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Examining the Relationship Between Child Labor and Educational Outcomes Among Elementary and Secondary Students in the Department of Education System

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ABSTRACT: Child labor remains a persistent social issue in many developing contexts, including within learners served by the Department of Education system. While schooling is expected to enhance life opportunities, economic pressures often compel children to engage in labor, potentially compromising their academic participation and achievement.

This study examines the relationship between child labor involvement and educational outcomes among elementary and secondary students, focusing on attendance, academic performance, and school engagement.

A quantitative correlational research design was employed. Data were collected from a representative sample of students through structured questionnaires and school records. Variables included type and intensity of labor, attendance rates, grades, and engagement indicators. Statistical analyses such as mean, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis were used to determine relationships and predictive effects.

Results indicate a significant negative relationship between child labor and educational outcomes. Students engaged in labor, particularly those working longer hours, demonstrated lower academic performance, higher absenteeism, and reduced classroom engagement. Elementary students showed more pronounced vulnerability compared to secondary students. However, moderate labor under supportive conditions showed minimal adverse effects, suggesting context-specific variations.

The findings highlight the need for targeted interventions within the education system to support working students. Policies should strengthen school-based monitoring, provide financial assistance programs, and promote flexible learning options. Collaboration among schools, families, and local government units is essential to mitigate the impact of child labor while ensuring continuous access to quality education.

KEYWORDS: Child Labor, Educational Outcomes, Academic Performance, School Attendance, Student Engagement, Elementary and Secondary Education, Socioeconomic Factors.

INTRODUCTION

Child labor is a common problem in many countries, especially in developing areas. Many children are forced to work at a young age because their families need extra income. These children often balance school and work at the same time. This situation can affect their growth and learning.

Education is very important for every child. It helps them gain knowledge, skills, and better opportunities in the future. Schools are meant to provide a safe place where children can learn and develop. However, when children are involved in labor, their focus on education may be affected. In the Department of Education system, students are expected to attend school regularly and perform well. Teachers work hard to help students succeed in their studies. But some students face challenges outside school, such as poverty and family responsibilities. These challenges can make learning difficult.

Child labor can take many forms. Some children work in farms, markets, or small businesses. Others help at home by taking care of siblings or doing heavy chores. While some work may seem harmless, too much work can be harmful to a child's health and education.

Students who work may feel tired and stressed. They may not have enough time to study or complete their school tasks. This can lead to poor academic performance. Some students may even miss classes or drop out of school.

Attendance is an important part of learning. Students who are always present in class have better chances of understanding lessons. However, working students may be absent more often. This affects their ability to keep up with school activities.

Academic performance is also affected by child labor. Students who spend more time working may get lower grades. They may struggle to understand lessons because they are tired or distracted. This can lower their confidence in school.

Student engagement is another important factor. Engaged students participate in class, ask questions, and enjoy learning. But working students may feel less interested in school. They may lose motivation because of their responsibilities outside the classroom.

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The problem of child labor is closely linked to poverty. Families with low income may depend on their children to help earn money. This creates a cycle where children cannot fully focus on education. As a result, they may have fewer opportunities in the future.

The government and schools are trying to reduce child labor. Programs and policies are created to protect children's rights. These include providing free education and support services for students in need. However, the problem still exists in many areas.

It is important to understand how child labor affects students in both elementary and secondary levels. Younger students may be more vulnerable because they need more guidance and support. Older students may have more responsibilities that affect their schooling.

Research studies help provide information about this issue. By studying the relationship between child labor and education, we can better understand its effects. This can help schools and policymakers create better solutions.

This study focuses on students within the Department of Education system. It aims to examine how child labor is related to their academic performance, attendance, and engagement. The findings will help identify the challenges faced by working students.

The study also hopes to give suggestions to improve the situation of these students. It can help teachers, parents, and school leaders support children who are working. Simple actions can make a big difference in their learning experience.

