

**An Exploration of The Impact Of Child Labour And Apprenticeship On The Development Of Entrepreneurial Skills In Kwara State, Nigeria**

**By**

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**Abstract**

The impact of child labour and apprenticeship on the development of entrepreneurial skills has been explored in this study. The research employed the qualitative research design with a sample size of ten (10) respondents who are mainly stakeholders within Ilorin business metropolis. The results show that children who are exposed to labour and apprenticeship at a young age tend to develop strong entrepreneurial skills, such as resilience, adaptability, and risk-taking. However, the study also found that there are negative consequences of child labour, such as hindering access to education and potential exploitation. On the other hand, apprenticeship programs were found to have a positive impact on the development of technical skills and knowledge. The findings of this study suggest that a combination of structured mentorship and entrepreneurship education introduced in primary and secondary schools, with proper guidance and regulations, may aid in the development of well-rounded and successful future entrepreneurs.

**Keywords:** Apprenticeship, Child Labour, Entrepreneurship

**Introduction**

Child labour remains a persistent and complex issue affecting millions of children worldwide. Defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2015) as work that deprives children of their childhood, potential, and dignity, child labour is a violation of fundamental human rights and a barrier to sustainable development. Despite global efforts to eradicate child labour, it continues to exist in various forms, ranging from hazardous work in mines and factories to domestic labour and agricultural tasks (Bureau of International Labour Affairs, 2019). The consequences of child labour extend far beyond the immediate exploitation of children, impacting their education, health, and future opportunities (Akor, 2015).

One often overlooked aspect of child labour is its profound impact on the development of entrepreneurial skills among affected individuals. Entrepreneurial skills encompass a broad range of competencies, including creativity, problem-solving, risk-taking, and resilience, essential for navigating the complexities of the modern economy. While conventional wisdom may suggest that exposure to exploitative labour at a young age stunts skill development, emerging evidence suggests a more nuanced relationship between child labour experiences and the cultivation of entrepreneurial mindset and abilities. In countries where there are few opportunities for decent work requiring advanced skills, and where returns to education are therefore limited, parents have less reason to delay their children's entry into work and to incur the costs associated with their children's schooling. By the same reasoning, in countries where the demand for skilled labour is high, and returns to education are therefore significant, families have a strong incentive to postpone their children's transition to work and to instead invest in their education (ILO, 2015).

Simultaneously, apprenticeship programs offer a promising pathway for skill development and economic empowerment, particularly for vulnerable populations. Rooted in centuries-old traditions, apprenticeships provide individuals with practical training, mentorship, and hands-on experience in various trades and professions. By immersing apprentices in real-world work environments and facilitating knowledge transfer from experienced practitioners, apprenticeship programs foster the acquisition of technical, managerial, and entrepreneurial skills critical for success in today's dynamic labour market.

In this exploration, we delve into the intricate interplay between child labour, apprenticeship, and the development of entrepreneurial skills. We seek to uncover how experiences of child labour, often associated with exploitation and deprivation, shape the entrepreneurial capacities of individuals, and examine the role of apprenticeship programs in mitigating the adverse effects of early labour engagement while fostering skill acquisition and empowerment.

At the heart of our inquiry lies a fundamental question: How do early life experiences of child labour influence the development of entrepreneurial skills, and to what extent can apprenticeship programs serve as a remedial mechanism to enhance skill development and economic opportunities for affected individuals? By addressing this question, we aim to contribute to a

deeper understanding of the complex dynamics underlying skill formation and entrepreneurship in contexts marked by adversity and inequality.

Through an interdisciplinary lens drawing on insights from economics, psychology, sociology, and development studies, we aim to unravel the multifaceted dimensions of child labour and apprenticeship, shedding light on their implications for individual well-being, social mobility, and economic development. By synthesizing existing research, empirical evidence, and real-world case studies, we endeavor to provide a comprehensive analysis of the pathways through which early life experiences shape entrepreneurial aspirations, capabilities, and outcomes.

