

Child Labor, Well-Being, and Academic Performance: Examining the Role of Work Experience Among Senior High School Learners

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Abstract. Child labor remains a pressing global issue, with approximately 160 million children affected in 2020 (UNICEF & ILO, 2021), including many adolescents in Tanjay City and Pamplona, Philippines, compelled by poverty into hazardous forms of work. This study investigates how work experience relates to academic performance and workplace well-being among senior high school students aged 16 to 17 engaged in labor covered by ILO Convention No. 138. Employing a descriptive, comparative, and correlational design, purposively selected respondents working in agriculture, domestic service, and multiple sectors were assessed using ANOVA, Kruskal-Wallis tests, and Pearson correlation. The most prevalent form of child labor was farming. Despite limited exposure to severe labor abuses, participants maintained satisfactory academic performance. Overall workplace well-being scores were high, especially in the domains of meaning, mindset, and engagement. Student workers in domestic roles reported the lowest levels of well-being, whereas those combining multiple forms of work reported the highest. Work experience duration was positively and significantly associated with overall well-being, and specific domains, physical health, and engagement, demonstrated significant positive associations with academic success. Findings highlight the complex relationship between academic performance and work conditions, showing resilience among youth despite challenging circumstances. These results have important implications for interventions, indicating a need for programs that extend beyond physical safety to include psychosocial support and flexible educational arrangements. Future research employing longitudinal and cross-contextual designs is essential to understand further how work experience shapes well-being and academic outcomes among working youth.

Keywords: Academic performance; Child labor; Philippines; Well-being; Work experience

1.0 Introduction

Creating more and better jobs for young people is essential to the Philippines' post-pandemic recovery and long-term economic growth (The World Bank, 2023). However, as the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2015) emphasized, the country's competitiveness continues to suffer due to an underutilized and inadequately skilled labor force. Skilled labor plays a vital role in sustainable national development, but child labor persists as a barrier to that goal. Child labor is rooted in complex socioeconomic factors, primarily poverty. Despite decades of growth, one in five Filipino families still lives below the poverty line (Edmonds & Theoharides, 2020a), compelling many children to work to support household needs. Globally, around 160 million children, nearly one in ten, were engaged in labor in 2020, with 79 million in hazardous conditions (UNICEF & ILO, 2021). In the Philippines, 1.37

million children aged 5 to 17 were employed in 2021, an increase from previous years, with agriculture being the leading sector (ILO, 2021). Child labor interferes with education and healthy development. UNICEF and ILO (2021) found that nearly one-third of child laborers are out of school. Among children aged 5–11, 28% do not attend school, rising to 35% for those aged 12–14. Momen (2021) and Radfar et al. (2018) argued that child labor perpetuates intergenerational poverty and is both unethical and morally unacceptable.

International standards define child labor as harmful work, interferes with education, or is performed by children too young to work (UNICEF & ILO, 2021). Key instruments like the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and ILO Conventions No. 138 and No. 182 codify protections for children (Momen, 2021). These frameworks recognize children as rights-holders entitled to protection from exploitation, education, and healthy development. Still, in many low- and middle-income countries, child labor remains entrenched due to social norms, weak enforcement, and poverty (Hussain et al., 2017; Radfar et al., 2018). Extensive research has examined the worst forms of child labor in agriculture (Palis, 2020; Jan, 2021), fishing and aquaculture (Mutia et al., 2020), manufacturing (Junaid et al., 2017; Lu, 2022), mining (Nwosu, 2022; Sedegah, 2024), and street services (Sohel et al., 2024). Meanwhile, studies have also documented its adverse effects on children's academic performance (Ahmad, 2015; Momen, 2021; UNICEF & ILO, 2021) and well-being (Ibrahim et al., 2019; Sámano-Ríos et al., 2019; Sandoval et al., 2022). Child laborers often report physical exhaustion, emotional stress, and lower academic achievement due to absenteeism or dropout (Abebe & Fikre, 2021).

Governments have responded with a range of interventions. In the Philippines, the Department of Labor and Employment's Child Labor Prevention and Elimination Program (CLPEP) aims to remove children from hazardous work through education, livelihood support, and enforcement (Thévenon, O., & Edmonds & Theoharides, 2020a). The Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), a conditional cash transfer initiative, incentivizes school attendance among low-income families. Globally, programs like China's Free Compulsory Education Reform (Tang et al., 2020) and Ethiopia's social development strategies (Abebe & Fikre, 2021) reflect growing international momentum toward eradicating child labor. Despite these efforts, child labor remains a pressing issue in many communities. In Tanjay City, where the researcher teaches, school attendance often drops during the sugarcane harvest season. Some students are forced to withdraw entirely to help support their families. Although legislation and national policy frameworks are in place, these efforts often do not reach the most vulnerable populations, particularly in smaller cities and rural areas. While much research has examined child labor broadly, there is a notable lack of localized, context-specific studies that integrate children's work experience, well-being, and academic performance, especially in regions like Tanjay City and Pamplona. Moreover, existing research rarely investigates how different types or intensities of labor correlate with students' psychological states and academic outcomes.

