

The Nexus between Child Labour and Survival Tactics of Children and Parents in CACLAZ Project in Chiredzi District, Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

This study which was supported by TdH Germany in Zimbabwe, was guided by the Development Evaluation (DE) and sought to examine the pull and push factors of child labour and the CACLAZ project has supported the livelihoods of children, in Chiredzi district. The study adopted a pragmatism philosophy which underpins the mixed method research. The Convergent Parallel Mixed-Method Research design (MMR) guided the study, leading to the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data at the same time in line with the research design. The quantitative results were cross-examined with results from qualitative research. Respondents were 160 primary school students who were randomly sampled from the target population. The study interviewed 39 Key Informants who were purposively sampled from the target population and also conducted 12 Focus Group Discussions from students and parents of students. Respondents provided the required information through a closed-ended questionnaire while participants and Key Informants were engaged in face-to-face interviews using semi-structured questionnaire. Data from Focus Group Discussions were obtained through unstructured questionnaire. Quantitative research data were analysed using the SPSS 21.0 while NVivo was employed to analyse qualitative data. The study found that boys were affected by child labour more than girls. These findings highlight the prevalence of child labour among the male respondents, where 100% were once in child labour, engaged in herding cattle, sugar cane industries and in other different fields, compared to 9% girls. Furthermore, the study found that children were pushed into child labour by orphanage, poverty, child abuses at homes and being child headed households. There were also pulled into child labour by the need for money, looking for food and peer pressure. The study recommended for interventions that will save the children from child labour, particularly the boy-child.

Key Words: Child labour, CACLAZ, Survival tactics, Chiredzi

INTRODUCTION

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), an estimated 160 million children were engaged in child labor globally as of 2020, with 79 million in hazardous work (ILO, 2021). The problem is most prevalent in Africa and Asia, with the highest rates found in sub-Saharan Africa (ILO, 2021). Common forms of child labor include agriculture, services, industry, and domestic work. Factors driving child labor include poverty, lack of access to education, social norms, and weak enforcement of labour laws (UNICEF, 2022). While the abolition of child labour is undeniably one of the major tasks assigned to the International Labour Organization (ILO) when it was founded, child labour remains a severe problem worldwide. In many parts of the world, especially in developing countries, children do not have access to school. Instead of ending up in school, millions of children are forced to engage in child labour in income-generating and non-income-generating activities (Mihigo, Vermeylen & Munguakonkwa, 2024).

Labour can be described as practical work, especially when it involves hard physical effort despite taken by children or adults (UNICEF, 2023). Amnesty International argues that some forms of labour can be hazardous to everyone but the risk is more problematic in children since they are still growing and developing processes that can be disturbed by hard and hazardous child labour (Amnesty International, 2021). In the same vein

Jayawardana, Baryshnikova and Cheng (2022) allude that children are more susceptible to harm and workplace hazards than adults and the results of hazardous work are often more devastating and lasting for them as their bodies and minds are still developing. It is indisputable therefore, that allowing child labour undermines the values of human dignity, equality and justice and efforts must be made by governments, organisations, and individuals to eradicate child labour in all its forms.

According to Lal (2019), the 2011 census conducted in India revealed that more than 10.2 million children between the ages of five and fourteen who were deemed to be "economically active", with 4.5 million girls and 5.6 million boys being employed. Child labour in Canada (ILO, 2017) is heavily concentrated in the agricultural sector, both in subsistence and commercial farming. In Ghana, for example, it is estimated that 25% of the populace live in extreme poverty, on an average minimum wage of around US\$2.00 a day (Rosana, Chauvel & Law, 2019). As a result, young children in Ghana are forced to work in family fields to help support their families. The belief is that work teaches them responsibility, work ethics, and the value of hard work (Rosana et al, 2019). It was further found that children worked to contribute to their own welfare while others due to poverty (Yeyie., 2020). Child labour is regarded as one of the most common problems in Bangladesh where 93% of child labourers are employed in the informal sector such as small factories and workshops, on the street, in home-based business and domestic employment (Roy, et al., 2017). According to Lo-oh and Monju (2022)'s study in Cameroon, child work in Africa is a reality for both cultural and economic reasons. However, work in the African culture aims at socialising, training and educating a child to become responsible in the family, kin and community at large (Lo-oh and Monju, 2022). In India and Pakistan, Aqil (2012)'s study made a conclusion that poverty breeds child labour poverty, after founding that poverty was the foremost reason of child labour. Per ILO, poverty is a major single cause behind child labor (Radfar, et al 2018). Roy, et al., (2017), found that the major factor behind child labour is poverty in Cameroon.

