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EFFECTS OF CHILD POVERTY ON CHILD LABOUR AND DEPRIVATION AMONG RURAL FARMING HOUSEHOLDS IN ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Both government and non-governmental organisations have been making efforts in the fight against the menace of child labour, child poverty and deprivation. Despite these efforts, 70% of world's child labour still work in agricultural sector. This study examined the nexus and impact of child poverty, deprivation and other socio-economic variables on child labour among rural farming households in Enugu State of Nigeria. Data for the study were collected using survey research design with the aid of structured questionnaire and interview. Descriptive statistics and multinomial logit regression was applied for data analysis. The result of the study shows that majority (92%) of the farming households were engaged in crop farming, majority (69%) of the children aged between 4 and 17 combined both schooling and agricultural labour. For children who were completely out of school, 5% we found to be idle while 16% engaged in agricultural labour. A significant number of children were engaged in agricultural labour, and 62.3% of them had access to primary school only. About 49.4% of children cannot obtain primary health services. Age, household size and gender of children had positive and significant ($p < 0.10$) relationship with child labour. We recommended a redesign of poverty alleviation programmes for rural active farmers and public schools make attractive, accessible and affordable in the rural areas.

Keywords: child labour, child poverty, rural farming households, Nigeria
JEL: R13 R23, R51

INTRODUCTION

It is alarmingly worrisome that agricultural sector holds about 70 per cent of world's child labour (**UNICEF, 2011**). The cause of this abysmal situation may be partly due to the prevalent poverty level among rural households (**Okpukpara and Odurukwe, 2006**). As more children engaged in agricultural labour, it is expected to increase agricultural productivity and possibly reduce child poverty momentarily but may cause more harm to the future of the children by depriving them access to basic education, social protection, sanity to life and consequently trap them in the vicious circle of poverty in the long run. The interpretation of child labour from International Labour Organization (ILO) standards as contained in Conventions 138 and 182 means all children below 12 years of age working in any economic activities and those children between 12 and 14 engaged in more than light works. According to **UNICEF (2011),** an estimated 246 million children are engaged in child Labour in the world, with over 70% involved in agricultural labour. In Nigeria, about 70 per cent of its rural population are engaged in agriculture and grossly characterized by poverty and low income (**Okunmadewa and Omonona, 2006; Omeje and Okoye, 2013**). All tangible farming works and operations undertaken by labourers in the sector are referred to as agricultural labour. An individual is therefore said to be an agricultural labourer if the person derives more than 50 per cent of his

or her annual income from agricultural sources (**Reddy *et al.*, 2009**) further classified agricultural labour into farmer's own labour, family labour, and hired labour. Hired labour could further be classified according to the nature of its remunerations.

It is therefore, imperative to approach this study from the perspective of establishing linkages among labour, poverty and deprivation of children in agricultural labour since the sector holds almost 70 per cent of child labour. Everywhere in the world and specifically in Africa where family labour is perceived to be traditional in agriculture, no one would reasonably oppose the engagement of children in such economic activities provided that the work does not negatively affect their health, education and development. Such light work is not only recommended for proper upbringing of the child especially in Nigeria but is also permitted from the age of children of 12 years under ILO Convention No.138.

Poverty among other factors is responsible for such huge number of children involvement in agricultural labour. According to **UNICEF (2011),** child poverty entails a child who is deprived of the material resources needed to develop and thrive, leaving them unable to enjoy their rights, achieve their full potentials, or participate as full and equal member of the society (**UNICEF, 2009).** Poverty leads to deprivation and child labour. Most often, those found to have led their children into hard labour do so as a coping strategy. Child Poverty level could be estimated from the amount of money spent daily or based