This study addresses that gap by offering a focused, community-based analysis of senior high school students aged 16 to 17 engaged in hazardous work. Specifically, it explores how varying levels and types of work experience affect their academic performance and workplace well-being. It also examines how well-being correlates with school performance, two dimensions rarely examined together in the local context. This study aims to investigate the relationship between child labor experience, academic performance, and workplace well-being among child laborers in Tanjay City and Pamplona, Philippines. By contextualizing international standards within the lived experiences of local youth, this research contributes meaningful, empirical evidence that may inform targeted education and labor policies.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative approach using descriptive, comparative, and correlational research designs. The descriptive design was used to systematically present data on the child laborers' work experience, well-being, and academic performance. The comparative component determined whether significant differences exist in well-being and academic performance based on the types and extent of work experience. The correlational design explored the relationship between students' well-being and their academic performance. This combination of designs was selected to address the study's objectives holistically.

2.2 Participants and Sampling Technique

The study involved 520 purposively selected senior high school students aged 16–17 from public schools in Tanjay

City and the Municipality of Pamplona, both classified as 3rd-class areas in the Philippines. Participants were included if they engaged in hazardous work, based on ILO Convention No. 138. Sectors considered included crop agriculture, fishing, manufacturing, mining, street work, domestic labor, and unpaid household services. Students performing light household chores were excluded. The sample was drawn in coordination with school authorities and local child protection advocates. Since senior high school students are generally at least 16 years old, they are only classified under hazardous child labor if applicable. According to ILO Convention No. 138, which sets the minimum age for various types of work, activities such as light work or routine household chores do not constitute child labor for individuals aged 16 and above. In addition, as emphasized in ILO (2011), Convention No. 138 is somewhat flexible, in that it allows for some exceptions (artistic performances, supervised apprenticeships, etc.). This further implies that students who undertake work immersion as part of the senior high school curriculum requirements are not considered child laborers. The respondents of the study were those who balance schooling and working. Hence, dropout learners or learners No Longer in School (NLS) were not part of the study.

2.3 Research Instrument

A structured survey questionnaire served as the primary data collection tool and was composed of four main parts. The first part covered demographic information, including the respondent's age, which served as a key selection criterion. The second part focused on work experience, with items developed by the researcher and anchored in the International Labour Organization's (2011) hazardous labor framework. The third part addressed academic performance, which was measured using the respondents' official school quarter grades. The fourth part included a well-being scale adapted from Donaldson et al. (2022), originally consisting of 29 items across nine domains. For this study, 23 items were retained, covering seven key domains: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment, health, and mindset. The response scale was modified from a 7-point to a 4-point Likert-type format to suit the cognitive and linguistic needs of the target population. It was translated into Binisaya (Cebuano) to ensure comprehensibility. The translated instrument was validated by seven education professionals affiliated with the Department of Education. It demonstrated strong internal consistency across its components, with reliability coefficients of $\alpha = .86$ for the work experience section, $\alpha = .82$ for the labor rights awareness section, and $\alpha = .94$ for the well-being scale.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection was conducted face-to-face in participating schools, following approval from the Silliman University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) and the DepEd Tanjay City Division Office. Informed consent was obtained from both students and their parents. The researcher personally administered the survey, assisted by teachers in remote areas. Instructions were provided in Binisaya, and participants were given ample time to respond. Completed questionnaires were collected immediately and encoded into Excel for analysis.

2.5 Data Analysis Procedure

Descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, standard deviation) summarized demographic and contextual data. To test differences across groups, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and the Kruskal-Wallis H test were used, depending on data normality. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was employed to determine the relationship between academic performance and well-being. Data reliability was assured through validated instruments and double-checked encoding.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

This study complied with ethical research standards approved by the Silliman University UREC. Participants were informed about the study's purpose, confidentiality protocols, and the voluntary nature of their participation. Signed informed consent forms were secured from both students and their guardians. Identifiable information was kept confidential and destroyed after analysis. Participants retained the right to withdraw at any time without consequence. All sources were cited, and the researcher upheld academic honesty, transparency, and objectivity throughout the study.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Work Experience of the Child Laborers

Table 1 presents the work experience of the child laborers, categorized by the type of work they are engaged in. This table provides insight into the nature and distribution of their labor activities, setting the foundation for the subsequent discussion.

Table 1. *Respondents' Type of Work*

Work Experience	<i>f</i>	%
Farming	219	42.12
Business Related	150	28.85
Domestic	96	18.46
Multiple	53	10.19
Not indicated	2	0.38
Total	520	100.00

Table 1 shows the distribution of 520 child laborers by type of work, with farming as the most common sector at 42.12 percent, followed by business-related work (28.85 percent), domestic labor (18.46 percent), and children engaged in multiple jobs (10.19 percent). Farming, especially prevalent in rural areas, is associated with significant occupational hazards such as pesticide exposure, physical strain, and long working hours, which negatively impact children's health (Corriols & Aragón, 2010; Jan, 2021). Socioeconomic factors like poverty and limited livelihood options contribute to the high incidence of child labor in agriculture (Ibrahim et al., 2019; Abebe & Fikre, 2021). Business-related work typically involves informal urban employment such as street vending and assisting family enterprises, which, while less physically demanding, exposes children to psychosocial risks including harassment and exploitation (Fernandez & Aboejo, 2014; Soheli et al., 2024; Doocy et al., 2007).