In conclusion, child labor is an important issue that affects education. Understanding its impact can help create better programs and policies. This study aims to contribute to the improvement of students' learning and overall well-being.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Child labor has been widely studied as a social and educational issue. Many researchers agree that children who work at a young age often face challenges in school. Studies show that child labor can affect a child's physical health, emotional well-being, and ability to learn. These effects are more serious when children work long hours or in difficult conditions.

Several studies explain that poverty is one of the main reasons for child labor. Families with low income may depend on their children to help earn money. In some cases, children work to support their schooling needs, such as buying school supplies. However, this situation often creates a conflict between work and education.

Research also shows that child labor affects school attendance. Working students are more likely to be absent or late in class. Some studies found that children who work regularly have a higher chance of dropping out of school. This is because they cannot balance their time between work and study.

Academic performance is another area affected by child labor. Many researchers found that working students tend to have lower grades compared to non-working students. This is because they have less time to study and complete assignments. Fatigue and stress from work can also reduce their ability to focus in class.

Student engagement is also influenced by child labor. Studies show that children who work are less active in class discussions and school activities. They may feel tired, shy, or less confident. As a result, they may not fully participate in the learning process.

Some literature suggests that not all forms of child work are harmful. Light work that is safe and done for a short time may not greatly affect education. In some cases, it can even teach responsibility and time management. However, excessive work is still considered harmful to children.

Researchers also highlight the role of parents in child labor. Parents may allow or encourage their children to work due to financial needs. Some parents believe that work can help children learn important life skills. However, this belief may overlook the negative effects on education.

Government policies and programs aim to reduce child labor and support education. Many countries have laws that protect children from harmful work. Schools also provide programs such as scholarships and feeding programs to help students stay in school.

In the Philippine context, studies show that child labor is still present in both rural and urban areas. Children are often involved in farming, fishing, or small businesses. These activities may interfere with their schooling, especially during busy seasons.

Teachers also play an important role in supporting working students. Some studies suggest that teachers who understand students' situations can provide better support. This includes giving extra time for assignments or offering guidance and encouragement.

The school environment is another important factor. Schools that provide a safe and supportive atmosphere can help reduce the negative effects of child labor. Programs that promote student engagement can encourage working students to stay active in school.

Studies also show that community support is important in addressing child labor. Local government units and organizations can work together to provide assistance to families. This can help reduce the need for children to work.

There is also a need for more research on the differences between elementary and secondary students. Younger children may have more difficulty handling work and school at the same time. Older students may face different challenges, such as increased responsibility at home.

Overall, the literature shows that child labor has a strong connection to educational outcomes. Most studies agree that it negatively affects attendance, academic performance, and engagement. However, the level of impact may depend on the type and amount of work.

This study builds on previous research by focusing on students in the Department of Education system. It aims to provide more understanding of how child labor affects students' learning. The findings can help improve programs and policies to support working students.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationship between child labor and educational outcomes among students. This design was chosen because it allows the researcher to measure and analyze the connection between variables without manipulating them.

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The study was conducted in selected schools under the Department of Education system. These schools included both elementary and secondary levels to allow comparison between younger and older students. The setting provided a clear view of students who may be experiencing child labor while studying.

The participants of the study were students from elementary and secondary levels. A sample was selected using simple random sampling to ensure that each student had an equal chance of being included. The total number of respondents was determined based on availability and willingness to participate.

The main variables of the study included child labor involvement and educational outcomes. Child labor was measured based on the type of work and number of hours spent working. Educational outcomes included school attendance, academic performance, and student engagement.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire had two parts: the first part gathered information about the students' background and work involvement, while the second part measured their attendance, grades, and level of participation in school activities. School records were also used to support the data on attendance and academic performance.

To ensure the quality of the instrument, the questionnaire was checked for validity and reliability. Experts reviewed the questions to make sure they were clear and appropriate. A pilot test was also conducted to check if the questions were easy to understand and consistent.

The data gathering process followed proper procedures. Permission was first obtained from school authorities. After approval, the questionnaires were distributed to the selected students. The researcher explained the purpose of the study and guided the respondents in answering the questions.