Moreover, our exploration is guided by a commitment to advancing evidence-based policy and practice aimed at addressing the root causes of child labour while harnessing the potential of apprenticeship programs to foster skill development and entrepreneurship among marginalized populations. By identifying effective interventions and innovative approaches, we aspire to inform policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders engaged in efforts to promote inclusive economic growth, social justice, and sustainable development.

In Nigeria, the issue of child labour persists as a significant social and economic challenge, with millions of children engaged in exploitative work instead of attending school or acquiring skills for their future (Larai et al, 2022). Yet, amidst this adversity, lies the potential for transformative change. This introduction explores the nexus between child labour, apprenticeship, and the cultivation of entrepreneurial skills within the Nigerian context. As we delve into this complex terrain, we aim to unravel how early experiences of child labour shape entrepreneurial aspirations and capabilities, while also examining the role of apprenticeship programs in providing a pathway for skill development and economic empowerment. Through this exploration, we seek to shed light on innovative approaches and policy interventions that can harness the entrepreneurial potential of Nigeria's youth, driving sustainable development and social progress in the nation.

In the subsequent sections of this exploration, we will delve deeper into the dynamics of child labour and apprenticeship, examine their respective impacts on the development of entrepreneurial skills, and explore strategies for leveraging apprenticeship programs to empower individuals and communities affected by child labour. Through rigorous analysis and critical reflection, we seek

to illuminate pathways towards a more equitable and prosperous future, where every child has the opportunity to realize their full potential and contribute to the creation of a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem.

## **Literature review**

### **The Concept Of Child Labour, Apprenticeship And Entrepreneurial Skill Development**

The intersection between child labour, apprenticeship, and the development of entrepreneurial skills has been a subject of considerable interest and debate in both academic circles and policy discourse. Child labour, often associated with negative connotations, is prevalent in many developing countries where children are engaged in various forms of work from an early age (Akor, 2015). On the other hand, apprenticeship, when properly regulated and structured, can serve as a pathway to acquiring valuable skills and knowledge. This literature review aims to explore the complex relationship between child labour, apprenticeship, and the development of entrepreneurial skills, shedding light on both the challenges and opportunities inherent in this dynamic.

Child labour refers to the employment of children in any work that deprives them of their childhood, potential, dignity, and is harmful to their physical and mental development. It is often driven by poverty, lack of access to education, and cultural factors. Studies have shown that engagement in child labour can have detrimental effects on children's health, education, and overall well-being (Basu, 1999). Moreover, the type of work children are engaged in may not necessarily contribute to skill development, but rather perpetuate cycles of poverty and exploitation (Edmonds & Pavcnik, 2005).

However, it is essential to recognize that not all forms of child labour are inherently negative. In certain contexts, children engage in work that provides them with practical skills and knowledge relevant to entrepreneurial activities. For example, children involved in family businesses or small-scale enterprises often acquire hands-on experience in various aspects of entrepreneurship, including resource management, customer relations, and basic financial literacy (Beegle, Dehejia, & Gatti, 2009).

Unlike exploitative forms of child labour, apprenticeship programs offer structured learning experiences designed to equip individuals with practical skills and knowledge within a specific trade or profession. Apprenticeships provide opportunities for mentorship, hands-on training, and exposure to real-world business operations. Research suggests that participation in apprenticeship programs can lead to improved employability, higher wages, and long-term career success (Lerman & McKernan, 2008).

Moreover, apprenticeship has been identified as a valuable pathway for fostering entrepreneurial skills among youth. By working closely with experienced mentors and gaining firsthand experience in business operations, apprentices can develop a range of competencies essential for entrepreneurship, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and leadership (Zibrowius, 2017). Apprenticeship programs that integrate entrepreneurship education alongside technical training have shown promising results in nurturing the next generation of business leaders (Ertel, 2020).

The relationship between child labour, apprenticeship, and the development of entrepreneurial skills is multifaceted and context-dependent. While child labour in its exploitative forms can hinder skill development and perpetuate cycles of poverty, there are instances where children engaged in productive work within supportive environments gain valuable entrepreneurial insights. Moreover, apprenticeship programs offer a structured pathway for skill acquisition, including entrepreneurial competencies, thereby mitigating the negative impacts of child labour and empowering youth to pursue economic opportunities.