Domestic labor, often unregulated and under-researched, remains a critical area of concern due to its exploitative conditions and harmful effects on children's education and well-being (ILO, 2011; Lubaale, 2011; Ahmad, 2015). Children working in multiple sectors face compounded risks, increasing their vulnerability to educational disruption and health problems (Effland, 2005; Fassa et al., 2005; Agnafors et al., 2021). These findings highlight the persistence of child labor in agriculture and informal sectors, driven by economic necessity and structural shortcomings. They support calls from international organizations for comprehensive policy interventions that combine legal enforcement, poverty reduction, and educational support to address the multidimensional nature of child labor and promote child protection and development (UNICEF & ILO, 2021).

3.2 Extent of Child Laborers' Work Experience Based on ILO Convention No. 182

Table 2 shows the extent of work experience among child laborers, classified according to ILO Convention No. 182, which outlines hazardous forms of child labor and their associated implications. This classification helps contextualize the severity and risks involved in the labor activities discussed.

Table 2. *Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Extent of Work Experience under ILO Convention No. 182*

Item	WX	CV	VD	I
I have not been subjected to any form of slavery or practices similar to slavery.	1.68	0.59	SD	VL
I have been working in conditions that harm my safety.	1.50	0.57	SD	VL
I have been working in conditions that harm my health.	1.43	0.56	SD	VL
I have been working in conditions that harm my morals.	1.42	0.56	SD	VL
I have not been used for prostitution or any pornographic performance.	1.25	0.34	SD	VL
I have been used for the production and trade of illegal drugs.	1.16	0.34	SD	VL
Section	1.41	0.33	SD	VL

WX=Weighted Mean; CV=Coefficient of Variation, VD=Verbal Description, I=Interpretation

1.00-1.75=Strongly Disagree/Very Low(SD/VL); 1.76-2.50=Disagree/Low(D/L); 2.51-3.25=Agree/High(A/H); 3.26-4.00=Strongly Agree/Very High(SA/VH)

Table 2 presents child laborers' self-reported exposure to the worst forms of child labor (WFCL), as defined under ILO Convention No. 182. This includes slavery-like practices, hazardous conditions, and involvement in illicit or morally dangerous activities. Weighted means (WX) for all six indicators range from 1.16 to 1.68, consistently interpreted as "Strongly Disagree" or "Very Low," indicating minimal reported exposure to WFCL. The highest-rated item, slavery or similar practices (WX = 1.68), still falls well below the threshold for moderate agreement. Health and safety-related risks also scored low (WX = 1.42 to 1.50), while the least reported activities involved prostitution and illegal drug trafficking (WX = 1.25 and 1.16, respectively). The overall section mean of 1.41 supports the conclusion that respondents in this sample generally do not experience the most extreme or exploitative forms of child labor.

These findings suggest that the respondents are primarily engaged in less hazardous or exploitative types of work, such as farming, domestic tasks, or small business support, consistent with the occupational profiles described in Table 1. This aligns with prior research indicating that WFCL is not uniformly distributed and may be less prevalent in specific rural or semi-urban contexts (Edmonds & Theoharides, 2020a; UNICEF & ILO, 2021). However, low reported incidence should not be equated with the absence of harm or risk. As noted by Ibrahim et

al. (2019) and Sedegah (2024), children often underreport abuse or normalize hazardous conditions, particularly in informal or family-based labor settings. Furthermore, even limited exposure to WFCL can significantly undermine a child's physical and psychological development (Fassa et al., 2005; Junaid et al., 2017). Therefore, while the results point to a relatively low-risk environment, there remains a critical need for proactive monitoring and enforcement of child labor laws. Sustained implementation of ILO standards, along with preventive measures such as educational access, family livelihood support, and mental health services, remains essential to protect vulnerable children (Sámano Ríos et al., 2019; Ahmad, 2015; Tang et al., 2020).

3.3 Extent of Child Laborers' Work Experience Based on ILO Convention No. 190

Table 3 presents the extent of child laborers' work experience about ILO Convention No. 190, which addresses violence and harassment in the world of work. This table provides a framework for understanding the risks and vulnerabilities faced by child laborers within their work environments.

Table 3. Profile of the Respondents in Terms of Extent of Work Experience under ILO Convention No. 190

Item	WX	CV	VD	I
I have been working with dangerous equipment or tools.	2.24	0.47	D	L
I have been working in roles that involve lifting, carrying, or transporting heavy objects.	2.23	0.48	D	L
I have been working in an environment with irregular temperatures or extreme weather conditions.	2.00	0.54	D	L
I have been working in an environment with abnormal noise levels or vibrations.	1.82	0.53	D	L
I have been working in an environment that is not safe or hygienic, such as those with exposure to toxic substances or diseases.	1.77	0.56	D	L
I have been exposed to emotional abuse.	1.67	0.56	SD	VL
I have been working where my employer did not pay me my earned wages or paid me less than the agreed amount.	1.65	0.55	SD	VL
I have been working in locations that pose inherent risks to my safety.	1.59	0.57	SD	VL
I have been exposed to physical abuse.	1.45	0.55	SD	VL
Section	1.82	0.40	D	L

WX=Weighted Mean; CV=Coefficient of Variation, VD=Verbal Description, I=Interpretation