on deprivations from these dimensions such as: safe drinking water, sanitation, housing, health and nutrition. According to **UNICEF (2009**), child poverty is not only money metrics but also multidimensional. According to sanders (2003), poverty entails lack of needed resources which causes social exclusion. Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the type of diet needed, participate in social activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged of children, or approved, in the societies to which they belong. This paper therefore examined the incidence and interconnectivity of child labour, poverty and deprivation among rural farmers in Nigeria. It investigated the engagement of children between 4-14years in agricultural labour and estimates child poverty among children of 4-14years using International Poverty Line (IPL) bases on current World Bank Purchasing Power Parity (PPP). Literature on child labour and poverty considered from the (agricultural) sectoral perspective in Nigeria are few. **Ofuoku et al. (2014)** determined the level of child labour involvement in arable crop farming and found that children participated in field preparation, planting, weeding, pesticide, fertilizer and herbicide application, harvesting, transportation and processing. Many (43.33%) of the children combined schooling with farming operations. The decision of the farming, household heads to use child labour was influenced by socioeconomic variables such as gender, age, level of education, household size, farm income, farm size, culture, economic factors and political factors. Closely too, **Okpukpara and Odurukwe (2006),** reported a two-way link between child labour and household poverty in Nigeria but the study did not specifically investigate what transpired within the agricultural sector only. However, various studies conducted on poverty in Nigeria in the past include **Onah (1996), Ogwumike and Ekpeyong (1996), Anyanwu (l997), Odusola (1997), Englama and Bamidele (1997)** and many by UNICEF and other organizations. None of them quantified the specifics of child labour and poverty and the factors that influence them within agricultural sector. Others include the Global Study on Child Poverty and Disparity by UNICEF which employed the use of the MICS 2007 to examine well-being of children and introduced Alkire and Foster dual cut-off identification methodology for poverty classification across different sectors and highly polarized poverty gaps without recourse to the specifics of rural agrarian societies. This paper adopted the IPL based on PPP by World Bank to classify the focused group into categories. The threshold was pegged at the World Bank's recommended USD1.90/person/day. The encumbrances and ambiguities associated with estimating poverty in the rural areas were nailed by valuing the alternative costs of all the food, water, and other essential commodities sourced by the households without buying them. Of course, some of the rural farmers produce their own food and buy only little from the market, source clean water from streams and make provisions for other essential needs without going to market. So, this study did not leave out the values of what they produced and provided by themselves for household consumptions.

According to **Omeje et al. (2019),** Nigeria is one of the developing economies with significant expenditures on agricultural protection through interest and exchange rates differentials, price mechanisms, input subsidies, researches, embargos and regulations promulgated in various protectionist policy reforms, projects and programmes. The reason for such protection policy and other interventions as shown in Figure 1, was to improve the livelihoods of the rural farmers and their households. Apart from the special interventions in agriculture, governments and non-governmental organizations have spent fortunes and rolled out policies promulgated towards reducing these global challenges of child labour, poverty and deprivations but those 'one-for-all approaches' or policies seem to be inappropriate in dealing with specific sectors and locations with varying degrees of custom, norms, political, environmental and socioeconomic factors, hence the situation worsens. The peculiarities of agricultural labour and factors affecting farming households especially in the rural areas demand that a new and distinct approach other than a blanket solution be given a trial in this our fight against child deprivations.

The broad objective of this paper is to examine the interconnectivity of child labour, child poverty and deprivation among rural farming households in Enugu State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:
- describe the socioeconomic and other characteristics of the farming households,
- identify various forms of child labour in the sector,
- profile poverty statuses of the children (4-14years), and
- estimate the effect of child poverty and other socioeconomic characteristics on child labour.

DATA AND METHODS

The Study Area
The study area is Enugu State in south-eastern part of Nigeria. Enugu State is located between latitude 6.459964, and the longitude is 7.548949 with the GPS coordinates of 6° 27'35.8704" N and 7° 32' 56.2164" E. It has a total of seven thousand, one hundred and sixty-one kilometre square (7,161 Km^2 or 2, 764.9 sq.m) land and lies south of Benue and Kogi States as well as east of Anambra State.