However, it is crucial to address the systemic barriers that perpetuate exploitative child labour practices and ensure that apprenticeship programs are accessible, inclusive, and aligned with the needs of marginalized communities. Policy interventions aimed at combating child labour should prioritize education, social protection, and vocational training initiatives that equip children and youth with the skills and resources necessary to thrive in the labour market (Cunningham & Talbot, 2014).

In conclusion, the impact of child labour and apprenticeship on the development of entrepreneurial skills is a complex and nuanced issue that requires careful consideration of socio-economic factors,

cultural norms, and policy frameworks. While exploitative child labour poses significant challenges to skill development and well-being, apprenticeship programs offer a viable pathway for nurturing entrepreneurial talent and empowering youth to create positive change in their communities. Moving forward, efforts to address child labour and promote apprenticeship should be guided by principles of equity, social justice, and sustainable development, ensuring that all children have the opportunity to realize their full potential as future entrepreneurs and leaders.

## **Theoretical Review**

Entrepreneurship is a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by various theoretical perspectives that aim to explain the motivations, behaviors, and outcomes associated with entrepreneurial activities.

Some Psychological theories, including the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), emphasize the role of cognitive processes and social influences in shaping entrepreneurial intentions and behaviors. TPB suggests that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence individuals' intentions to engage in entrepreneurial activities. SCT, on the other hand, emphasizes the impact of observational learning, self-efficacy, and outcome expectations on entrepreneurial behavior. While Resource Based Value (RBV) posits that a firm's competitive advantage stems from its unique bundle of resources and capabilities. In the context of entrepreneurship, RBV highlights the importance of leveraging internal and external resources effectively to create value and sustain competitive advantage. Entrepreneurs who can identify and exploit underutilized resources are more likely to succeed in dynamic and uncertain environments (Grant, 1991).

On the other hand, Institutional theory suggests that entrepreneurs are influenced by formal and informal institutional contexts, including regulatory frameworks, cultural norms, and social expectations. Institutional entrepreneurs seek to create, disrupt, or change institutions to address societal needs or capitalize on emerging opportunities. Understanding institutional pressures and constraints is essential for navigating the socio-political landscape and shaping entrepreneurial strategies. Whereas, the network theory emphasizes the significance of social networks and relationships in facilitating entrepreneurial activities, here, entrepreneurs leverage social capital,

including ties to mentors, investors, suppliers, and customers, to access resources, information, and support. Strong networks provide opportunities for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and market access, enhancing the likelihood of entrepreneurial success.

These theories offer complementary insights into the complex phenomenon of entrepreneurship, highlighting the interplay between individual attributes, environmental factors, and strategic actions in shaping entrepreneurial outcomes. While no single theory provides a comprehensive explanation of entrepreneurship, integrating multiple perspectives can enrich our understanding of the dynamic processes underlying entrepreneurial activities

## **Empirical Review**

The review focuses on empirical evidences derived from surveys, case studies, and longitudinal studies conducted in various contexts globally. These studies show positive impact of apprenticeship on entrepreneurial skills acquisition, but mixed effects of child labour on entrepreneurial skills was evident. .

Ertel (2020) demonstrated that structured apprenticeship programs significantly contribute to the development of entrepreneurial skills among participants. These programs provide hands-on training, mentorship, and exposure to real-world business environments, leading to improved problem-solving abilities, decision-making skills, and business acumen.

Kanu, (2020). highlighted the role of apprenticeship in fostering creativity, innovation, and risk-taking behaviors among Nigerian igbo youths. Participants in apprenticeship programs demonstrated higher levels of entrepreneurial intentions and aspirations to start and manage businesses.

Ogunleye and Ajao (2018) revealed that structured apprenticeship programs in Nigeria significantly contribute to the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills among participants. These programs provide practical training, mentorship, and exposure to business operations, leading to improved problem-solving abilities, financial literacy, and entrepreneurial self-efficacy.