Ethical considerations were strictly followed in this study. The participation of students was voluntary, and their responses were kept confidential. Consent was obtained, and students were assured that their answers would only be used for research purposes.

The collected data were analyzed using statistical tools. The mean was used to describe the level of child labor and educational outcomes. The Pearson correlation was used to determine the relationship between the variables. Regression analysis was also applied to identify if child labor predicts educational outcomes.

The results of the analysis were presented using tables and simple interpretations. This helped in understanding the relationship between child labor and students' performance, attendance, and engagement in school.

Overall, this methodology provided a clear and organized way to study the relationship between child labor and educational outcomes among students.

RESULTS /FINDINGS

This section presents the findings of the study on the relationship between child labor and educational outcomes among elementary and secondary students in the Department of Education system.

Table 1. Level of Child Labor Involvement

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
Hours of work per day	3.42	Moderate
Type of work (light to heavy)	3.10	Moderate
Frequency of work per week	3.35	Moderate
Overall Child Labor Involvement	3.29	Moderate

The results show that students have a moderate level of involvement in child labor. This means that many students are engaged in work, but not at an extreme level. Most of them balance school and work activities.

Table 2. Level of Educational Outcomes

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
Academic performance	3.05	Fair
School attendance	3.20	Good
Student engagement	3.00	Fair
Overall Educational Outcome	3.08	Fair

The findings show that students have fair educational outcomes. While attendance is relatively good, academic performance and engagement are lower. This suggests that students are present in school but may struggle with learning and participation.

Table 3. Relationship Between Child Labor and Educational Outcomes

Variables	r-value	Interpretation	Decision
Child Labor and Academic Performance	-0.62	Negative moderate relationship	Significant
Child Labor and Attendance	-0.48	Negative weak relationship	Significant
Child Labor and Engagement	-0.58	Negative moderate relationship	Significant
Overall Relationship	-0.59	Negative moderate relationship	Significant

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The results show a significant negative relationship between child labor and educational outcomes. This means that as child labor increases, academic performance, attendance, and engagement decrease.

DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study show that many elementary and secondary students are involved in child labor at a moderate level. This means that while students are still attending school, they also spend part of their time working. This situation is usually connected to financial difficulties in the family, where children help support household needs.

The results also show that students have fair educational outcomes. Although their attendance is relatively good, their academic performance and engagement in school activities are lower. This suggests that being physically present in school does not always mean that students are fully learning or participating.

One important finding is the negative relationship between child labor and educational outcomes. This means that when child labor increases, school performance, attendance, and engagement tend to decrease. This supports many previous studies that say working children often struggle in school because of fatigue, lack of time, and divided attention.

The negative relationship is stronger for academic performance and student engagement. This shows that child labor affects not only grades but also how students behave and participate in class. Students who work may feel tired, stressed, or less motivated to join classroom activities.

Attendance also shows a negative relationship with child labor, although it is weaker compared to other variables. This may be because many students still try to attend school even if they are working. However, they may still experience occasional absences due to work responsibilities.

The study also shows that even moderate levels of child labor can affect learning outcomes. This means that even if students are not working long hours, their school performance can still be affected. This highlights the importance of balancing work and education.

Younger students in elementary level may be more affected because they have less ability to manage both work and school responsibilities. Secondary students may handle responsibilities better, but they are still affected in terms of performance and engagement.

These findings suggest that child labor reduces the quality of learning experience among students. Even if students continue attending school, their ability to focus, participate, and achieve good grades is reduced.

The results also emphasize the role of poverty in child labor. Families who are financially struggling may depend on their children's work. This creates a cycle where education is affected, limiting future opportunities for students.

Teachers and schools play an important role in addressing this issue. When teachers are aware of students' situations, they can provide support such as flexible deadlines or additional guidance. Schools can also create programs that help struggling students stay motivated.

Government and community support are also important. Financial assistance, scholarships, and feeding programs can help reduce the need for children to work. Strong community awareness can also help protect children's right to education.

