

## Wastage of the Boy – Child in Africa: Implications for Educational Management

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### Abstract

*This paper critically examines the wastage of the boy-child in Africa, exploring its causes, types, effects, and possible solutions. The phenomenon has long-term consequences for the boy himself, his family, and the nation. Many African boys are unable to realize their full potential due to destructive practices that undermine their foundation, leading to hostility, aggression toward the girl-child, and even premature death. For this study, the boy-child is defined as those aged 10 to 20. The wastage of the boy-child is widespread across Africa, driven by factors such as terrorism, banditry, child soldiering, armed robbery, pipeline vandalism, baby factories, drug abuse, trafficking, rape, and abduction. These social vices stem from poor home backgrounds, societal pressures, and government failure to provide jobs and an enabling environment for entrepreneurship. Such challenges hinder sustainable development in education, the economy, security, and peace. The paper emphasizes the urgent need to redirect the energy of the boy-child toward productive ventures that foster national growth. It concludes that stakeholders—including families, governments, schools, teachers, UNICEF, and NGOs—must collaborate to rescue the boy-child from these destructive forces. Recommendations include embedding moral and national values, self-reliance courses, peace and security education, leadership training, and financial management into curricula from nursery to secondary school. Equal attention must be given to both boys and girls to ensure balanced development. Addressing the wastage of the boy-child is essential for achieving sustainable progress across African nations.*

**Keyword:** Wastage, boy-Child, Africa, Implication, Educational Management

## Introduction

The boy child of the 21st Century is faced with tremendous challenges which unless properly guarded, the society is losing him. All children are future leaders of tomorrow and guardians of the future, and the first aim of every family and society should be to raise healthy and productive individuals who are physically, psychologically, socially and mentally stable. These can be achieved through guidance and the education of the boy-child who is the father of tomorrow that could sustain development of nations. The negligence of issues affecting the boy-child is apparent and evident in most discourse and academic literature. From the researcher's observation, it seems researches and attentions by Africa scholars, Non – Governmental Organizations, UNICEF, and Anti – slavery society and World Bank were basically focused on the girl - child with no much consideration on the boy – child in Africa whose onus the sustainable development of a nation rests.

Access to education lies at the heart of development. Lack of educational access and securely acquired knowledge and skills is both a part of the definition of poverty and a means for diminution. Quality education is influenced by several factors which include access to education, retention rates, dropout rates and adequacy of instructional resources (World Bank, 2005). Persistent campaign for awareness of girl's retention in school has started bearing fruits, but in retrospect the society has ignored the plight of boy-child. The issue of the boy- child has not been adequately addressed (World Bank, 2005). Extensive analysis of data indicates that boy-child is at a higher risk of dropping out of school than girls. The trend of more boys dropping out of school started in a cohort comprising of 620,000 boys and 586,000 girls that joined standard one in 2005. By 2010, survival rate in the group had dropped to 558,000 boys and 562,000 girls. Never before had enrolment of girls in any primary school grade nationally had exceeded that of boys (UNESCO, 2003). This impedes the achievement of Universal Primary Education which is Millennium Development Goal, number two that by 2015 ensure that all boys and girls alike complete primary schooling. This paper seeks to examine the problems that engulfed the boy - child from developing his potentials for viable living and sustainable development of nations. It identifies the challenges such as terrorism, boy- child soldier, armed robbery, pipe line vandalism, baby factory, drug abuse, child trafficking, raping and abduction and proposes positive actions for the mitigation of the situation.

## Historical Background

Scholars have severally maintained that the industrial revolution in Europe and America in the sixteenth century brought about boy-child labour cum wastage. This is because before this time, children were engaged in household chores and light farm work but these were not remunerated. The coming of industrialization therefore marked the beginning of child labour (Marx, 1967). At this time the percentages of male child labourers exceeded that of the females. For instance (De Herdf, 1996, Parsons & Goldin, 1989 and Saito 1996) severally maintained that the census of England and Wales of 1861 had 36.9% of boys in the 10-14 age group as labourers and girls was 20.5%. For Africa and Asia in 1950, it was higher than this. However some Nations such as Ethiopia, have a much higher rate of child labourers yet the industrializing nations of Belgium, USA and Japan have different rates. The wastage of the boy-child for example in Nigeria has its roots in the phenomenon dates back to the pre-colonial days, when the major occupation in our society was agriculture. The custom in South-western Nigeria was polygamy for the sole purpose of childbearing so as to have more hands to assist them on the farm. The notion still lingers in our society till date. It is worthy of note that the rationale behind this act was to boost their economic status - the number of labourers (wives and children) you have on the farm determines the volume of your produce for that year and invariably your economic and financial status. This practice became part and parcel of our society and it is still in practice even after many years of estern education. The idea of boy- child wastage in our days has become an hydra-headed monster that seems to defiles solutions. As against the “agrarian era” practice of boy-child wastage in farming, the wastage has now become fully-blown and manifest in vices such as child-labour (Hawking), trafficking, abduction, terrorism, vandalism, baby factory, kidnapping and bus conducting.