Like other countries, Zimbabwe, also has the problem of child labour. Despite the fact that Zimbabwe is signatory to the ILO convention 138 which stipulates 18 as the minimum age for workers engaging in hazardous labour, Chingono (2020) argues that children are pushed to work because families lack the capacity to adequately provide for their needs. A report by the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, revealed that, of the 50,000 under-16s surveyed in 2019, 71% were working in agriculture, forestry, and fishing and 5.4% were in the mining and quarrying sectors (Chingono, 2020). Limited information is available specifically on child labour in Chiredzi district which study was conducted. However, the 2022 United States Department of Labour (USDOL) list of goods produced by child labour or forced labour identifies some of the goods produced in Zimbabwe which include tobacco, cotton, and sugarcane (USDOL, 2022). Although the specific districts were not mentioned, Chiredzi is known for its production of sugarcane. CALCAZ concurs with the USDOL citing that children in Zimbabwe are engaged in different forms of work which include among others, farming, fishing, and cattle herding (CALCAZ, n.d). According to CALCAZ, agriculture is on top of the list for engaging child labour where children do infrastructure maintenance, cultivation of the fields, and fetching water and wood to generate energy for agricultural processes.

There are quite a number of gaps however, in the attempts by both government and development partners to address the challenge of child labour in Zimbabwe. For example, both government and development partners have not been actively involving the target groups and all stakeholders in planning, implementing and evaluating interventions to change their circumstances. Lack of access to quality education is also a significant factor in child labour. Many children leave school early or do not attend school at all because they do not see the value in the quality of education offered in school. There is also a lack of public awareness about the negative impacts of child labour and the importance of eradicating it. Insufficient resources and capacity restrict monitoring and surveillance mechanisms to identify and tackle child labour effectively. The majority of child labour in Zimbabwe is found in the informal sector and agriculture, which are often outside the purview of monitoring and regulations. The lack of oversight in these sectors makes it challenging to identify and address cases of child labour.

This study was unique in that it addressed the gaps identified in terms of pull and push factors of child labour. The findings are hoped to direct the interventions to primary sources of push-pull factors that force children to partake child in labour. The findings will contribute to the body of knowledge and bring expansion to the use of Developmental Evaluation in Zimbabwe, not only in creating solutions to end child labour in the

agricultural sector but also in other social development programmes.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was guided by Convergent Parallel Mixed-Method Research design (MMR) underpinned by both the positivist and phenomenological philosophies. Thus, a mixed-method approach was adopted combining quantitative and qualitative research approaches to address the research objectives and provide answers to the research questions for the study. The study applied a three-tier or three-layered stratified random sampling approach on the 10 schools and the study focused on Primary schools that were benefiting from the CACLAZ (Coalition against Child Labour in Zimbabwe) project. A total of 12 FGDs were conducted with learners and parents/guardians. The study used purposive sampling to select 6 primary schools from CACLAZ project of which 6 FGDs were conducted involving learners and parents/guardians. Similar to sampling for FGDs, purposive sampling was used to select 39 key informants. These KIIs were drawn from different levels of data sources; namely school, community, project, and government district stakeholders.

Thus, conceptually, the study was premised on the need to comprehend the effectiveness of the strategies implemented by Coalition against Child Labour in Zimbabwe (CACLAZ) to end child labour in Chiredzi using the Developmental Evaluation Approach. The study used SPSS to analyze quantitative data. Qualitative data from FGDs and KIIs was transcribed, coded according to themes emerging from the discussions. This data was analyzed through qualitative data analysis techniques using NVivo 12.0 and analyzed using Thematic Analysis (TA) for common themes, trends.