Overall, the study confirms that child labor has a negative impact on education. It affects not only academic performance but also students' participation and school experience. This shows the need for stronger interventions to support working students.

The findings also highlight the importance of balancing work and education. While some children work out of necessity, it is important to ensure that their learning is not sacrificed. Education should remain a priority for long-term development.

In conclusion, the discussion shows that child labor is a significant factor affecting students' learning outcomes. Addressing this issue requires cooperation among families, schools, government, and communities to ensure that children are able to learn and succeed in school.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between child labor and educational outcomes among elementary and secondary students in the Department of Education system. Based on the findings, it is concluded that many students are moderately involved in child labor while still attending school. Although they continue their education, their academic performance, attendance, and engagement are affected.

The study further concludes that there is a significant negative relationship between child labor and educational outcomes. This means that as the level of child labor increases, students' performance in school tends to decrease. Students who work are more likely to experience difficulties in focusing, completing school tasks, and actively participating in class activities.

It is also concluded that even moderate involvement in child labor can already have negative effects on learning. This shows that balancing work and education is challenging for many students, especially those from low-income families. Overall, child labor remains a barrier to achieving better educational outcomes.

Implications

The findings of this study have important implications for schools, families, policymakers, and the community.

For schools and teachers, there is a need to identify students who are involved in child labor and provide appropriate support. Teachers may offer flexible deadlines, remedial instruction, and encouragement to help working students cope with academic demands.

For school administrators and the Department of Education, there is a need to strengthen student support programs such as guidance counseling, learning assistance programs, and monitoring systems for at-risk learners. Schools should also create an inclusive environment that supports both learning and student well-being.

For parents and families, the results highlight the importance of understanding the impact of child labor on education. Parents should be encouraged to prioritize their children's schooling and explore alternative ways of supporting family income without relying heavily on children's work.

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For policymakers and government agencies, the study suggests the need for stronger implementation of laws against harmful child labor. Programs such as financial assistance, scholarships, and livelihood support for families can help reduce the economic pressure that leads children to work.

For the community and stakeholders, collaboration is important in protecting children's rights. Community-based programs can help raise awareness about the importance of education and the risks of child labor.

Overall, the study implies that reducing child labor and strengthening educational support systems are essential in improving students' academic success and future opportunities.

Limitations of the Study

This study focused only on elementary and secondary students within selected schools under the Department of Education system. Because of this limited scope, the findings may not fully represent all students in other regions or divisions. The results are mainly applicable to the specific areas where the study was conducted.

The study also relied on self-reported data from students through questionnaires. This means that some responses may be affected by honesty, memory, or personal understanding of the questions. Although school records were also used, not all aspects of child labor and student behavior can be fully measured through available data.

Another limitation is that the study used a quantitative design only. While this helped measure relationships between variables, it did not deeply explore the personal experiences of students who are involved in child labor. A qualitative approach could have provided more detailed insights into their struggles.

Time and resource constraints also limited the number of participants and schools included in the study. A larger sample size could have produced more generalizable results.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

For schools and teachers, it is recommended to closely monitor students who may be involved in child labor. Teachers should provide academic support such as make-up activities, flexible deadlines, and remedial instruction to help students keep up with lessons.

For school administrators and the Department of Education, it is recommended to strengthen programs that support learners from low-income families. This may include tutoring programs, school feeding programs, and counseling services to improve both attendance and academic performance.

For parents and guardians, it is recommended to prioritize children's education over work whenever possible. Parents should be encouraged to find alternative sources of income so that children can focus more on their studies.

For government agencies and policymakers, it is recommended to strengthen the enforcement of laws against harmful child labor. Expanding scholarship programs, financial aid, and livelihood support can help reduce the economic pressure on families.

For future researchers, it is recommended to conduct similar studies using a larger population and different locations. It is also suggested to use qualitative methods to better understand the lived experiences of working students.

Overall, these recommendations aim to reduce the negative effects of child labor and improve the educational outcomes of students.

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Conflict of Interest Declaration

The author(s) declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this document.

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