It is also bounded in the east of Ebonyi State and South by Abia State. The state has a climate marked with two major seasons including rainy season which lasts between April and October; and dry season lasting from November to March **(ESG, 2010).** 70% of its rural population are engaged in agriculture, with about 18% and 12% of its working rural population engaged in trading and services (**Omeje and Okoye, 2013).** The state has good soil-land climatic condition all year round, making it suitable for agriculture, sitting at about 223 meters above sea level and the soil is well drained during rainy season **(ESG, 2010).**

Sampling Techniques
This study employed purposive and multistage random sampling techniques for selecting the respondents (First 2

stages were purposive while last 2 stages were random). Purposively, the six agricultural zones in Enugu State were selected for convenience. One Local Government Area (LGA) was selected from each of the 6 agricultural zones making a total of 6 LGAs. These LGAs were selected using purposive random sampling to ensure that only predominantly rural farming households were the respondents. From the six (6) selected LGAs, five (5) communities were selected using systematic random sampling to make up 30 communities. Lastly, fifteen (15) households were also selected using systematic random sampling from each of the 30 communities, making a total of 450 rural farming households. These respondents comprised of both faming households with/and those without child or children between 4 to 5 years.

Data Collection

The data used for analysis in this study was collected from primary source between September 2017 and February 2018. The data were gathered by the researchers using a structured questionnaire and interview schedule administered on the rural households' heads and children between 4 and 14 years. The socio-economic characteristics used in the study include: age of children, gender of children, marital status, and years of education of heads, household size, poverty status, group membership and farm size.

Data Analysis

Objectives 1-3 were realized using descriptive statistics, and objective 4 was realized using multinomial logit regression model. The model used is specified by the Eq. 1-4.

$$\Pr(y = 1) = \frac{1}{1} + \lambda^{XB(2)} + \lambda^{XB(3)} + \lambda^{XB(4)} + \lambda^{XB(5)} \ldots + \lambda^{XB(n)} \tag{1}$$

$$\Pr(y = 2) = \frac{\lambda^{XB(2)}}{1} + \lambda^{XB(2)} + \lambda^{XB(3)} + \lambda^{XB(4)} + \lambda^{XB(5)} \ldots + \lambda^{XB(n)} \tag{2}$$

$$\Pr(y = 3) = \frac{\lambda^{XB(3)}}{1} + \lambda^{XB(2)} + \lambda^{XB(3)} + \lambda^{XB(4)} + \lambda^{XB(5)} \ldots + \lambda^{XB(n)} \tag{3}$$

$$\Pr(y = 4) = \frac{\lambda^{XB(4)}}{1} + \lambda^{XB(2)} + \lambda^{XB(3)} + \lambda^{XB(4)} + \lambda^{XB(5)} \ldots + \lambda^{XB(n)} \tag{4}$$

Where:
Pr(Y = 1) neither schooling nor engaged in child labour (idle group),
Pr(Y = 2) child labour only,
Pr(Y = 3) schooling only and,
Pr(Y = 4) child labour and schooling combined.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Farming Households

