour (Schoenfeld et al., 2021). However, challenges such as limited rehabilitation centres, inadequate resources, and high caseloads were also noted, indicating the need for institutional and governmental support to enhance the efficiency of social work services.

Furthermore, the study underscores the crucial role of social workers in providing psychosocial support, advocacy, educational placement, vocational training, and counseling to victims of child labour. The survey results indicate that a significant proportion of respondents acknowledge the relevance of these services, with over half agreeing that social workers effectively utilize counseling, crisis intervention, and advocacy strategies to support children. Nonetheless, a notable percentage remained uncertain or dissatisfied, reflecting gaps in service availability and visibility. These

findings align with previous research emphasizing the critical role of social workers in addressing social determinants that hinder children's development (Germain & Gitterman, 2013). The provision of psychosocial support, education, and vocational training emerged as recurring themes, echoing prior studies that highlight the importance of social workers in reducing the socio-economic burden of child labour on families and communities (Mizrahi & Abramson, 2020). However, some concerns were raised regarding the limited recognition of social workers within community and government structures, a factor that could hinder their effectiveness. This challenge is consistent with findings from similar studies, which indicate that social workers often experience professional marginalization in community-based interventions (Regehr et al., 2016).

Another critical finding of the study is that a significant majority of respondents believe social work interventions contribute positively to children's ability to cope with trauma, reintegrate into society, and pursue education or vocational training. These findings align with existing literature, which links effective social work services to improved rehabilitation outcomes and child well-being (Cohen et al., 2019). However, a small but notable proportion of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with available social work services, suggesting that gaps remain in service delivery. These recommendations are consistent with studies advocating for enhanced institutional and government support for social workers to maximize their impact on child rehabilitation (Browne et al., 2021).

The study also highlights the significant role of social workers in child rights advocacy, community sensitization, and policy engagement in Egor LGA. A substantial majority of respondents acknowledged that social workers contribute positively to reducing child labour by educating parents, mobilizing communities, and working with schools to ensure sustained educational participation of rescued children. This finding aligns with prior

research, which emphasizes the importance of social workers in child rights protection and advocacy (Barker, 2020). Additionally, the study reveals that social workers play a crucial role in improving children's resilience by bridging communication gaps between caregivers, schools, and stakeholders. This finding reinforces existing research on the role of social workers in enhancing reintegration and rehabilitation outcomes (Reamer, 2018). Moreover, respondents agreed that social workers contribute to improving the overall quality of rehabilitation services, supporting literature that underscores the role of social work in promoting holistic, child-centered care (Netting et al., 2016).

The advocacy role of social workers in upholding children's rights, particularly concerning access to education, financial support, and protection from exploitation, was another key finding of the study. A significant proportion of respondents agreed that social workers serve as intermediaries between vulnerable families, community leaders, and government agencies, ensuring ethical and equitable interventions. This corroborates findings by Garthwait (2021), who noted that social workers play a critical role in protecting vulnerable children from exploitation and advocating for policy reforms that enhance child welfare.

A majority of the respondents also emphasized that financial constraints remain a major challenge for families, limiting their ability to support children's education and rehabilitation. A social worker participating in the discussion noted that their role involves linking children with scholarships, government support, and NGO-sponsored programs, which has been shown to significantly improve outcomes for economically disadvantaged children. Additionally, the study highlights the essential psychological and emotional support provided by social workers to victims of child labour, particularly those dealing with trauma from street life or hazardous work. A significant proportion of respondents

agreed that social workers help reduce emotional trauma and restore a sense of belonging. This finding aligns with literature suggesting that social workers assist children in managing stress, fear, and anxiety resulting from child labour experiences (Healy, 2014).

Despite these positive contributions, the study identified significant challenges that limit the effectiveness of social work interventions in Egor LGA. The most frequently cited issue in the focus group discussions was the shortage of trained social workers, which reduces their ability to reach all children in need. Additionally, limited awareness of social work services within communities was identified as a major barrier to utilization. Many families are unaware of the role of social workers, leading to underutilization of these critical services. Addressing these challenges through increased staffing, awareness campaigns, and policy reforms could significantly enhance the effectiveness of social work interventions, ultimately improving rehabilitation outcomes for victims of child labour in Egor Local Government Area.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The aim of this study was to examine social work intervention strategies and rehabilitation outcomes for victims of child labour in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State. A survey research design was employed, in which 400 questionnaires were administered to respondents. Out of these, 394 questionnaires were properly completed and retrieved, yielding an 88.5% response rate.