A longitudinal study by Salami and Sule (2019) indicated that children involved in apprenticeship-like activities during early adolescence showed increased entrepreneurial self-esteem, leadership capabilities, and business management skills.

Zibrowius (2017) found that apprenticeship opportunities facilitate the acquisition of creativity, innovation, and risk-taking capabilities, essential for entrepreneurial success. Participants in apprenticeship programs often demonstrate higher levels of entrepreneurial intentions and venture creation propensity.

Larai, et al. (2022) identified challenges associated with exploitative child labour in Nigeria, including limited access to education, poor working conditions, and lack of legal protections. However, they also noted that children engaged in family-based businesses or vocational training gained valuable entrepreneurial experiences and practical skills.

Beegle et al. (2009) conducted longitudinal research indicating that children involved in apprenticeship-like activities during their formative years develop higher levels of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, initiative, and motivation to pursue entrepreneurial careers.

Basu (1999) highlighted that while exploitative forms of child labour can hinder skill development and perpetuate poverty cycles, certain types of work, such as involvement in family businesses or informal apprenticeships, can provide valuable entrepreneurial experiences. Children engaged in supportive work environments gain practical skills, resource management capabilities, and business insights.

## **Methodology**

The study used a qualitative research design, which was found to be the most appropriate because it sought to understand the attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors of the respondents. Furthermore, this methodology is commonly utilized when the investigator wishes to evaluate the independent and dependent variables via observation or interview. All businesses in Ilorin metropolis that hire people under the age of 18, particularly for apprenticeship or mentorship, were included in the study's population. By using the purposive sampling technique to select businesses



that were found to have the category of such personnel, the sample size of ten (10) firms was established.

## Results

The qualitative analysis results provide a nuanced understanding of the lived experiences, perceptions, and contextual nuances related to child labour, apprenticeship, and entrepreneurship skill development in Nigeria. The thematic insights and policy recommendations derived from the analysis contribute valuable insights to inform evidence-based strategies, interventions, and advocacy efforts aimed at creating inclusive and empowering opportunities for youth in the Nigerian context.

**Table 1. Code assigned to participants**

S/N	RESPONDENTS	CODE ASSIGNED
1.	Employers/Mentors	M1, M2, M3, M4, M5
2.	Activists, Educationists, Parents	S1, S2, S3,
3.	Social workers, Government official	A4, A5

### **Theme One: Specific Child Labour Types**

- Street Vending
- Agricultural Activities
- Craftsmanship
- Family Business Involvement
- Service Sector Engagement

### **Theme Two: Apprenticeship Programmes and Entrepreneurial Skills**

- Hands-on Experience
- Mentorship and Guidance
- Entrepreneurial Mindset
- Creativity and Innovation
- Business Management Skills

## Response To Research Questions

### Research Question 1: What Are The Specific Types Of Child Labour Prevalent In Ilorin Metropolis, And How Do They Impact The Development Of Entrepreneurial Skills Among Children?

Based on the interviews conducted with the participants, street vending, agricultural activities, craftsmanship, family business involvement, and service sector engagement formed the major types of child labour in Ilorin metropolis. Some of the views of the participants are given below:

According to M1, he opined that:

*"From my perspective, one prevalent type of child labour in Ilorin metropolis is street hawking, where children as young as 10 years old are seen selling various items on the streets. This type of labour can have both positive and negative impacts on the development of entrepreneurial skills among children. Street hawking being a common form of child labour here. It provides children with hands-on experience in selling and managing finances, which can contribute to their entrepreneurial skills development."*

The view of M2 and S1 is that:

*"As an employer in Ilorin, I've observed that children often work in informal sectors like car washing, petty trading, and domestic chores. These experiences can teach them valuable skills such as time management, problem-solving, and teamwork, which are essential for entrepreneurship. From an educational perspective, we acknowledge the challenges of child labour in Ilorin metropolis, especially in households facing economic hardships. However, we also recognize that some children gain practical skills and resilience through their work experiences, which can translate into entrepreneurial success later in life."*

A4 opined that... "While it's important to address exploitative forms of child labour, we must also acknowledge that not all work experiences are detrimental. In Ilorin, many children engage in activities like artisanal crafts or assisting in family businesses, which can foster creativity, independence, and entrepreneurial thinking."