The socioeconomic characteristics and other relevant statuses of the respondent are discussed. Majority (92%) were engaged in crop farming; 75% were married; 31%, 33%, 21% and 15% had no formal education, primary, secondary and tertiary education respectively. Among the households, many of them had family sizes of 12-14 (5%), 8-11 (22%), 0-3 (25%), and 4-7 (39%). Both the age distribution and household size suggest that many of them are still in their active years of reproduction and faming.
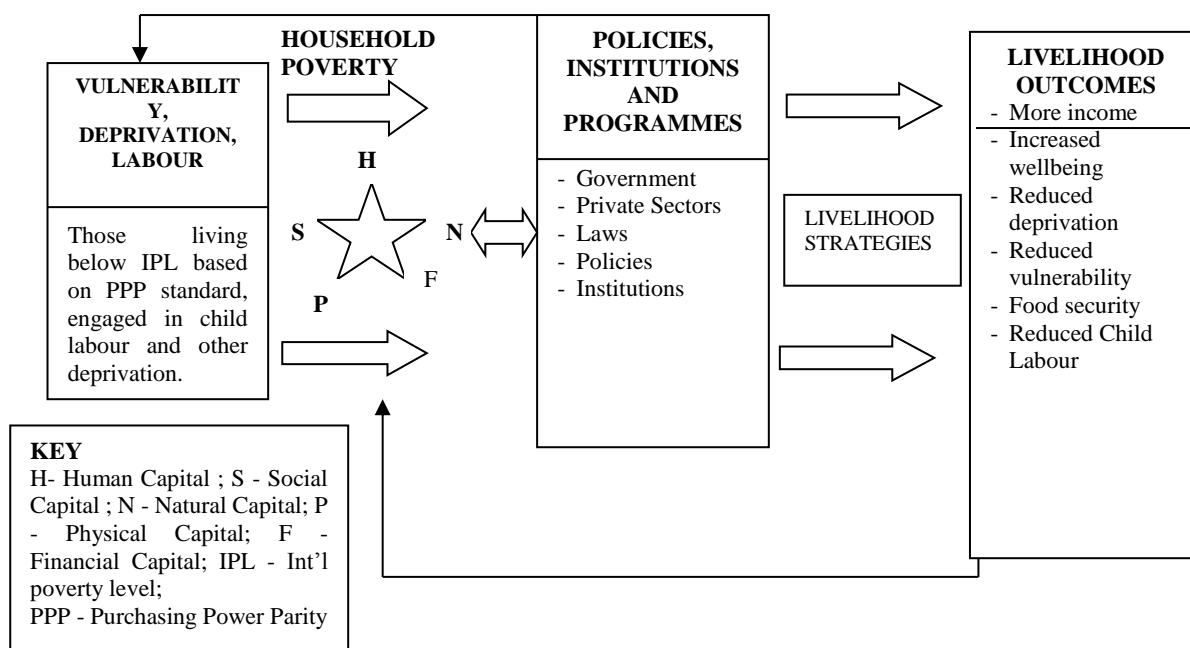