1.00-1.75=Strongly Disagree/Very Low(SD/VL); 1.76-2.50=Disagree/Low(D/L); 2.51-3.25=Agree/High(A/H); 3.26-4.00=Strongly Agree/Very High(SA/VH)

Table 3 outlines the extent of respondents' exposure to hazardous and abusive work conditions based on nine indicators aligned with ILO Convention No. 190 on violence and harassment in the workplace. Weighted means (WX) ranged from 1.45 to 2.24, corresponding to the "Strongly Disagree/Very Low" and "Disagree/Low" categories. The highest scores were associated with physically demanding tasks such as operating dangerous equipment (2.24) and lifting heavy objects (2.23), indicating low but notable physical strain. Environmental risks, including exposure to irregular temperatures (2.00), loud noise or vibration (1.82), and unhygienic workspaces (1.77), were also reported at modest levels. Meanwhile, emotional abuse (1.67), wage exploitation (1.65), physical abuse (1.45), and safety threats in the work location (1.59) received the lowest mean scores, suggesting limited disclosure or perceived incidence of direct abuse. The overall section mean of 1.82 places general exposure in the "Disagree/Low" category, implying that although severe workplace violence is not widely reported, children do experience measurable levels of physical and environmental risk.

These findings present a layered narrative of child labor conditions, where overt abuse may be minimal or underreported, yet structural hazards persist, particularly in physically intensive settings. This is consistent with earlier research documenting frequent occupational risks in informal and agricultural sectors (Fassa et al., 2005; Junaid et al., 2017). Low reports of emotional or wage abuse may reflect normalization, fear of reprisal, or lack of awareness among child workers, as noted by Ibrahim et al. (2019) and Sedegah (2024). Even minimal exposure to violence or hazardous conditions warrants urgent policy attention due to its long-term impact on well-being and educational development (Radfar et al., 2018; Agnafors et al., 2021; Ahmad, 2015). Sector-specific interventions must prioritize occupational safety, hygiene, and fair labor practices, particularly in agriculture and small-scale industries where risks are elevated (Jan, 2021; Abebe & Fikre, 2021). Strengthening labor enforcement, wage monitoring, and health protections remains critical (ILO, 2011; Lu, 2022). As UNICEF and ILO (2021) emphasize, a multisectoral approach that integrates labor regulation, social services, education, and child protection is essential to fully safeguard children from both overt and hidden forms of workplace exploitation.

3.4 Extent of Well-being of the Child Laborers

Table 4 delineates the extent of well-being experienced by child laborers across various domains, including positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment, negative emotion, physical health, and mindset. This table serves as a basis for understanding the overall psychological and physical state of child

laborers.

Table 4. *Extent of Well-Being of the Respondents*

<i>Positive Emotion</i>	WX	CV	VD	I
I feel enthusiastic about my work.	3.07	0.26	A	H
I love my job.	3.04	0.26	A	H
I feel joy in a typical workday.	3.02	0.27	A	H
Section	3.04	0.24	A	H
<i>Engagement</i>				H
I typically become absorbed while I am working on something that challenges my abilities.	3.11	0.25	A	H
I lose track of time while doing something I enjoy at work.	2.94	0.29	A	H
When I am working on something I enjoy, I forget everything else around me.	2.60	0.34	A	H
Section	2.89	0.24	A	H
<i>Relationships</i>				
I trust my colleagues.	2.94	0.28	A	H
My colleagues bring out my best self.	2.91	0.28	A	H
I feel appreciated by my coworkers.	2.85	0.28	A	H
I can receive support from coworkers if I need it.	2.82	0.30	A	H
Section	2.87	0.25	A	H
<i>Meaning</i>				
The work I do deserves a greater purpose.	3.11	0.26	A	H
I understand what makes my job meaningful.	3.06	0.26	A	H
My work is meaningful.	2.99	0.27	A	H
Section	3.05	0.24	A	H
<i>Accomplishment</i>				
I set goals that help me achieve my career aspirations.	3.20	0.25	A	H
I typically accomplish what I set out to do in my job.	2.96	0.26	A	H
I am generally satisfied with my performance at work.	2.82	0.30	A	H
Section	3.00	0.24	A	H
<i>Physical Health</i>				
I typically feel physically healthy.	2.98	0.27	A	H
I feel in control of my physical health.	2.96	0.28	A	H
I am rarely sick.	2.94	0.30	A	H
I can typically overcome sources of physical distress, e.g., insomnia, injuries, and vision issues.	2.64	0.30	A	H
Section	2.88	0.22	A	H
<i>Mindset</i>				
I believe I can improve my job skills through hard work.	3.17	0.25	A	H
I believe my job will allow me to develop in the future.	3.13	0.27	A	H
I have a bright future at my current work organization.	2.97	0.27	A	H
Section	3.09	0.23	A	H
Overall	2.97	0.20	A	H

WX=Weighted Mean; CV=Coefficient of Variation, VD=Verbal Description, I=Interpretation
1.00-1.75=Strongly Disagree/Very Low(SD/VL); 1.76-2.50=Disagree/Low(D/L); 2.51-3.25=Agree/High(A/H); 3.26-4.00=Strongly Agree/Very High(SA/VH)

Table 4 presents self-reported well-being scores of child laborers across seven dimensions: Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment, Physical Health, and Mindset, measured using mean agreement scores interpreted within the “High” range (2.51 to 3.25). All dimensions yielded high ratings, with an overall mean of 2.97. Mindset scored the highest (3.09), indicating optimism, belief in self-improvement, and future-oriented thinking. Meaning (3.05) and Positive Emotion (3.04) followed closely, suggesting that respondents perceive their work as purposeful and emotionally rewarding. Accomplishment (3.00) also reflected general satisfaction with task completion and goal attainment. Engagement (2.89) and Relationships (2.87) indicated that respondents often feel absorbed in their work and supported by peers or others. Physical Health, though slightly lower (2.88), still fell within the high range, suggesting respondents generally consider themselves physically capable, despite potential strain.