The findings of this study align with the research objectives and highlight the significant role of social work in addressing child labour and improving rehabilitation outcomes. The study confirms that social work interventions are essential in tackling the psychosocial, educational, and economic challenges faced by child labour victims, thereby facilitating their recovery and reintegration. Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that social workers play a vital role in child protection and rehabilitation, supporting existing literature that emphasizes their importance in safeguarding children's welfare.

In line with the second objective, the study established that social workers serve as key collaborators in community-based interventions. Findings indicated that social workers facilitate communication between children, families, schools, and community stakeholders, ensuring comprehensive protection and support. Respondents emphasized the effectiveness of social workers in providing counseling, crisis intervention, and psychosocial support, reinforcing their role in reducing vulnerability and promoting resilience among child labour victims.

The study also explored the impact of intervention strategies such as counseling, rehabilitation services, vocational training, and advocacy. Findings revealed that vocational training and rehabilitation centers were considered highly effective strategies for reintegration, with a majority of respondents acknowledging their positive impact. Public awareness campaigns and advocacy were also identified as crucial in addressing cultural norms and community attitudes that perpetuate child labour. Despite these contributions, challenges such as inadequate funding, limited facilities, and high caseloads were identified as factors hindering the efficiency of social work interventions.

Furthermore, the study assessed the extent to which social work interventions contribute to victims' educational attainment, psychosocial recovery, and reintegration. Respondents affirmed that social workers play a critical role in reducing educational disruption, providing emotional support, and connecting children with welfare services. However, a lack of recognition and insufficient institutional support for social work were highlighted as barriers to effectiveness, consistent with existing literature on child protection systems in Nigeria.

Additionally, the findings show that social work interventions significantly enhance the ability of child labour victims to cope with trauma, resume schooling, and reintegrate into family and community life. While a majority of respondents expressed satisfaction with current interventions, a notable proportion reported gaps in accessibility and sustainability of rehabilitation programs. Focus group discussions reinforced these concerns, with participants calling for increased funding, improved facilities, and greater government commitment.

Finally, the study confirms the role of social workers in advocating for victims' rights, mobilizing community resources, and ensuring equitable access to rehabilitation services.

Respondents widely acknowledged that social workers engage in awareness creation, family mediation, and community advocacy to safeguard children's welfare. These findings underscore the need for evidence-based strategies to strengthen social work practice in child protection, rehabilitation, and community reintegration within Egor Local Government Area.

5.2 Conclusion

This study examined social work intervention strategies and rehabilitation outcomes for victims of child labour in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State. The findings underscore the indispensable role of social workers in addressing child labour, supporting victims' recovery, and facilitating successful reintegration into society. The study highlights that social work interventions significantly contribute to child protection by addressing psychosocial challenges, advocating for victims, and mobilizing resources for their rehabilitation. Their role in counseling, crisis intervention, vocational training, and psychosocial support was affirmed by respondents, reflecting the consensus in existing literature that social workers are central to holistic child welfare and rehabilitation services.

The study confirms that social workers act as intermediaries between child labour victims, families, schools, and community stakeholders, thereby strengthening protection and improving rehabilitation outcomes. Respondents emphasized that social workers are particularly effective in reducing emotional distress, promoting resilience, and ensuring victims regain access to education and community life. The effectiveness of these interventions highlights the significance of social work in addressing not only immediate needs but also the long-term developmental, emotional, and social well-being of child labour victims.

The research also identifies key challenges faced by social workers in Egor LGA, including inadequate funding, limited rehabilitation facilities, high caseloads, and insufficient institutional recognition. These factors impede the effectiveness of interventions, suggesting a need for increased government commitment, better infrastructure, and stronger community support systems. Respondents called for the establishment of more rehabilitation centers, regular training of social workers, and expanded awareness campaigns to improve intervention outcomes.