This research was based on the definition of ethics from Bhattacharjee (2012:137) in which the study valued the moral distinction between right and wrong with particular reference to community entry and engagement with research participants. In line with this definition of ethics, the study observed and followed all child protection aspects, cultural and political protocols before and during community entry while collecting data from the project area. Permission was sought from provincial and local authorities. Thus, the permission to conduct field work in Chiredzi district was granted.

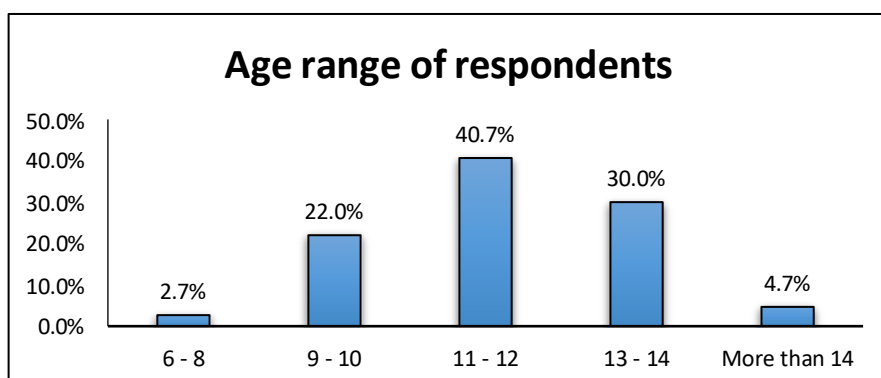
STUDY RESULTS

Quantitative Results

Evaluation demographics

The findings from the survey reveal important insights about the child respondents in relation to their age, gender, family size, dream employment, living arrangements, and grade level.

Age Range of Respondents



The survey captured a diverse range of age groups among the child respondents. The largest proportion of respondents fell within the age range of 11-12 years, accounting for 40.7% of the total. This was followed by the age range of 13-14 years, which constituted 30.0% of the respondents. The age groups of 9-10 years and more than 14 years comprised 22.0% and 4.7% of the respondents, respectively. The youngest age group of 6-8 years constituted a smaller proportion, accounting for 2.7% of the respondents.

Three Major Reasons for Children Dropping Out of School

Among the respondents, three primary reasons emerged as major factors contributing to school dropout: child labour, poverty, and orphanage. These reasons shed light on the challenges faced by children in their pursuit of education and highlight the complex circumstances they often enter.

When analysing the findings based on the respondents' gender, distinct patterns emerged. Among the male respondents, an overwhelming majority of 93.1% identified child labour as the primary reason for dropping out of school. This suggests that male children are more susceptible to being engaged in labour activities that hinder their educational journey. While child labour was not mentioned by any of the female respondents, a considerable proportion (37.2) cited orphanhood as a reason for leaving school. This indicates that female children might face challenges related to family structure, parental support, or social circumstances that contribute to their educational discontinuation. Additionally, a substantial 34.6 of female respondents highlighted poverty as a significant factor, emphasizing the economic constraints that hinder their access to education.

Child Labour

Among the male respondents, a significant proportion of 100 stated that they had been child labourers at some point. In contrast, only 9 of the female respondents reported being child labourers. This suggests that male children are more likely to be engaged in labour activities during their childhood. Among the male respondents who reported being child laborers, the most common activities mentioned were herding cattle and working as maids. Other activities mentioned included working in sugar production and engaging in unspecified "other" labour. This suggests that male child laborers were involved in a range of manual labour tasks.