These findings, while seemingly counterintuitive in the context of child labor, reflect possible resilience and adaptive coping mechanisms. High scores in Positive Emotion and Engagement align with Agnafors et al. (2021), who argue that emotional well-being can persist even in adverse conditions. The importance of social bonds as buffers against labor stress, highlighted by Ibrahim et al. (2019) and Lee (2024), supports the elevated ratings in the Relationships dimension. The relatively favorable score in Physical Health, despite the likelihood of underreporting, may reflect either normalization of physical strain or a strong coping mindset (Junaid et al., 2017; Lu, 2022). Notably, the strong rating in Mindset reinforces findings by Tang et al. (2020), who identify future-

oriented thinking as a protective factor against long-term harm. These results underscore the complexity of child labor experiences. While structural vulnerabilities persist, many children show positive psychological indicators. As UNICEF and ILO (2021) and Edmonds and Theoharides (2020b) emphasize, interventions should not only aim to reduce harm but also promote psychosocial growth, offering opportunities for goal-setting, emotional support, and empowerment in settings where child labor remains a reality.

3.5 Academic Performance of the Child Laborers

Table 5 demarcates the academic performance of child laborers, offering an overview of their grades and academic achievements. This table provides insight into how involvement in labor may influence their educational outcomes.

Table 5. Academic Performance of the Respondents (N=520)

Descriptor	Remarks	f	%
Outstanding (90-100)	Passed	44	8.46
Very Satisfactory (85-89)	Passed	176	33.85
Satisfactory (80-84)	Passed	223	42.88
Reasonably Satisfactory (75-79)	Passed	76	14.62
Did Not Meet Expectations (<75)	Failed	1	0.19

Based on DepEd's Grading System, the Mean academic performance is 84.

Table 5 presents the academic performance of 520 child laborers based on the Department of Education (DepEd) grading system. The majority of respondents fall within the “Satisfactory” range (80–84) at 42.88%, followed by 33.85% in the “Very Satisfactory” range (85–89), and 8.46% achieving “Outstanding” marks (90–100). Meanwhile, 14.62% received “Fairly Satisfactory” scores (75–79), and only one respondent (0.19%) failed to meet expectations. The overall mean grade is 84, indicating that, on average, child laborers in the study are performing at a satisfactory academic level. These results suggest that many working children manage to meet school requirements despite the demands of their employment.

However, this apparent academic stability should be interpreted cautiously. As Ahmad (2015) and Fernandez and Abocejo (2014) argue, passing grades can obscure deeper issues such as fatigue, irregular attendance, and compromised learning due to the dual burden of work and study. Ahmad (2015) also notes that the academic impact of child labor varies by the intensity and nature of the work, with part-time or less hazardous jobs allowing better educational continuity. Fernandez and Abocejo (2014) emphasize the buffering role of strong family and community support systems. Furthermore, Edmonds and Theoharides (2020a, 2020b) highlight how economic pressures often compel children into labor, resulting in trade-offs between income generation and educational advancement. While the data reflect a degree of resilience among these learners, the sustainability and quality of their academic engagement remain uncertain. To safeguard their right to education, targeted interventions such as flexible learning options, integrated support services, and structural policies to reduce child labor are essential (UNICEF & ILO, 2021; Sandoval et al., 2022).

3.6 Well-Being and Type of Work Experience of the Child Laborers

Table 6 presents the significant differences in the well-being of the child laborers when categorized according to their type of work. This comparison highlights how varying work conditions may impact different aspects of their well-being. Table 6 above elucidates significant differences in the well-being of child laborers based on their type of work, with all eight dimensions, including Positive Emotion, Engagement, and Overall Well-being, showing p-values below 0.05, indicating statistical significance. Child laborers engaged in domestic work consistently report the lowest well-being across all areas, highlighting their vulnerability. In contrast, those involved in multiple types of work report the highest well-being, particularly in Engagement, Meaning, and Overall Well-being. Business-related work also shows relatively higher well-being, often outperforming farming, which ranks moderately. These patterns suggest that domestic work may be especially isolating and undervalued. In contrast, multiple work types might offer more opportunities for social interaction, autonomy, or variety, though this could also reflect a coping mechanism rather than truly better conditions.

Abebe and Fikre (2021) document that child labor in rural agricultural settings often occurs under physically demanding, isolating conditions that reduce psychosocial well-being. Similarly, Ibrahim et al. (2019) highlight that domestic labor lacks peer interaction and socio-emotional support, which can undermine children's mental health and relational well-being. By contrast, Fernandez and Abocejo (2014) suggest that informal business roles may provide social interaction and autonomy that support engagement and meaning. Programs targeting child labor

must adopt sector-specific approaches. Children in domestic work may benefit from peer-support groups or supervised care arrangements, while those in business-related roles may respond well to skills training and community-based interventions. Policy efforts should prioritize psychosocial support tailored to the particular vulnerabilities of each work context.