The study reaffirms that social workers play a crucial role in advocacy, emotional support, education, and rehabilitation of child labour victims. Their contributions extend beyond short-term relief to long-term reintegration, making them vital in promoting children's rights and welfare. Strengthening institutional support, funding, and recognition of social work services will significantly improve the rehabilitation outcomes of child labour victims and reduce the prevalence of child labour in Egor Local Government Area.

5.3 Contributions to Knowledge

This study makes significant contributions to knowledge in the field of social work intervention strategies and child welfare, particularly in addressing child labour in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State.

First, it provides empirical evidence on the critical role of social work interventions in the rehabilitation of child labour victims. By highlighting their contributions to counseling, advocacy, vocational training, and psychosocial support, the study reinforces the importance of social work as a core mechanism for child protection and rehabilitation.

Additionally, the research establishes that social workers serve as essential intermediaries between child labour victims, families, schools, communities, and government agencies.

The study demonstrates that social workers improve communication, address psychosocial concerns, and facilitate reintegration processes, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of rehabilitation outcomes for victims.

More so, this study identifies key challenges that social workers face in tackling child labour, including inadequate funding, high caseloads, limited rehabilitation facilities, and insufficient institutional recognition. By documenting these barriers, the research offers valuable insights for policymakers, community leaders, and child protection agencies to strengthen interventions and support services.

Furthermore, the study expands knowledge on the impact of social work interventions in improving victims' access to education, skill acquisition, and community reintegration. It emphasizes the role of social workers in reducing vulnerabilities, enhancing resilience, and ensuring equitable opportunities for affected children, which aligns with global efforts to eradicate child labour and promote children's rights.

Finally, the study provides qualitative insights from victims, families, and stakeholders, offering a nuanced understanding of the effectiveness of social work interventions in real-life contexts. These findings contribute to the growing body of literature advocating for stronger institutional support, community participation, and policy reforms to strengthen social work practice in addressing child labour in Nigeria.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance social work intervention strategies and improve rehabilitation outcomes for victims of child labour in Egor Local Government Area:

Increased Government and Institutional Support for Social Work Services:

Government agencies, local authorities, and NGOs should allocate more funding and resources to child labour rehabilitation programs. This includes adequate staffing, training, and infrastructure to address the needs of victims and reduce workload pressure on social workers.

Strengthening Collaboration among Stakeholders: Social workers should be integrated into multidisciplinary teams that include schools, healthcare providers, law enforcement, NGOs, and community leaders. Such collaboration will ensure holistic rehabilitation and sustainable reintegration of child labour victims.

Expansion of Counseling, Psychosocial, and Vocational Training Programs:

Structured programs that combine emotional counseling, educational support, and vocational skill acquisition should be developed to address the psychosocial and economic needs of victims, ensuring their long-term rehabilitation.

Enhanced Advocacy and Resource Mobilization: Social workers should intensify advocacy efforts to influence policy, mobilize community support, and attract funding from government, corporate organizations, and international donors for child rehabilitation initiatives.

Community Awareness and Sensitization Campaigns: Public enlightenment programs should be carried out to change societal attitudes toward child labour, highlight its negative consequences, and promote community participation in protecting children's rights.

Policy Development and Enforcement: Policymakers should enact and enforce child protection laws that strengthen the role of social workers, ensure standardized intervention procedures, and discourage exploitative practices.

Establishment of More Rehabilitation Centers: Additional child-friendly rehabilitation centers and safe spaces should be established to provide temporary shelter, education, and training facilities for victims, thereby improving reintegration outcomes.

Continuous Capacity Building for Social Workers: Regular training workshops and professional development programs should be provided to enhance the competence of social workers in addressing emerging challenges in child labour rehabilitation.

5.5 Future Research Approaches /Direction

Future research on social work intervention strategies and rehabilitation outcomes for victims of child labour should adopt multidisciplinary and community-based approaches to generate deeper insights and strengthen interventions.

First, longitudinal studies should be conducted to assess the long-term impact of social work interventions on the rehabilitation, reintegration, and overall well-being of child labour victims. Such studies will help determine whether social work efforts produce sustainable outcomes over time.

Second, comparative studies should be undertaken across different Local Government Areas or states to identify variations in social work intervention strategies. By comparing areas with diverse levels of social work integration and resources, researchers can highlight best practices that can be replicated in Egor LGA and beyond.