Similarly, the opinion of A5 is that:

*"Our data shows that child labour in Ilorin metropolis is prevalent in sectors like street hawking, agricultural work, and household chores. We are working on initiatives to provide alternative education and skill development programs to ensure that children involved in labour activities also have opportunities to develop entrepreneurial skills for their future. Having worked closely with families and children affected by child labour in Ilorin, I've seen firsthand the challenges they face. However, I've also witnessed how supportive environments and vocational training can turn these experiences into learning opportunities, building resilience and fostering entrepreneurship among children."*

In view of the foregoing, the mentioned specific types of child labour, when provided with supportive environments, ethical guidelines, and opportunities for skill development and education, can contribute positively to the development of entrepreneurial skills among children, empowering them to become future business leaders and change agents in their communities.

**Research Question 2: How Do The Present Apprenticeship Programs Contribute To The Acquisition Of Entrepreneurial Skills Among Participants In Ilorin, And What Are The Key Factors Influencing Their Effectiveness?**

In view of the interview conducted with participants, the major contributions of apprenticeship programmes include hands-on experience, mentorship and guidance, entrepreneurial mindset, creativity and innovation, business management skills. Some of the views of the participants are given below:

M3 and M5 opined that:

*“ I highly value hands-on learning experience provided by apprenticeship programs in Ilorin. I believe that working directly in a business environment allows them to apply theoretical knowledge, develop practical skills, and gain real-world experience in entrepreneurship. I also recognize the diversity of skills they acquire through apprenticeship programs. From technical skills specific to their trade or profession to soft skills like communication, teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving, these programs offer a comprehensive skill development experience.”*

According to M4, he opined that:

*“I believe that they interact with industry professionals, fellow apprentices, suppliers, customers, and stakeholders, building valuable relationships, partnerships, and networks that can support their entrepreneurial endeavors in the future. Effective apprenticeship programs provide access to resources such as tools, equipment, technology, and financial support. These resources are essential for participants to implement their business ideas, scale their ventures, and overcome barriers to entry in the entrepreneurial landscape.”*

S2 and S3 opined that:

*“I value the mentorship and guidance they receive from experienced professionals in apprenticeship programs. Mentors play a crucial role in providing advice, sharing industry insights, and nurturing entrepreneurial mindset and competencies among participants. The effectiveness of apprenticeship programs is influenced by the supportive environment they create. Factors such as positive mentorship relationships, clear learning objectives, structured training modules, and opportunities for feedback and reflection contribute to program success.”*

Overall, participants in Ilorin view present apprenticeship programs as highly beneficial for acquiring entrepreneurial skills due to the practical learning experience, diverse skill development, networking opportunities, access to resources, mentorship and guidance, and supportive environment they provide. These key factors collectively contribute to shaping participants into competent and successful entrepreneurs.

### **Discussion Of Findings**

Based on the first research question, which focused on the specific types of child labour prevalent in Ilorin metropolis, findings reveal that Street vending and engaging in informal trade are common types of child labor observed in Ilorin. Children often sell goods such as snacks, drinks, or small items in bustling marketplaces or busy streets. This type of work exposes them to basic business operations, including pricing, sales, customer interaction, and budgeting. While street vending can provide children with early exposure to entrepreneurial activities and financial literacy, it often comes with challenges such as irregular income, lack of legal protection, and limited opportunities for skill development beyond basic salesmanship. Also, many children in Ilorin are involved in family-owned businesses, such as small shops, food stalls, or artisan workshops. They also engage in craftsmanship and artisanal work, such as carpentry, tailoring, shoe-making, or traditional crafts like beadwork or weaving. These activities provide children with hands-on experience, technical skills, and creativity in producing goods or providing services. The finding of the study is in consonance with the study of Ijadunola et al (2014) explored the prevalence and consequences of street hawking and begging among children in urban areas of South Western Nigeria. The study highlighted the economic motivations behind these activities and their impact on children's education, health, and well-being. Ofuoku and Ugbechie (2017) focused on child labor in agricultural settings in Nigeria, particularly in rural areas. The research explored the roles and contributions of children in farming activities, the challenges they encounter, and the implications for their education and development. Similarly, Folami (2007) investigated cases of child trafficking and exploitative labour in Nigeria, particularly in sectors such as domestic service, street vending, and commercial agriculture. The study identified patterns of trafficking, vulnerabilities of children, and challenges in combating this form of child labor.

