

IMPACT OF CHILD LABOUR THROUGH SUGARCANE GROWING ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN WAIBUGA SUB COUNTY, LUUKA DISTRICT: A CROSS SECTIONAL STUDY.

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Abstract

Background

The study sought to investigate the impact of child labor through sugarcane growing on the academic performance in primary schools of Waibuga Sub County in Luuka District.

Methodology.

A cross-sectional study design was used and a review of primary documents, review of secondary documents, interview method, focus group discussion, and observation method were used. Asked the extent to which children are involved in sugarcane growing.

Results.

5 out of 100 respondents representing 5% said to a very big extent, 45 out of 100 respondents representing 45% said to a big extent, while 50 respondents representing 50% said to a small extent. 40 out of 100 respondents representing 40% said to a very big extent, 50 out of 100 respondents representing 50% said to a big extent, while only 10 respondents out of 100 representing 10% said to a small extent.

Conclusion

There is a significant correlation between child labor and academic performance.

Recommendation.

There is a dire need for the Government of Uganda to enact laws.

Keywords: Impact, Child Labour, Academic Performance, Primary Schools, Waibuga Sub County, Luuka District.

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Background

Child labor has been employed as the cheapest method of production hence impacting negatively on the academic performance of pupils and students as most school-going children get engaged in the sugarcane planting and harvesting processes thereby devoting more time and energy to this income generating venture at the expense of their academics. Although the school-going percentage is above 50, there is a lot of laxity in the school enrollment, retention, and academic performance, hence the need for this study. No wonder, Luuka District in General, and Waibuga Sub County in particular have posted some of the poorest performances in the whole Country over the years.

According to the Uganda National Examinations Board, 581,586 candidates sat for PLE in November (New Vision 2022). Eighty-five percent of them (494,839) passed, with 9% (52,786) in the first division, 42.5% (247,507) in the second division, 21.5% (125,292) in the third division and 11.4% (68,554) in the fourth division. Districts that registered a high failure rate included Kaliro (28.1%), Luuka (27.3%), Iganga (26.7%), Buyende (25.5%), Bugiri (24.5%), Bududa (24.6%) and Namutumba (24.6%), all from eastern Uganda. (By Vicky Wandawa and Daniel Edwegu, New Vision Report).

Child labor is associated with sugarcane plantations where children are hired to cut and load sugarcane on Lorries. The world over, every community acknowledges the role of

Education in the development process. Pupils' and students' enrolment in areas with booming economic businesses is hampered because many children engage in these activities instead of enrolling for and remaining in school. Among the challenges facing the present generation in Uganda and the Waibuga sub-county in particular, is the poor rate of school enrolment and retention in both primary and secondary schools the need for a study on the impact of child labor through sugarcane growth on academic performance in this area in particular, Busoga region and Uganda in general.

Methodology.

Research design

A cross-sectional study design was used.

Study size

The number of participants was 100 respondents.

Study Area.

The study was done in selected primary schools of Waibuga Sub County, Luuka District.

Sampling design/methods

To ensure good representation and validity of the findings, a stratified random sampling method was used. Stratified random sampling was used for selecting the respondents from different departments from which opinions were sought during the research.

Data collection instruments

The study employed the following data collection methods;

Questionnaires

The questionnaires were both open and closed-ended to enable the respondents to understand them and answer them appropriately with ease. It included boxes to be ticked by the

respondents. They were of use since they helped the researcher gather data from the respondents considered to be rich in information.

Observation

This method was used in the field to collect data on certain non-physical aspects of the study, which do not necessarily need interaction with respondents, or are of too much contention to avoid asking respondents. This was used since it helped the researcher to avoid clashes with respondents.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Data was analyzed using tables, bar graphs, and pie-charts using computer packages, and descriptive tools of frequencies with narrative summaries and computed in percentages method to determine the relationship between the variables.