The phenomenon of child Labour plays itself out in various forms and shades. Some are clearly more visible than others. In sub Saharan Africa, hawking or street trading evidently, seems to be the most popular form of child labor. Observation shows that 20 per cent of children between the ages of 10 and 20 are involved in child labor and street trading. As such, children have come to make-up about 17 per cent of Africa’s Labor force (Ekpenyong S, & Sibiri, A; 2011). In Nigeria in most importantly the south-east and south – west zones children hawk a wide range of cheap articles, edibles and products such as sachet water, plantain chips, bread, biscuits, okpa, ugba, fruits, vegetables, wears,

newspapers in the streets and along the roads especially at damaged portions of the roads where motorists and other road-users are constrained to slow down due to the bad condition of such roads

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **The Concept of Wastage of Boy-child?**

In the context of this paper wastage mean all activities that are not progressive to the life of a boy-child. According to Adebayo (2015), wastage means people whose lives depend on variables that are detrimental to their progresses and contributions to nation building.

### **Who is a boy-Child?**

A boy-child is a male person between the age of 10 and 20 in most cases they are still under the supervision of an adult, especially their parents or guardian. Offorma, (2008) defined the boy-child as a biological male offspring from birth to eighteen (18) years of age. It is made of infancy, childhood, early and late adolescence stages of development. During this period, the boy-child is malleable, builds and develops his personality and character. He is very dependent on the significant others, those on who he models his behavior, through observation, repetition and imitation. His physical, mental, social, spiritual and emotional developments start and progress to get to the peak at the young adult stage. However, the boy – child is born free but the society put him in chains (Adebayo, 2006).

### **Statement of the Problem**

It is observed that more emphases were placed on the girl-child education, welfare wellbeing and leadership training in many African countries (EFA, 2000). This had led to back grounding of boy-child thus detrimental to the boy – child life. Targeting of the girl-child, and in some instances the boy-child, is necessary and essential for sustainable development. Neglect of the boy child seems to have led to their violent reactions people are witnessing today. Childhood Sexual Abuse (CSA) is a worldwide problem. Although most studies on the long-term consequences of CSA have focused on women, sexual abuse of both boys and girls is common (Dube, 2005).

### **Forms of Boy-Child Wastage in Nigeria**

This paper will focus on challenges that face the boy – child in Africa such as Terrorism, boy- child soldier, armed robbery, pipe line vandalism, baby factory, drug abuse, child trafficking, raping and abduction as forms of Boy-Child wastage in Africa.

## Child Trafficking

Africa seems to be a source, transit and destination continent for child trafficking. Children are trafficked to work in agriculture, domestic service, mining, quarrying, and street hawking (Olofinniyi et.al, 2021). Children are trafficked from one country to another where they may be forced to work as domestic servants, market laborers, vendors, sexual exploitation and beggars on streets.



*Child Trafficking In Africa. Source: Research work, 2023*

### Forced Recruitment of Boy-Child as soldier / in Armed Conflicts

Pervasive poverty, coupled with mass unemployment and a poor education system, has created an atmosphere in which youth are susceptible to participation in armed conflict with various groups, including ethnic-based militia organizations, criminal gangs, extremist groups (terrorists) and partisan political organizations, such as party "youth wings." The boy – child is recruited, and sometimes forced, into such groups during war. Street children are most at risk for recruitment (Anaukwu and Orji, 2023).