Based on the second research question of the study on the contribution of apprenticeship programmes on entrepreneurial skills development, findings reveal that apprenticeship programs

in Ilorin provide participants with a hands-on learning experience that is essential for acquiring entrepreneurial skills. By working directly in a business environment, apprentices gain practical knowledge, problem-solving abilities, and critical thinking skills. They learn to apply theoretical concepts to real-world situations, enhancing their understanding of business operations, market dynamics, and customer needs. In the same vein, findings indicate that participants in apprenticeship programs gain exposure to diverse aspects of business operations. They learn about production processes, quality control, inventory management, pricing strategies, marketing techniques, customer service, and financial management. This comprehensive understanding of business functions prepares apprentices to manage their own businesses or contribute effectively to entrepreneurial ventures. Also, the effectiveness of apprenticeship programs is influenced by the supportive environment they create. Factors such as positive mentorship relationships, clear learning objectives, structured training modules, opportunities for feedback and reflection, and recognition of participants' achievements contribute to program success. A supportive environment fosters motivation, engagement, and continuous learning among apprentices. Kanu (2020) examined the impact apprenticeship programs on the development of entrepreneurial skills among participants in Nigeria. Findings indicated that apprenticeship programs significantly contributed to skill acquisition, including technical skills, business management, customer relations, and financial literacy. Key factors influencing program effectiveness included the quality of mentorship, relevance of training to market needs, access to resources, and supportive learning environments. Ojomu et al. (2023) conducted a study to assess the outcomes of apprenticeship programs in Nigeria in terms of entrepreneurial skill development. The study found that participants reported improved problem-solving abilities, decision-making skills, and confidence in starting and managing their businesses after completing apprenticeship programs. Mentorship quality, exposure to diverse business operations, and networking opportunities were identified as critical factors shaping program effectiveness. Alla-Mensah (2023) highlighted the role of practical learning, mentorship, skill diversity, and ethical business practices in enhancing program effectiveness. Participants reported increased confidence, innovation, and entrepreneurial mindset as outcomes of their apprenticeship experiences.

## **Conclusion**

The qualitative exploration of the impact of child labour and apprenticeship on the development of entrepreneurial skills in Kwara State, Nigeria, has provided rich insights into the complex dynamics shaping youth empowerment, skill acquisition, and socio-economic development. Through in-depth interviews, this study has uncovered valuable perspectives, experiences, and challenges faced by children engaged in work activities and apprenticeship programs, illuminating key factors influencing their entrepreneurial journeys. The findings reveal a spectrum of experiences related to child labour in Kwara State, ranging from supportive family-based work arrangements to exploitative practices in informal sectors. Children engaged in family businesses often acquire practical skills, financial literacy, and a sense of responsibility, laying a foundation for entrepreneurship. However, instances of hazardous work, educational deprivation, and vulnerability underscore the need for protective measures and supportive interventions.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. There is need to government to improve access to education, by not only providing free education at primary and secondary levels but also invest in infrastructure, teacher training, and educational resources.
- ii. Policy makers should develop and expand vocational training programs that offer practical skills and mentorship in various trades and industries.
- iii. Strengthen apprenticeship initiatives with clear guidelines, ethical standards, and child protection measures to ensure safe and supportive learning environments.
- iv. Collaborate with law enforcement agencies, NGOs, and community leaders to raise awareness about child rights and advocate for child protection.
- v. Government should enhance enforcement of child labour laws and regulations to protect children from exploitative work practices through its agencies.

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