Data Analysis

The data collected for analysis was coded, stored, retrieved, and analyzed using a computerized system. After cleaning the data, the researcher entered it into a computer using the SPSS program for data entry and analysis. This generated a template of categorized response results, which guided the researcher while analyzing the responses. For instance, the template of percentile rates depicting the extent of child labor in the sugarcane industry and the extent to which this has affected the academic performance of children within Waibuga Sub-Country in Luuka District in particular and Busoga Region in General and imputed to the whole Country at large.

Results

On how serious sugar cane growing is in Waibuga Sub County, the following responses were given as represented in the table.

Table 1; Response rate.

Response rate	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Very Serious 80%-100%	30	30
Serious 59%-79%	60	60
Fairly Serious 1%-58%	10	10
Total	100	100

The table shows that sugarcane growing is a serious problem as represented by 60% of the total of 100 respondents who said it is serious. 30% of all respondents said it is a very

serious activity in Waibuga Sub County in Luuka District, while only 10% said it is fairly serious.

Table 2: The extent to which school children are involved in the sugarcane growing industry

Response rate	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Very big extent	5	5
Big extent	45	45
Small Extent	50	50
Total	100	100

Asked the extent to which children are involved in sugarcane growing, 5 out of 100 respondents representing 5% said to a very big extent, 45 out of 100 respondents representing 45% said to a big extent, while 50 respondents representing 50% said to a small extent. Some of the children go to the plantations to earn some money to buy basic school needs, while most of them go there to make

money to buy personal, needs like clothes, watches, shoes, small radios, and phones among other items.

The 50 respondents and the 45 respondents said to a big extent a real impression that there is a serious threat of child labor on sugarcane plantations in Waibuga Sub County in Luuka District, and if this trend is not tamed, the academic performance in school will continue to deteriorate over the coming years.

Figure 1: The extent to which school children are involved in the sugarcane growing industry

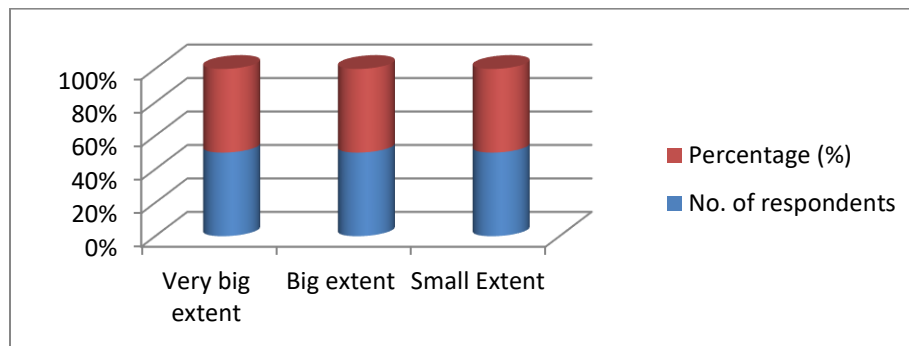


Table 3: On the question of how many days a week children are involved in the sugarcane growing and harvesting process.

Response Rate	No. Of respondents	Percentage
5 days	10	10
4 Days	15	15
3 Days	30	30
2 Days	30	30
1 Day	15	15
Total	100	100

When asked about the number of days children go to school regularly, the responses were varied as indicated in the table. 10 out of 100 representing 10% said 5 days, 15 out of 100 representing 15% said four days, 30 out of 100 representing 30% said 3 days, 30 out of 100 also representing 30% said 2 days, while 15 out of 100 respondents representing 15% said 1 day. This means that children who attend school for only 3 days or less account for 75%, while those who attend

classes for four days account for 15%, and those who attend for five days account for only 10%. This means that absenteeism is as high as 75% and this explains the number of children who get involved in child labor on sugarcane plantations.

This absenteeism if not curbed, will not help the academic performance of children in Waibuga Sub County specifically and in Luuka District in general.

Figure 2: On the question of how many days week children are involved in the sugarcane growing and harvesting process.