Factors Contributing to Child Labour

Among the male child labourers, the most prevalent factor cited was poverty, with 76.4 mentioning it as a cause. This indicates that economic hardship and the need to support their families financially may have compelled male children to engage in work at an early age. Other factors mentioned by male child labourers include lack of fees (18.1) and orphanage (5.6). Among the female respondents who were not child labourers, the majority (91.0) reported that they had not been engaged in labour activities. However, a small proportion of female respondents (9.0) indicated that they had been child labourers at some point. Among these female child labourers, poverty was the primary factor mentioned (85.7), indicating that economic challenges also play a significant role in forcing girls into labour. These findings highlight the gender disparities in child labour, with a higher prevalence among male respondents. They also underscore the influence of poverty as a major driver of child labour for both genders. Additionally, the absence of fees and orphanage were mentioned as contributing factors, albeit to a lesser extent.

Children Experiences as child labourers

The findings from the responses of young children provide insights into their experiences as child labourers and their return to school.

		What were you doing as a child labourer										When did you return to school?							
		Herding Cattle		Maid		Working sugar		Working in sugarcane production		Other		Jan, Feb & March		Apr, May & June		July, Aug & Sept		Oct, Nov & Dec	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Sex of respondents	Male	43	59,7	9	12,5	13	18,1	0	0,0	7	9,7	40	55,6	20	27,8	10	13,9	2	2,8
	Female	0	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	7	100,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	7	100,0

Activities as Child Labourers

Among the male respondents who reported being child labourers, the most common activities mentioned were herding cattle (59.7) and working as maids (12.5). Other activities mentioned included working in sugar production (18.1) and engaging in unspecified "other" labour (9.7). This suggests that male child labourers were involved in a range of manual labour tasks.

Returning to School

For male child labourers, the data indicates that the majority (55.6) returned to school during the months of January, February, and March. Another significant proportion (27.8) returned to school between April and June. Smaller proportions returned to school during the months of July to September (13.9) and October to December (2.8). This suggests that many male child labourers were able to resume their education after a period of engagement in labour activities. Among the female respondents who reported being child labourers, all of them (100) indicated that they returned to school during the months of April, May, and June. This suggests a more concentrated timeframe for the return to school among female child labourers. These findings highlight the prevalence of child labour among the male respondents and provide insights into the specific activities they were engaged in. It is encouraging to see that a significant proportion of male child labourers were able to return to school, with the majority resuming their education in the early months of the year.

Qualitative Results

Qualitative results were compiled from the interviews conducted with CACLAZ supported Teachers, School Headmasters /mistresses, Livelihood Chairpersons/Secretaries, Child Care Workers (CCWs), Government Stakeholders, CACLAZ Project Staff and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with learners and parents/guardians of learners. CACLAZ has been working in Chiredzi's three (3) wards; 16, 24 and 29 since 2021, with the goal to end child labour.

Are there any school-going-age children who are out of school or have dropped out of school in this community? In answering the above-mentioned question, the majority of the participants said, "Yes" indicating that the presence of children of school-going ages out of school in Chiredzi district. The majority of participants cited lack of school fees, poverty and orphanhood as the common reasons for keeping children out of school. Other reasons include; economic hardship, long walking distances to school and child labour (mainly working in the fields). There was some agreement amongst the participants that the numbers of children out of school have decreased since the inception of CACLAZ project. It was revealed that children were working in nearby farms, herding cattle or on sugarcane plantations in order to buy food, clothes and other basic needs for the family. Being out of school renders the children vulnerable to all forms of abuses including child labour. Returning children to school, will by far reduce child labour, early marriages, drug and substance abuse and ultimately improve numeracy and literacy in children, which is key in future development of the country.

When asked about the what pushes children to child labour, the participants cited the aspects of orphanhood, poverty, child abuses at home and child headed families as the major push factors. According to the results, many children were working as labourers for significantly long periods of their childhood. This means that child labour is affecting the normal growth of children (physical, cognitive, moral as well as social) as it interferes with a period critical for their development. The interviews with former children in child labour, showed the following results; 67% worked on farms weeding in the fields and 33% worked as cattle herders. This revelation is evidence that work done by children is hard and not appropriate for their age. It also means that children spend most of their time with adults at the expense of going to school and playing with other children. The children were pushed into child labour as early as the ages between six and eight years. The results highlight the degree of family poverty and the nexus between poverty and child labour. This is a cause for concern hence, the need for interventions targeted to empower families and communities with life skills and livelihood projects so that they are able to provide for their basic needs without having to rely on child labour to work on other peoples' farms for money and food. Being aware of the push factors greatly assist in the designing of effective interventions that makes impact. Addressing these factors helps to address root

causes of child labour.