Table 6. Significant Differences in the Respondents' Well-Being when Grouped According to Type of Work

<i>Type of Work and Positive Emotion</i>					
Mean Ranks for Farming 252	Business Related 268	Domestic 189	Multiple 274	H 14.68	P < .001*
<i>Type of Work and Engagement</i>					
Mean Ranks for Farming 247	Business Related 264	Domestic 211	Multiple 273	H 8.16	P 0.044*
<i>Type of Work and Relationships</i>					
Mean Ranks for Farming 254	Business Related 276	Domestic 161	Multiple 273	H 26.75	P < .001*
<i>Type of Work and Meaning</i>					
Mean Ranks for Farming 236	Business Related 264	Domestic 193	Multiple 281	H 17.82	P < .001*
<i>Type of Work and Accomplishment</i>					
Mean Ranks for Farming 238	Business Related 273	Domestic 213	Multiple 270	H 9.19	P < .001*
<i>Type of Work and Physical Health</i>					
Mean Ranks for Farming 235	Business Related 279	Domestic 179	Multiple 275	H 23.06	P < .001*
<i>Type of Work and Mindset</i>					
Mean Ranks for Farming 246	Business Related 264	Domestic 204	Multiple 275	H 10.34	P < .001*
<i>Type of Work and Overall</i>					
Mean Ranks for Farming 239	Business Related 273	Domestic 177	Multiple 278	H 22.75	P < .001*

H=Kruskal-Wallis; *=Significant

Positive Emotion: M1, M2, M4 > M3; Engagement: M4 > M3; Relationships: M1, M2, M4 > M3; Meaning: M2, M4 > M3; Accomplishment: M2, M4 > M3;

Physical Health: M1, M2, M4 > M3; Mindset: M1, M2, M4 > M3; Overall: M1, M2 > M3; M4 > M1 & M2

3.7 Well-Being and Child Laborers' Work Experience Based on ILO Convention No. 182

Table 7 exposes the significant differences in the extent of well-being among child laborers, categorized according to their type of work. This table provides a comparative view of how different labor roles may influence their overall well-being. Table 7 above shows the results of the Kruskal-Wallis H Test, revealing statistically significant differences in the well-being of respondents based on their work experience extents under ILO Convention No. 182, with all p-values falling below 0.05. A consistent trend emerges where child laborers with High work experience (2.51–3.25) report the highest well-being scores across all dimensions, including Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment, Physical Health, Mindset, and Overall Well-being, while those with Very Low experience (1.00–1.75) consistently report the lowest. These findings suggest a surprising positive correlation between higher work experience and better well-being, implying that increased familiarity or adaptation to work may contribute to a stronger sense of purpose, engagement, and emotional resilience among these children. Sedegah (2024) finds that normalization of hazardous work among chronically exposed children may produce inflated well-being self-assessments. Agnafors et al. (2021) suggest that mental resilience may emerge among those exposed to adversity. Ibrahim et al. (2019) also warn of underreporting due to fear or lack of awareness regarding rights violations.

These paradoxical findings underscore the necessity for multi-modal assessment strategies, including qualitative interviews and caregiver perspectives, rather than sole reliance on self-reports. Despite reported well-being, any evidence of exposure to WFCL justifies risk-elimination interventions, as outlined by ILO (2021) and supported by Sámano Ríos et al. (2019).

Table 7. Significant Differences in the Respondents' Extent of Well-Being when Grouped Based on the Indicator under ILO Convention Number 182

Positive Emotion				
Mean Ranks for				
1.00-1.75	1.76-2.50	2.51-3.25	H	P
250	261	443	38.87	< .001*
Engagement				
Mean Ranks for				
1.00-1.75	1.76-2.50	2.51-3.25	H	P
248	266	470	51.92	< .001*
Relationships				
Mean Ranks for				
1.00-1.75	1.76-2.50	2.51-3.25	H	P
252	240	465	48.95	< .001*
Meaning				
Mean Ranks for				
1.00-1.75	1.76-2.50	2.51-3.25	H	P
255	230	438	38.42	< .001*
Accomplishment				
Mean Ranks for				
1.00-1.75	1.76-2.50	2.51-3.25	H	P
251	244	459	45.85	< .001*
Physical Health				
Mean Ranks for				
1.00-1.75	1.76-2.50	2.51-3.25	H	P
255	240	414	27.79	< .001*
Mindset				
Mean Ranks for				
1.00-1.75	1.76-2.50	2.51-3.25	H	P
260	225	361	14.72	< .001*
Overall				
Mean Ranks for				
1.00-1.75	1.76-2.50	2.51-3.25	H	P
252	236	468	50.89	< .001*