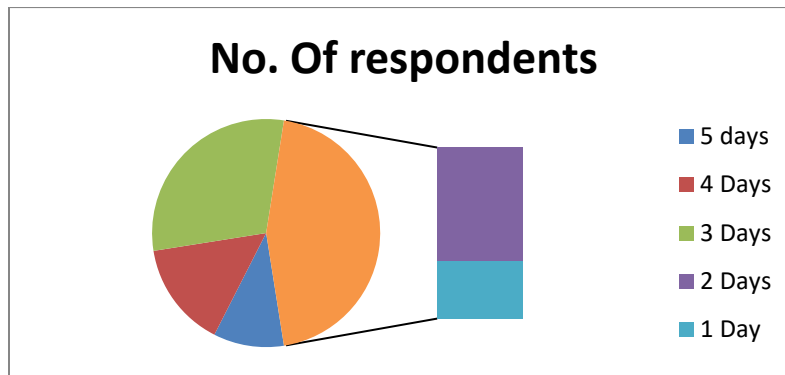


Table 4: Performance of Children in Waibuga Sub County

Response rate	No. of Responses	Percentage
Very Good	3	3
Good	10	10
Fair	87	87
Total	100	100

Asked about the performance of children in Waibuga Sub County, the respondents gave their responses as illustrated in the table. Only 3 out of 100 respondents representing 3% said it is very good, 10 out of 100 respondents representing 10% said it is good, while the majority of the respondents (87 out of 100) representing 87% said is fair. Going by the 87 respondents who said the performance is fair, it is clear that children in Waibuga Sub County in Luuka District do not perform well and one of the serious factors leading to this poor performance is child labor evidenced on sugarcane

plantations where children dodge classes to go and cut and load sugarcane on lorries for little daily payments. This rampant absenteeism reduces the concentration on academic work as children who work on sugar cane plantations are not only too tired but also use part of their little money earned to go to video halls to watch movies with the resultant effect of meditating more on the movies they watch at the expense academic revision hence poor performance in classes. Those who attend class for more days a week tend to perform fairer than those who attend fewer days.

Figure 3: Responses on Performance Levels of Children in Waibuga sub-county.

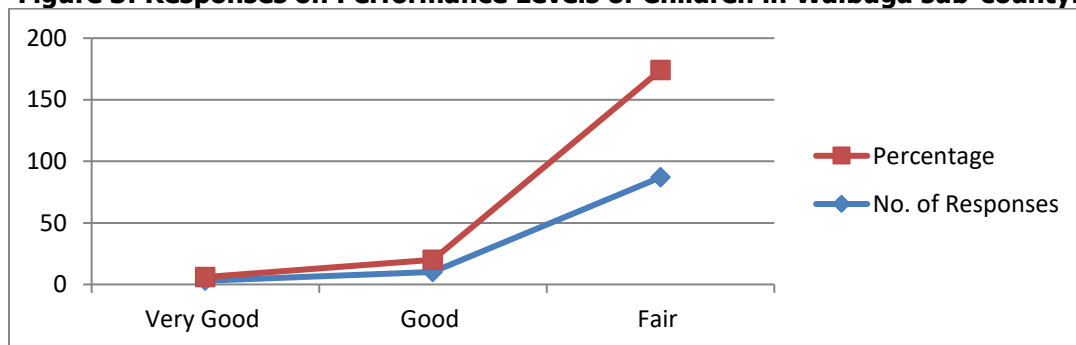


Table 5: On the extent to which being involved in the sugar cane production process has affected academic performance in Waibuga Sub County.

Response rate	No. of Responses	Percentage
Very big extent	40	40
Big Extent	50	50
Small Extent	10	10
Total	100	100

The researcher asked the respondents to answer the question of to what extent has sugarcane production process affected the academic performance in Waibuga Sub County and they responded as illustrated.

40 out of 100 respondents representing 40% said to a very big extent, 50 out of 100 respondents representing 50% said to a big extent, while only 10 respondents out of 100 representing 10% said to a small extent. It therefore comes by analogy that the 90% response rate which indicated that

it is to a big and very big extent is a clear indication that child labor on sugarcane plantations in Waibuga Sub County in Luuka District has and continues to affect the academic performance if not tackled and eliminated in the area. The sugar cane growing industry continues to grow, yet the labor laws are not well implemented in the area-meaning children will continue to flock to sugar cane plantations to seek for quick daily earnings at the expense of their academic performance.