Figure 1: Conceptualization of child labour-poverty Framework
Source: Adapted from Department for International Development (**DFID, 2003**)
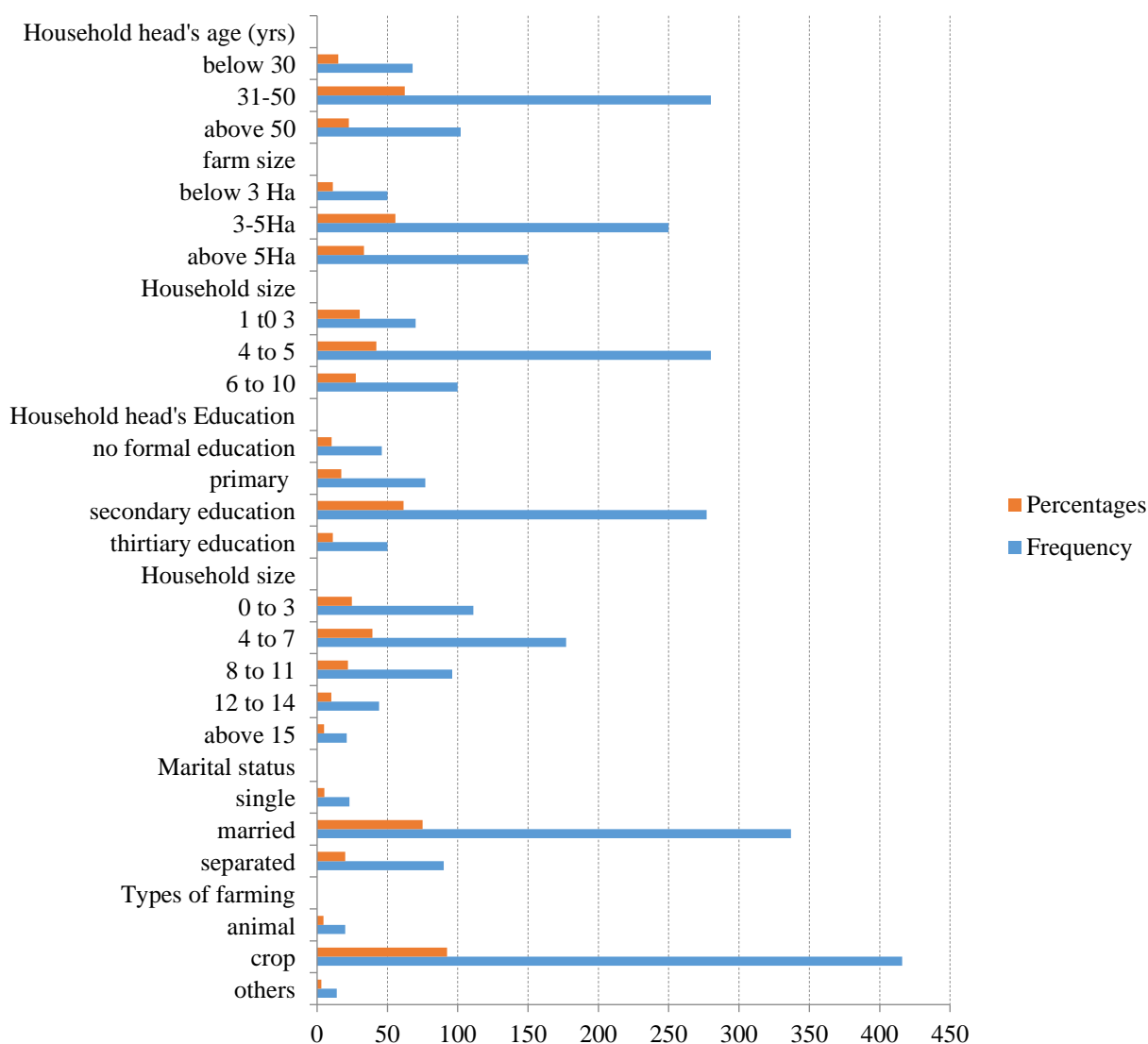
Figure 2: Socioeconomic characteristics of the farming households in the sample
Source: Own work based on field survey, 2018.

Groups and Forms of Children engagement in Agricultural Labour

Out of the 450 sampled rural farming households, 36 percent of them had children between 04-14 years of age, which is our major concern in this study (Table 1). Households without children were 82, and those households with children between 0-3 and above 14 years-children were 80 and 126 respectively.

Majority (69%) of the children combined both schooling and agricultural labour. However, some children (21%) were completely out of school of which 5% was completely idle (i.e., not engaged in labour and agriculture labour) (Figure 2). Out of all the respondents, 36% (162) of the households had children aged between 4 and 14 (Table 1). 128 respondents were deeply engaged in agricultural labour.

Child's family owned most of the labour contributed by children (Table 2). Family labour took about 40.6%, hired labour 39.1%, own labour 4.7% and combined family and hired labour 15.6%. All paid labour (44.7%),

was further grouped into four categories including piece wage (85.2%), time wage (0.00%), kind wage (7.4%) and cash wage (7.4%).

Child Poverty and deprivation profiles

Our results revealed that slightly more than halve of the rural farming households (51.2%) still live in poverty using the IPL standard based on World Bank PPP (Table 3). However, poverty is correlated with level of deprivation from certain social amenities which are more pronounced in the rural area than urban. This study further showed that out of the 162 households, only 62.3% agreed to have had good access to primary school while 37.7% felt deprived of primary education. 50.6% agreed to have accessed primary health services while 48.8 felt deprived. Barely half of the children under review are living below poverty line (Table 3), while 37.7% and 49.4% of the children had no access to primary school and primary health centres, respectively (Table 4).