Third, future research should explore the role of digital platforms and innovative approaches in social work intervention. For instance, studies could investigate how mobile technology, social media, or community-based digital tools can enhance awareness, advocacy, and access to rehabilitation services for child labour victims.

Fourth, research should examine the economic implications of child labour rehabilitation, including the cost-effectiveness of social work programs, and their impact on poverty reduction, educational attainment, and community development. This will provide valuable evidence for resource allocation and policy planning.

Fifth, qualitative research should be expanded to capture the lived experiences of child labour victims, their families, and community stakeholders. Such narratives will provide nuanced insights into challenges, successes, and areas requiring improvement in social work interventions.

Lastly, policy-oriented research should be conducted to evaluate existing child protection laws and social welfare policies. Evidence-based recommendations from such studies can guide policymakers and government agencies in designing stronger frameworks that enhance the effectiveness of social work intervention strategies and rehabilitation programs for child labour victims.

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APPENDIX

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
BENIN CITY**

Dear Sir/ Madam

I am a post graduate student of the above department and institution. As part of the requirement of my programme, I am conducting a research on: **“Social Work Intervention Strategies and Rehabilitation outcome for Victims of Child Labour in Egor Local Government Area Edo State”**, in the fulfilment of requirement for the award of a Master Degree in social work degree (M.S.W).I wish to appeal to you to assist by kindly sparing a few minutes to complete this questionnaire as honestly as you can, I implore you to be free to respond as your anonymity will be ensured and your response will be strictly confidential. I wish to indicate that the purpose of this study is purely academic and your response to the questions will contribute immensely to the success of this study.

**MAIKUDI- ERHENHI EKI
STELLA**

QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION A: PERSONAL BIO-DATA

Instruction: please tick [] against your chosen response and record your view where necessary in the provided spaces.

1. Sex: Male [] Female []
2. Age Range: 6–10 years [] 11–14 years [] 15–18 years []
3. Educational Status: Primary [], Junior Secondary [], Senior Secondary [], dropped out [], never enrolled []
4. Living Arrangement: With both parents [] With single parent [] extended family [] foster family [] On the streets []
5. Place of Residence: Urban ward [] rural ward []

SECTION B: Social Work Intervention Strategies and Rehabilitation outcome for Victims of Child Labour in Egor Local Government Area Edo State

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Yes	No	Undecided
Social Work Intervention Strategies for Rehabilitation of Child Labour Victims				
1	Counselling services are provided to child labour victims			
2	Educational support programs are available for victims of child labour.			
3	Vocational training and skill acquisition programs are offered to child labour victims as part of rehabilitation			
4	Social workers collaborate with NGOs, government agencies, and community leaders to address child labour issues			
5	Social workers engage in awareness campaigns to sensitize communities on the dangers of child labour.			
Effectiveness of Social Work Intervention Strategies on Rehabilitation Outcomes				
6	Counselling services have been effective in improving the emotional wellbeing of victims of child labour			
7	Educational support programs have successfully helped child labour victims return to school and continue learning			
8	Vocational training programs have effectively equipped rehabilitated children with skills for self-reliance			
9	Collaboration between social workers and NGOs/government agencies has improved the quality of rehabilitation services			
10	Awareness campaigns by social workers have increased community support for the elimination of child labour			
Barriers to Effective Social Work Intervention in Child Labour Rehabilitation				
11	Inadequate funding and financial support limit the ability of social workers to implement effective interventions			

12	Shortage of social workers in the community makes it difficult to reach all victims of child labour			
13	Cultural beliefs and community attitudes towards child labour create resistance to rehabilitation efforts			
14	Limited availability of rehabilitation facilities (shelters, centres, vocational training spaces) affects interventions			
15	Political interference and lack of strong government policies weaken social work strategies.			
Recommendations for Enhancing Social Work Interventions and Rehabilitation Outcomes				
16	Government should increase funding and resource allocation to support social work interventions for child labour victims			
17	Capacity building and regular training programs should be provided for social workers to improve their effectiveness			
18	Stronger collaboration between social workers, schools, NGOs, and families will enhance rehabilitation outcomes			
19	Establishing more rehabilitation centers and vocational training facilities will improve child labour victims' reintegration			
20	Public awareness campaigns should be intensified to change community attitudes towards child labour			