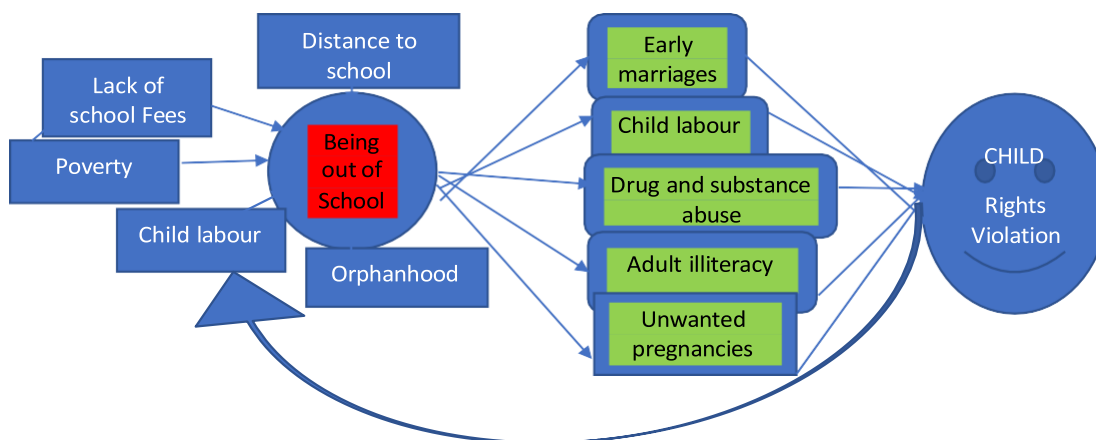
When asked about the pull factors to child labour, the participants cited the need for money, need for food and peer pressure. The results indicate the need for the continuous involvement of Government stakeholders in CACLAZ project. Being aware of the pull factors greatly assists in the designing of effective interventions that address the root causes of child labour. The results showed that 83% of the interviewed children may of the opinion that child labour is the normality of life because it provided them with food, clothes and other basic needs which the family could not afford. As such they had no option but to work. To them what is referred to as child labour is normal and part of their grooming. This was testified by the children who were once in child labour but returned to school by CACLAZ project. They (children) revealed that their lives had changed for the worst since there were no longer getting income to buy food, clothes and other basic commodities. This was possible when they worked as a child labourer. This highlights the need for more awareness raising on children’s rights that is, right to education, right to a childhood, right to be protected from any forms of abuse including child labour. Children lack the confidence to demand their rights and to stand up to challenge rights violations

DISCUSSION

Circumstantial factors of being out of school

There was correlation between quantitative and qualitative results that child labour, poverty and orphanhood cause children to be out of school. The circumstances are summarized using an explore diagram before being explained in detail.

Figure 6.1



Generally, evidence from the quantitative, case studies and qualitative results revealed that orphanhood, poverty, child labour, long distances to school and lack of school fees are most causes of being out of school. Being out of school has negative effects to children. It can lead to early marriages, child labour, high crime rates, use of drugs and substances and adult illiteracy of which all these aspects violate the rights of children, as illustrated by the diagram in figure 6.1. Being out of school and its consequences can lead to intergenerational vicious cycle of poverty, which is a long-term effect.

Child labour was identified as a cause of being out school both in case studies and quantitative research. The quantitative results of the study show that a significant proportion of boys, (100%) stated that they had been out of school and child labourers at some point. According to the findings, child labour is more common to boys than girls, given the aspects that boys can do many tasks such as livestock herding, agricultural activities, guarding homes and fields amongst many of them. The girls are more suitable for domestic or maid positions

and agricultural activities. This was testified by one FGD participant who said;

“Most children in child labour are boys because of their muscles can endure any type of job compared to girls”.