Table 1: Grouping of child labour according to labour intensity

Households' children data	Frequency	Percentage
Household with kids 4-14years	162	36
Household without kids at all	82	18.2
Household with kids 0-3 years	80	17.7
Household with kids above 14years	126	28
Intensity of child labour, N=162	162	100
Idle children	8	5
Children engaged in labour only	16	10
Children engaged in labour and schooling	112	69
Children engaged in school only	26	16

Source: Own work based on field survey, 2018.

Table 2: Grouping of children according to ownership of the farms where child labour was engaged

Agric. labour, N=128	Frequency	Percentage
Family labour only	52	40.6
Hired labour only	50	39.1
Own labour only	6	4.7
Family and hired labours	20	15.6

Source: Own work based on field survey, 2018.

Table 3: Child poverty profile of households bearing child labourers in line PPP based IPL

Poverty status of HH N 162	Frequency	Percentage of children
In poverty	83	51.2
Not in poverty	79	48.8

Source: Own work based on field survey, 2018.

Table 4: Child deprivation profile of households bearing child labourers

Child deprivation indexes, N-162	Frequency	Percentage of children
Access to primary school		
Yes	101	62.3
No	61	37.7
Access to primary health centres		
Yes	82	50.6
No	80	49.4

Source: Own work based on field survey, 2018.

Effect of child poverty, deprivation and socioeconomic characteristics on child labour

Child labour among children were grouped into four categories: category one - those who were neither in school nor in child labour; category two - those who were engaged in child labour only; category three - those who were in school only and; category four - those who were in school and engaged in child labour simultaneously. However, category one (those who were neither in school nor in child labour) was used as the base category ($P_r(Y_1)$ = 0) in the analysis. The following variables were used as the political, environmental and socio-economic characteristics: age of children, gender of children, marital status, household size, and years of education of household heads, poverty status, group membership, and proximity to hospital and farm size.

Results of how rural households' political, environmental and socio-economic characteristics influenced child labour engagement among rural farming households in Enugu State are presented in Table 5. For the whole sample, the following variables: age of children, gender of children, marital status of the household heads, household size, group membership, proximity to hospital and farm size were statistically significant.

Age of children
Age of children had a positive and significant ($p<0.10$) relationship with the probability to engage in child labour (Table 5). This implies that an increase in age of children among the households would increase the probability of involvement in child labour and schooling category.

Gender of children
Gender of children (male children) had positive and significant influence ($p<0.10$) on their probability to engage in child labour (child labour only) among the rural farming households of Enugu state. This is expected since male children are more likely to engage in child labour both in rural and urban areas.

Household Size
Household size had positive and significant ($p<0.01$) relationship with the probability of children been engaged in agricultural labour (Table 5). **Muturi (1994)** showed that a relationship exists between child labour and family size. This implies that further increase in the number of people in the rural households would lead to an increase in number of children in child labour (child labour only). This may be true since increase in household size would lead to demand for more food, wellbeing, health services, and poverty the people may become more vulnerable to poverty if household size increases without commensurate increase in livelihood outcomes. This is also in line with the results of the **DFID (2003).**

Poverty Level
In this analysis, poverty level had negative but significant relationship at 5% level of probability ($p<0.05$) with both 'schooling and child labour' category. This suggests that as poverty level of the households increases, more children were made to combine their schooling with agricultural labour. This is in accordance with the *a priori* expectation and that of **Naeem et al. (2011)** which found that children work mainly due to poverty and that poor parents are forced to send their children to work instead of school.