*In all dimensions: M4 > M1 & M2; *=Significant*

3.8 Well-Being and Child Laborers' Work Experience Based on ILO Convention No. 190

Table 8 discloses the significant differences in the well-being of the respondents when grouped according to indicators under ILO Convention No. 190. This table offers insights into how experiences of violence and harassment in the workplace may affect various aspects of their well-being. Table 8 reveals statistically significant differences in respondents' well-being across multiple indicators, such as Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment, Physical Health, Mindset, and Overall Well-being, when grouped according to their work experience under ILO Convention No. 190, with all dimensions showing p-values less than 0.05. Physical health, while still rated "High" (WM = 2.88), had the lowest mean score, suggesting that many child laborers may be experiencing physical strain such as fatigue, minor illnesses, or difficulty recovering from physical distress, potentially linked to the demands of their jobs. Kruskal-Wallis test results confirm that the type of work significantly impacts physical health ($H = 34.46$, $p = 0.00$), with those engaged in more demanding or multiple jobs likely facing greater health challenges. While academic performance appears statistically consistent regardless of work type, possibly due to short-term resilience or coping mechanisms, there is concern that physical well-being may be silently undermining long-term academic success. This highlights the need to view physical health as a less visible but crucial factor when assessing the impact of child labor on educational outcomes.

Interestingly, a consistent upward trend was found wherein child laborers with Very High (3.26–4.00) work experience reported the highest well-being across all dimensions, followed by High, Low, and Very Low experience groups. For example, in Positive Emotion, the mean rank rises sharply from 250 (Very Low) to 462 (Very High), and similar trends are seen in Engagement (240 to 448) and Relationships (241 to 484). This suggests that, under certain conditions, work may contribute positively to emotional and psychological stability, especially when perceived favorably or when working environments offer meaning, connection, or support. However, this finding contradicts much of the existing literature. Thi (2021) emphasizes that adverse childhood experiences, such as forced labor, have long-term detrimental impacts on mental and physical health. Similarly, Ibrahim et al. (2019) associate child labor with poor development, malnutrition, and elevated illness risk, while Momen (2021) and Radfar et al. (2018) highlight its adverse effects on children's cognitive, psychological, and physical

development. Edmonds and Theoharides (2020b) add that working children have higher nutritional demands, which, if unmet, result in poor health outcomes. Fassa et al. (2005) and Ibrahim et al. (2019) also warn that normalization of workplace abuse can distort children's perceptions of safety and satisfaction. Abebe and Fikre (2021) further argue that social and cultural contexts may condition children to internalize adversity, leading to seemingly higher self-reported well-being. These findings call for caution in interpreting well-being data from high-risk environments and emphasize the need for trauma-informed assessments, mandatory reporting of abuse, workplace monitoring, and the establishment of independent psychosocial support systems.

Table 8. Significant Differences in the Respondents' Well-Being when Grouped Based on the Indicator under ILO Convention No. 190

<i>Type of Work and Positive Emotion</i>					
Mean Ranks for 1.00-1.75 250	1.76-2.50 245	2.51-3.25 265	3.26-4.00 462	H 49.90	P < .001*
<i>Type of Work and Engagement</i>					
Mean Ranks for 1.00-1.75 240	1.76-2.50 254	2.51-3.25 292	3.26-4.00 448	H 47.85	P < .001*
<i>Type of Work and Relationships</i>					
Mean Ranks for 1.00-1.75 241	1.76-2.50 254	2.51-3.25 271	3.26-4.00 484	H 62.65	P < .001*
<i>Type of Work and Meaning</i>					
Mean Ranks for 1.00-1.75 240	1.76-2.50 254	2.51-3.25 291	3.26-4.00 458	H 52.59	P < .001*
<i>Type of Work and Accomplishment</i>					
Mean Ranks for 1.00-1.75 246	1.76-2.50 262	2.51-3.25 239	3.26-4.00 449	H 44.81	P < .001*
<i>Type of Work and Physical Health</i>					
Mean Ranks for 1.00-1.75 247	1.76-2.50 256	2.51-3.25 261	3.26-4.00 428	H 34.46	P < .001*
<i>Type of Work and Mindset</i>					
Mean Ranks for 1.00-1.75 256	1.76-2.50 246	2.51-3.25 270	3.26-4.00 380	H 18.47	P < .001*
<i>Type of Work and Overall</i>					
Mean Ranks for 1.00-1.75 244	1.76-2.50 251	2.51-3.25 267	3.26-4.00 484	H 61.53	P < .001*

M4 > M1, M2, & M3; *Significant

3.9 Work Experience and Academic Performance of Child Laborers

Table 9 displays the significant differences in the academic performance of child laborers based on the type of work they are engaged in. This table provides a comparative analysis of how various forms of labor may impact their educational outcomes. Table 9 presents the results of one-way ANOVA tests, showing no statistically significant differences in academic performance among child laborers based on the type of work they perform or their level of awareness of ILO Conventions Nos. 182 (Worst Forms of Child Labor) and 190 (Violence and Harassment in the World of Work). The F-values (1.56, 0.52, and 1.28) are all below the respective F-critical thresholds (2.62, 3.01, and 2.62), and the corresponding p-values (0.251, 0.603, and 0.282) exceed the 0.05 significance level. These findings suggest that work experience, including exposure to hazardous conditions or awareness of protective international labor standards, does not significantly impact the reported academic achievement of the respondents, whose average grade remains at 84, falling within the "Satisfactory" range. Despite the variance in work conditions and well-being indicated in prior tables, academic performance appears statistically consistent across groups.