The findings were consistent with International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2017), FAO (2021) and Ahmady (2024) study in India, which revealed that boys are more likely than girls to engage in child labour. These findings highlight the prevalence of child labour among the male respondents, where 100% were once in child labour, engaged in herding cattle, sugar cane industries and in other different fields, compared to 9% girls. The findings imply that the children work for economic value. This calls for interventions to save the children, particularly the boy-child from child labour. Unlike most interventions that always put forward the needs of a girl-child, it is also high time to call for interventions to save the boy-child. Addressing child labour with a gender focus is essential, since the causes and factors that lead to child labour may differ for girls and boys, they may experience work differently, and each gender group may experience different consequences of their work as children. Therefore, in dealing with child labour, it is necessary to consider gender an important factor. We can better plan to address the problem of child labour if we know more about the children involved in a specific child-labour activity. There should be safety nets that target both boys and girls who are vulnerable and prevent them from child labour.

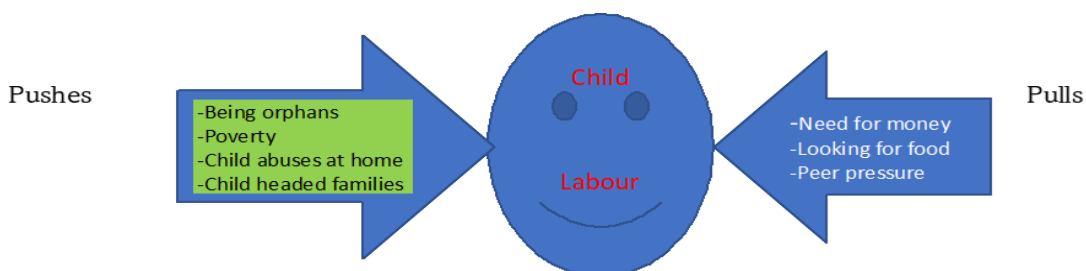
Poverty was mentioned as one of the major circumstances leading to children to be out of school. Poverty can be a causative to lack of school fees which was also cited as a circumstance. Addressing poverty can also address the issue of lack of school fees, of which income generating projects/activities (IGAs) can be one of the strategies. The IGAs do not only address the issues of poverty, but can also solve the problem of school fees.

Another circumstance leading to children being out of school is long walking distances to school. This can be a cause for other problems such as sexual abuse which might lead to unwanted pregnancies and early marriages particularly to girls. Short to medium term solutions to this problem can include provision of bicycles.

Orphanage was one of the circumstances cited as leading to children out of school. Improving safety nets can be another solution that can alleviate the plight of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC).

Failure to address these circumstances will always be a major cause for children to be out of school and flood the labour market, formally and informally.

Finding 2. Influence around Child labour



The results show that there are push and pull factors to child labour.

According to the results, the children are pushed into child labour by orphanage, poverty, child abuses at homes and being child headed households. There are also pulled into child labour by the need for money, looking for food and peer pressure. Unless and until these pushes and pull factors are addressed, child labour will continue to be a problem in Chiredzi.

Push factors

Orphanhood was seen as one of the major causes of child labour. These findings were similar to other studies

conducted in Democratic Republic of Congo, where Mihigo, Vermeylen & Munguakonkwa (2024) found that orphanhood reduces a child's likelihood of school attendance and increases the probability of entering the labour market. There were also similar to other studies done in other parts of Zimbabwe, where Novella (2018) found that orphans are less likely to attend school and more likely to work. Diallo, et al. (2010) and Guarcello, et al. (2004) (as cited in Pantelic, et al, 2024), the study also found that orphans were at elevated risk of child labour than non-orphans (Pantelic, et al, 2024). Indeed, orphanhood exposes children to high levels of vulnerability, either by relatives or the community in general. One teacher in the study had to say,

“the relatives and the community will have found cheap labour because of the vulnerability attached to orphans”.

“Some relatives pretend to care for the orphans but at the end, it will be the orphan doing everything for the household and end up not going to school, either heading cattle or working in the field” said one participant in one of the FGDs.