*Child Soldier in the Camp Of Terrorist Group in one of the Africa countries. Source: Research work, 2023*

The terrorist group Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, commonly known as Boko Haram, recruited and used child soldiers during the reporting period. Boys as young as 11 years old were reportedly forced to fight, plant bombs, spy, and act as suicide bombers. Girls have been abducted by Boko Haram for domestic labor, sexual exploitation, and to act as suicide bombers. Implicit in this is that while attentions are diverted to the girl – child, the boy – child is fully prepared to waste them away via abduction, forced marriages, suicidal bombing raping among orders. For example, in Nigeria, Boko Haram has continued to carry out regular attacks on primary and secondary schools in Northeast Nigeria. Boko Haram abducted 276 girls from a secondary school in Chibok, Borno State in 2014. In addition to targeted attacks, Boko Haram threatens and intimidates teachers and students to keep them from going to school. This insecurity has led to mass school closures in the Northeast, Northwest, North-Central and the withdrawal of many students, especially girls, from school. As at this time of writing this paper, majority of the girls are yet to be released from this den of lion.

### **Child Begging**

Aliyu and Kayode (2024) sees street begging by the school as social menace. It makes young learners to have emotional, economic, and psychological trauma, and a great concern to Nigeria government (Olofinniyi, 2024). Begging on the street while the children should be in schools may be due to poverty, parental separation, deprivation, and cultural or religion belief. In some parts of African countries, families send children from rural to urban areas to live with and receive a Koranic education from Islamic teachers known as mallams. These children, known as almajiri, may receive lessons, but teachers often force them to beg on the streets and surrender the money they collect.



*Children Begging Motorist for alms on the street of Nigeria city. Source: Research work, 2023*

This has negative psychological, social and health consequences. The three categories of child beggars are - those who lead blind parents or relatives, those who beg entirely on their own and those who act as fronts for their parents, especially mothers, who are usually hidden from public view but supervises them from a close distance.

These children are the most vulnerable because they are from families of the poorest of the poor. In all three categories, they run enormous risks of running between cars in heavy traffic putting them in dangers of accidents.

### **Child Labour**

Child labour is the act of engaging children under 18 years in jobs that are meant for adults, either as way of fending for themselves, their employer or their family at large (Goyal, 2025). This practice has been observed to be inimical to the growth and development of children that are involved. The side effects of child labour has been observed by various authors and writers to be physical and psychological.

According to Sudam Moyi, Edmonds & Pavcnik 2011 the term child labour refers to when children is working in any type of work that is dangerous and harmful to children's health, or work in bad conditions and hazardous occupations that hinders their education.

ILO (2004) defined child labour as that: if the age is under eighteen and if the job intervenes the children's education and development.

**Child Labour in Agricultural Sector:** Most child labour occurs in agriculture and in the informal sector of the economy.



*A Nigerian boy working on Cocoa Plantation. Source: Research work, 2023*

### **Bonded Labour**

Bonded Labor which is also known as debt bondage is another form of child Labor and it designates the practice of pledging labor as payment on a debt. Child bonded labor refers to situations where a child's labor services are offered in exchange for a loan.

### **Boy-Child Drop-Out in School**

The rate at which boy-child drop out of schools in Nigeria is alarming compare to their female counterpart. In view of this the federal government launched boy-child education to tackle the high rate of male dropouts from schools in the southeast. With the launch of boy-child education for the southeast, the federal government seems to have kept faith with its promise to ensure the education of Nigerian citizens (Uzundu, 2012). In June 2010, the former Vice President, Architect Namadi Sambo flagged off the campaign targeted at girl-child education in Yola, Adamawa State. The boy-child education which was launched at Micheal Okpara Square in Enugu State, was aimed at arresting male dropouts, which is mostly experienced in the southeast (Uzundu, 2012).

President Jonathan whose address at the occasion was read by the minister of education, Professor Ruqayyatu Ahmed Rufai, said that even though the people of the southeast zone have a passion for enterprise education will contribute in boosting the potentials of the individuals so as to become more effective in the current digitalized global environment. 'Although the southeast is blessed with natural resources, all these will remain hugely untapped if the skilled human resources are not readily

available to drive the process .It is therefore for this reason that all hands must be on deck to support government’s effort in ensuring that boys from the region are fully engaged in schools.” The approach to solving the problem, he suggested will be for each state to work in tandem with the local government councils in the states, traditional rulers in the various communities and the town unions in identifying the unique challenges of the boy-child education in their respective areas.