Table 5: Effect of child poverty, deprivation and socioeconomic characteristics on child labour

Explanatory Variables	Child labour only	Schooling only	Combined child labour and schooling
Age of children	0.03	0.323	0.0828***
	(0.309)	(408.33)	(0.0293)
Gender of children (1/0)	4.56***	29.101	0.365
	(1.097)	(7713.959)	(0.814)
Marital status	0.98**	9.726	-0.158
	(0.460)	(4294.485)	(0.448)
Years of education of heads	-0.04	0.729	0.632
	(0.077)	(580.067)	(0.698)
Household size	0.35*	2.868	0.152
	(0.177)	(1680.15)	(0.1504)
poverty status (1/0)	-0.0000	-1.03e	-0.0000**
	(0.0000)	(0.002)	(0.0000)
Group membership (1/0)	-3.54***	-43.298	2.00735***
	(10.946)	(4884.51)	(0.917)
Proximity to hospital (1/0)	0.00***	0.000	0.0000***
	(0.000)	(0.0343)	(0.0000)
Farm size (ha)	4.30***	90.45	4.3816***
	(1.348)	(17355.34)	(1.277)
Constants	-9.02***	65.604	-9.59***
	(12.445)	(4880.36)	(2.518)
No of observations	162		

Chi square (X^2)-(22) = 217.97
Prob $>X^2$ = 0.0000
Pseudo R^2 = 0.4918

Note: *, ** and *** denote significant at the 10%, 5% and 1% levels respectively; Pr y=1 the base category; the figures in parentheses are robust standard errors.
Source: Own work based on field survey, 2018.

Group membership
Those children whose household heads belonged to one or more groups like *Isusu*, age of grade, political parties and cooperatives had negative and significant ($p<0.10$) relationships with 'child labour' category and in both 'schooling and child labour' category which was positive and significant at 10% levels of probability (Table 5). This suggests that those households whose heads were engaged in social and political groups seem to be more aware of the dangers of child labour and it reflected in their lifestyle.

Proximity to hospital
Proximity to hospital had negative and significant relationship at 1% level of probability with 'child labour' category. This implies that as the proximity to hospital of the respondents is increasing, their tendency to encourage child labour reduces. This suggests that as the households were saving more from sicknesses and treatments as a result of availability of health centres, more children were saved from joining agricultural labour.

Farm size
Farm size had positive and significant relationship with both categories of child labour ('child labour only' and 'schooling/child labour') (Table 5). This implies that as the farm size increases, the need for child labour also increases among the rural farming households.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

To proffer workable policies and address the challenges identified in this research, the following recommendations are presented for action:

- Since over 70% of the rural population is engaged in agriculture, and studies have shown that 70% of child labour is found in agricultural sector, it is pertinent that UNICEF and stakeholders consider a change from the current 'one-for-all' policy approach to a more specific policy for the rural farming households towards the fight against child labour. This will go a long way in reducing this huge number of children engaged in agricultural labour.

- Deliberate efforts should be made to target rural (agriculture) extension officers, religious and community cum opinion leaders with appropriate programs, workshops and trainings that can improve their understanding of child welfare, so that they can also educate other rural farmers.

- Access to both primary health care (PHC) and primary schools were put at 50.6% and 62.3% respectively. Both health and education ministries and agencies should try to improve access to these facilities by making PHC more affordable and primary schools attractive.

- Sequel to the result that as more household heads acquire basic education, they tend to pull their children out from child labour. Ministry of education should reconsider adult education policy for the rural people since education is pivotal in this fight.

- Finally, poverty has direct link with child labour

and deprivation. Ministry of agriculture should address the poverty issues among rural farmers by designing special agricultural protection policy for them. This can be done through some agricultural protection instruments such as subsidies and market/price bylaws.

This study has examined the nexus and impact of child poverty, deprivation and other socio-economic variables on child labour among rural farming households in Enugu State of Nigeria. In most rural African communities where poverty is prevalent, child labour is often viewed as an economic activity to augment family income. However, this has serious implications on child growth and development, as it could affect their health and impinge on their education. This study found that there is an inverse relationship between poverty and child schooling. As the poverty status of the family or household deepens, the likelihood of sending their children to engage in child labour also increases. Again, the findings of the study suggest that the male child had more probability to engage in child labour. All these have policy implications for the fight against child labour and deprivation in Nigeria. First, a blanket 'one size fits all' policy may not be effective in eradicating the menace.

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