If the community is not capacitated and empowered to take care of the orphans, they will continue to work as children. The orphans will always be involved in child labour in search of food and money to meet the basic needs of life. Unless and until the safety nets are improved for these Vulnerable groups, they will not attend schools and end-up being in child labour. Like the orphans, the Child headed household suffer the same vulnerability in the hands of the relatives and/or the community

The study found that poverty is forcing the parents and community to violate the rights of children by involving them in child labour. The findings were consistent with Aqil (2012), Yeyie (2020) and Radfar, et al (2018).

The CCW had to say; *“Some parents are being taken care of by their children who are working as child labourers”*

Parents in poverty are unable to pay school fees and some of them tend not even to value education. There is need to address the issues of poverty in the district in order to exceedingly reduce and prevent child labour. The Government and Developmental agencies need to collaborate and come out with sustainable interventions.

The study found that child abuses at home pushes children to child labour. The findings were consistent with Mahmud, et al (2016), who found that more than half (63%) of the working children have been emotionally abuse, 27% physically abused and at least 10% have been sexually abused in Malaysia. Similarly, the findings conformed with Kaur & Byard (2020)'s study in India, that revealed that children run away from home to look for a job because of mistreatment. In Zimbabwe, step-mothers are the most abusers of children, leading to child labour.

“Children living with step-mothers tend to run away from their homes and look for work because of abuses. In fact, they start child labour at home, because they do everything. Some are shouted at, are not given food or are even beaten up” said one participant teacher.

In Zimbabwe, step-mothers in particular, have a bad reputation of abusing step children. Policies should be reviewed, implemented and monitored to save the children from abuses, in turn this will reduce child labour perpetuated by abuses. There is need to address the issue of child abuse in the CACLAZ operational area.

Pull factors

Need for money/looking for food/peer pressure; these factors can be explained under one roof. Due to high poverty levels in the community, children are pulled into child labour because of the need for money to look after themselves, their parents or grandparents. The findings were in tandem with Yeyie (2020)'s study in Ghana, which found that some children had become bread winners and Lo-oh and Monju (2022) whose study revealed that child workers engaged in work for economic benefits in Cameroon. The findings also conformed with Mihigo, Vermeylen & Munguakonkwa (2024), who found that children engage in child labour for income-generating activities in Democratic Republic of Congo. Some children are living with grandparents

who are also vulnerable, who need support, so this forces the grandchildren into child labour to care for them. As such, some families were relying on the income generated by their children for survival.

“Some of the children are living with grandparents who are being cared for by the children through child labour” said one participant teacher.

Other children get into child labour because of peer pressure. The study conformed with Metta, et al. (2023) who also found that peer pressure promoted children into mining or reinforced its continuation in Tanzania. Similarly Nyuiemedi (2013) found that peer pressure and materialism pulled children into fishing in Ghana.

“There are other children in child labour who are buying livestock at the end of the year, clothes and food. The on-looker children think it’s a good thing to get into child labour and start to own property and items” one teacher participant elaborated.

CONCLUSION

A multifaceted approach is needed to prevent and end child labour. Government should be at the forefront in development of sustainable interventions. There is need for continuous awareness campaigns against child labour, using innovative methods such as Road shows. These campaigns should be properly timed, involve Community leaders and, collaborate with local or national celebrities to ensure positive impacts through maximum attendance by the community, including children. CACLAZ is encouraged to advocate enforcement of child labour laws and regulations. It should continue to collaborate with law enforcement agents to strengthen monitoring and enforcement mechanisms on all forms of child labor. Orphanage was consistently pronounced as one of the causes of children to be out of school and in child labour. CACLAZ should collaborate with the community and community leaders to find ways of caring for and supporting vulnerable groups in the community and preventing orphans from falling victims of child labour. For example, income generating projects can be one of the strategies. In terms of poverty there is need for CACLAZ, Government and other partners to look into the ways of alleviating poverty in the community, in order to reduce vulnerability that eventually leads to school drop outs and child labour

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