The administration has developed a four-year strategic plan of the development of the education sector in the country. Among the strategies is the ‘access and equity’ campaign, which is identified as one of the major steps of letting millions of Nigerian children that are currently out of school to redress their steps (Uzundu, 2012). Governor Rochas Okorocha of Imo State and his Ebonyi State counterpart, Chief Martin Elechi promised to continue to promote boy-child education in their states. Enugu state commissioner for education, Dr. Simon Ortuanya, stated that the education policy of the state is to encourage the boy-child to obtain basic education up to junior secondary before veering off for trade for those who do not want to further their education. The state government has made education free and compulsory from primary school up to junior secondary (Uzundu, 2012).

It is estimated that about 10 million Nigerian children of primary school age are out of school because of some challenges. These include: lack of political commitment, poor planning and management as well as blind curriculum. Foremost Nigerian Nationalist, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe in his book, “Silent Resistance: High School dropouts Among Igbo-Nigerian children,” recommended that “curriculum should be relevant to global needs such as the inclusion of more science and technology in the basic curriculum, but not at the expense of a holistic view of the needs of the society in question. Schooling is designed to produce literacy in all fields of life, but especially literacy in one’s culture”.

### **Strategies for Possible Solutions**

Several approaches can be used to combat child labour and other practices that leads to boy-child wastage. Some of these are:

- i. Reducing poverty – widespread poverty is said to be the major cause of harmful child labour in developing countries. If the poverty level of households is reduced, child labour will also be reduced.
- ii. Parents should be sensitized on importance of sending children to secondary school level so that they can actively participate fully in the society.

- iii. There should be a proper linkage and interaction between primary and secondary to enhance transition.
- iv. Good parenting: Practice a secret code word with the children. Choosing a word that would not be easy for a stranger to guess. Use this code word when another adult is required to transport your child. Teach your kids about the common lures use by abductors such as for directions. The family should re-examine its role and responsibility as a socialising and nurturing agent because the family is one of the powerful social change and social support that could influence the girl-child. Support for parents through education via ante-natal and post-natal clinics, i.e. creating awareness for the mothers on these vices. Adebayo (2015).
- v. Providing support services for working children that is the causes of child labour may be known and palliative measures like feeding schemes, literacy programmes etc can be used.

### **Implications for Educational Management**

- i. Raising public Awareness -this include improving child knowledge of work hazards raising parental awareness of the human capital loss that may be associated with child labour and changing the emphasis of policy makers.
- ii. Legislation and regulation-child labour laws and regulations can be made and enforced to stop families from sending their children out to work.
- iii. Educating children – making basic education compulsory will solve the problem especially in rural areas children can be scheduled to attend school and work without conflicting.
- iv. Teachers/society and stakeholders at large should shield boy child from harmful practices such as drug abuse, alcohol and other deviant behaviors’.
- v. Guidance and Counseling in schools be enhanced
- vi. Ensure gender balance in School Management Committees (SMC), Board of Governors (BOG) and Parents Teachers Associations (PTA).
- vii. Implement affirmative action on bursaries and support infrastructure improvement, particularly for boys’ schools.

### **Conclusion**

With respect to the outlined factors that contributes to the wastage of boy-child in Nigeria, education has a major role to play. Education is the process through which individuals are made functional

members of their society (Ocho, 2005). It is a process through which the young acquires knowledge and realizes his or her potentialities and uses them for self-actualization, to be useful to himself or herself and others. There have been remarkable advances in the nation's educational system at all levels, although several problems have continued to plague the educational system especially that of boy-child education.

However, with the launching of boy-child education in southeast and almajiri model education in the Northern states, and the successful implementation of Universal Basic Education (UBE), Education for All (EFA) especially, boy-child education shall become a reality in Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

To promote boy-child education in Nigeria, the following recommendations are made:

1. The politicians and other members of the public should leave politics out of the education sector and work together towards supporting all the learning institutions to enhance boy-child education.
2. The government should propagate laws making boy-child education compulsory in Nigeria.
3. Entrepreneurship education should be introduced into Nigerian educational curriculum to elicit boy-child enrolment to acquire professional skills for future self-dependence.
4. Advocate for boys education among communities/parents and other stakeholders. Sensitize
5. A series of gender sensitization and awareness campaign workshops and seminars and affirmative action are needed to improve boy child access and participation in education.
6. Undertake continuous review of curriculum/policy documents to ensure gender sensitivity
7. There is need to identify and recognize successful professional men within the District who can act as role models or mentors to the boys.
8. There is need to reinforce legal support for affirmative action program to eliminate discriminatory practices and also ensure that positive steps are taken to increase the number of boys enrolment and retention in both primary and secondary school.

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