Figure 4: On the extent to which being involved in the sugar cane production process has affected academic performance.

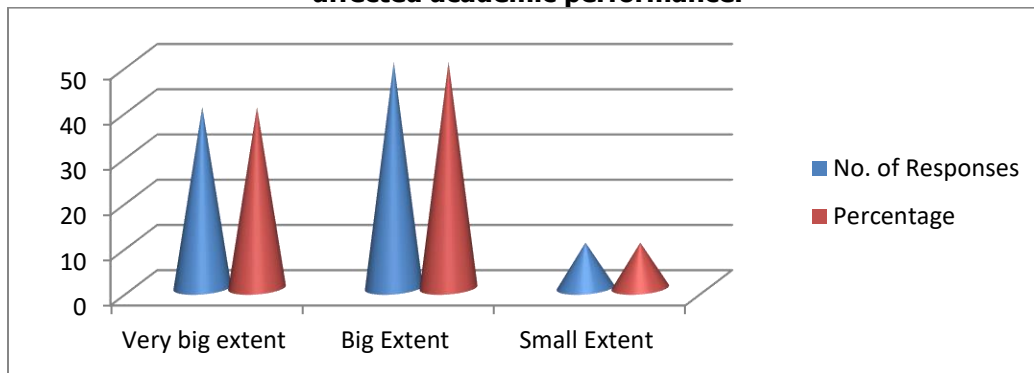


Table 6: On how big UPE and USE enrollments were in the last 10 years.

Response rate	No. of Responses	Percentage
Very Big	65	65
Big	30	30
Small	5	5
Total	100	100

On the question of how big UPE and USE enrollments were in the last 10 years, the respondents had those responses illustrated in the table.

65 out of 100 respondents representing 65% said very big, 30 out of 100 respondents representing 30% said big, while only 5 out of 100 respondents representing 5% said small. Although 95% of all respondents told the researcher that

UPE and USE enrollments were very big and big, school dropout and class absenteeism were recorded as very rampant in Waibuga Sub County in Luuka District. Many hundreds of children were enrolled in Primary Schools but very few completed Primary Seven. One of the serious reasons for this scenario is the noticeable child labor on

sugar cane plantations in Waibuga Sub-County in Luuka District.

Table 7: On the percentage number of children that complete Primary Seven.

Response rate	No. of Responses	Percentage
80%-100%	5	5
59%-79%	10	10
1%-58%	85	85
Total	100	100

On the percentage that completed primary seven, the respondents had their responses as rated in the percentile table. 5 out of 100 respondents representing 5% said 80% to 100% didn't complete Primary Seven, 10 out of 100 respondents representing 10% said 59% to 79% completed primary seven, while the majority (85 out of 100) respondents representing 85% said 1% to 58% complete primary seven. This 85% response rate in favor of fewer

children completing primary seven is also clear evidence that child labor has had a big toll on academic performance and children's retention in school.

This high dropout rate is also a problem for academic performance because among those who drop out are children who could have been intelligent enough to excel but dropped out to join the sugarcane plantations for merger earnings.

Table 8: On the Percentage of children that complete Senior Four.

Response rate	No. of Responses	Percentage
80%-100%	4	4
59%-79%	10	10
1%-58%	86	86
Total	100	100

When it came to the question of the number of children who complete senior four, the researcher was given the responses illustrated in the table. In the response rate table, only 4 out of 100 respondents representing 4% rated the completion rate as 80% to 100%, 10 out of 100 respondents representing 10% rated the completion rate between 59% to 79%, while 84 out of 100 respondents representing 84% rated the completion rate between 1% to 58%. It, therefore, comes clear from these responses that a small percentage of children who complete primary seven and go to secondary schools, fewer complete senior four. This again is attributed to among other factors the rampant child labor evidenced on sugarcane plantations. Although other forms of child labor contribute to the scenario above, the research specifically concentrated on child labor majorly in the sugar cane industry, and how this has affected academic performance.

Discussion.

From the findings, 10 out of 100 representing 10% said 5 days, 15 out of 100 representing 15% said four days, 30 out of 100 representing 30% said 3 days, 30 out of 100 also representing 30% said 2 days, while 15 out of 100 respondents representing 15% said 1 day. This means that children who attend school for only 3 days or less account for 75%, while those who attend classes for four days

account for 15%, and those who attend for five days account for only 10%. This means that absenteeism is as high as 75% and this explains the number of children who get involved in child labor on sugarcane plantations.

This absenteeism if not curbed, will not help the academic performance of children in Waibuga Sub County specifically and in Luuka District in general.

According to research done by Isa Matovu on the factors affecting academic performance in Nawampiti Sub County in Luuka District, the socio-economic status of parents, occupation, and lack of parental support to students, are among the causes of poor academic performance in Luuka District. (Matovu Isa, 2017). This has to do with sugarcane growing which most parents and their school-going children are engaged in. It takes not only the students' time but also their brains are devoted more to economic activities than their academic peril.

Although 95% of all respondents told the researcher that UPE and USE enrollments were very big and big, school dropout and class absenteeism were recorded as very rampant in Waibuga Sub County in Luuka District. Many hundreds of children were enrolled in Primary Schools but very few completed Primary Seven. One of the serious

reasons for this scenario is the noticeable child labor on sugar cane plantations in Waibuga Sub-County in Luuka District.

Although the school-going percentage is above 50, there is a lot of laxity in the school enrollment, retention, and academic performance, hence the need for this study. No wonder, Luuka District in General, and Waibuga Sub County in particular have posted some of the poorest performances in the whole Country over the years. According to Vicky Wandawa and Daniel Edwegu the Research report published in the New Vision of (2022), some pupils and students report in the first term for enrollment and only come back in the third term to sit for promotion exams! They had gone to earn money from sugarcane plantations (New Vision 2022). In Busoga, some farmers abandon food production for sugarcane growing, but the recent high PLE failure rate is evidence that pupils are also abandoning school to work as casual laborers in sugarcane plantations.

Conclusions of the study

Conclusively, therefore, some remedies were suggested by the respondents, both individually and from the FGD, and also some were suggested by the researcher himself. If followed and implemented, the academic performance of children in Waibuga Sub County in Luuka District and that of the whole country can improve gradually to the desired standards.

Recommendations of the study.

There is a dire need for the Government of Uganda to enact and enforce stricter laws on labor, education, and children. This will go a long way to mitigate child labor and hence force children to remain in school, grasp more, and improve their performances.

The government needs to put in place deliberate efforts to sensitize the community on the value of education. These will curb education neglect among parents who attach less value to education.

The government should enforce the labor laws and the Children's Act vigorously in a bid to curb child labor hence influencing performance in schools.

The police should monitor sugar cane growing activities to ensure no children are allowed to get involved. This way, the children will remain in school for more days and hence learn more and improve their performance.

Create a conducive class environment to motivate children to prefer school to child labor. This can be done by providing all that children need like playing materials, reading materials, uniforms, and meals. If all these are provided, children will remain in school and hence improve their performance.

The government should pay teachers well enough to motivate them to teach daily without absenteeism. This will improve performance since one of the outstanding factors affecting children's performance was teacher absenteeism, there is a dire need for the government to construct staff quarters for teachers. Once this is done, many pupils who use redundancies at school as an excuse to go to the sugar cane plantations to work, will attend school more regularly and thus improve their performance in class.

There is a need for the Government to introduce a bursary system for best-performing children. This will encourage bright children from poor families to attend school instead of getting into child labor activities and hence improve their performance.

Make UPE and USE compulsory. Government should punish parents who neglect their children thereby leaving them to get involved in work for pay at a tender age moreover during school time.

There is a need for the Government to sensitize the sugar cane growers to employ only adults and not children of school-going age. They should be sensitized to the strict laws that govern the labor market, children, and the education system. This will keep more children in school and regular class attendance will have a direct bearing on academic performance.

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Conflict of interest.

The author had no conflict of interest.

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