However, when interpreted alongside the psychosocial data in Tables 6 through 8, this academic stability warrants a more critical perspective. Table 6 identified disparities in well-being based on work type, with domestic laborers exhibiting lower psychosocial scores, which, while not reflected in immediate grade reductions, may contribute to long-term disengagement, reduced motivation, and cognitive fatigue (Abebe & Fikre, 2021; Ibrahim et al., 2019).

Furthermore, Tables 7 and 8 revealed that children with greater exposure to hazardous work and violence paradoxically reported higher well-being, a phenomenon that may stem from psychological adaptation or the normalization of adversity (Agnafors et al., 2021; Sedegah, 2024). This form of resilience may conceal deeper emotional or cognitive challenges that subtly hinder educational quality over time (Ahmad, 2015; Edmonds & Theoharides, 2020a). Literature by Fernandez and Abocejo (2014) also points to the buffering role of family, community, and school-based support systems in maintaining academic performance. However, stable grades may not fully reflect diminished participation, delayed learning, or reduced engagement among working students. These findings underscore the necessity of pairing academic metrics with psychosocial assessments to avoid misinterpreting resilience as well-being. As UNICEF & ILO (2021) and Sandoval et al. (2022) emphasize, effective policy must address both educational outcomes and the psychosocial toll of child labor through integrated, flexible, and trauma-informed interventions.

Table 9. Significant Differences in the Respondents' Academic Performance when Grouped According to Type of Work

Type of Work and Academic Performance						
SUMMARY						
Type of Work	Count	Sum	Average	Variance		
Farming	96	7989	83	11		
Business Related	150	12524	83	11		
Domestic	53	4475	84	20		
Multiple Jobs	219	18374	84	16		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	SS	Df	MS	F	P-value	F-crit
Between Groups	66.14	3	22.05	1.56	0.251	2.62
Within Groups	7264.72	514	14.13			
Total	7330.86	517				
ILO No. 182 and Academic Performance						
SUMMARY						
Group (ILO 182 Severity)	Count	Sum	Average	Variance		
1.00-1.75(VL)	431	36110.20	83.78	14.38		
1.76-2.50(L)	64	5338.00	83.41	12.54		
2.51-3.25(H)	25	2080.00	83.20	14.26		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	SS	Df	MS	F	P-value	F-crit
Between Groups	14.66	2	7.33	0.52	0.603	3.01
Within Groups	7316.34	517	14.15			
Total	7331.00	519				
ILO No. 190 and Academic Performance						
SUMMARY						
Group (ILO 190 Severity)	Count	Sum	Average	Variance		
1.00-1.75(VL)	267	22433.46	84.02	16.71		
1.76-2.50(L)	173	14427.41	83.40	10.69		
2.51-3.25(H)	54	4503.33	83.40	11.04		
3.26-4.00(VH)	26	2164.00	83.23	16.27		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	SS	Df	MS	F	P-value	F-crit
Between Groups	54.18	3	18.06	1.28	0.282	2.62
Within Groups	7276.82	516	14.10			
Total	7331.00	519				

3.10 Well-being and Academic Performance of Child Laborers

Table 10 illustrates the significant relationship between the well-being and academic performance of child laborers. This table highlights how their overall well-being may be associated with their educational outcomes, offering insight into the interplay between emotional, physical, and academic factors. Table 10 presents statistically significant correlations between specific dimensions of well-being and academic performance among child laborers, namely Engagement ($r = 0.10$, $p = 0.021$), Meaning ($r = 0.12$, $p = 0.013$), Physical Health ($r = 0.13$, $p < .001$), and Overall Well-being ($r = 0.11$, $p = 0.012$). These findings indicate that child laborers who report higher levels of engagement, a stronger sense of purpose, better physical health, and overall well-being tend to achieve better academic outcomes. This aligns with earlier observations from Tables 4 and 9, where Meaning and Physical Health emerged as relatively high-scoring dimensions, particularly among those in less hazardous work or with

strong community support networks. Similarly, Engagement is also linked to academic success, varied by work type and exposure to hazardous environments (Tables 6 and 7), reinforcing the importance of work conditions in shaping both well-being and learning outcomes. These associations are supported by existing literature, with Agnafors et al. (2021) highlighting the influence of mental health on educational trajectories, and Ahmad (2015) showing that physical health and motivation can buffer the educational harms of child labor. Ibrahim et al. (2019) and Junaid et al. (2017) further emphasize how physical strain and occupational hazards reduce focus and school attendance, thereby impacting performance.

Table 10. *Significant Relationship Between the Respondents' Well-Being and Academic Performance*

Variables	r	p
Positive Emotion	0.06	0.199
Engagement	0.10	0.021*
Relationships	0.09	0.062
Meaning	0.12	0.013*
Accomplishment	0.07	0.100
Physical Health	0.13	< .001*
Mindset	0.08	0.092
Overall	0.11	0.012*

r=Pearson *r*, *=*Significant*

While other well-being domains, such as Positive Emotion, Relationships, Accomplishment, and Mindset, also showed positive but statistically nonsignificant correlations with academic performance, their importance should not be dismissed. These factors likely influence education in complex and indirect ways, especially under the dual pressures of work and school (Edmonds & Theoharides, 2020a; Sedegah, 2024). When integrated with earlier findings on academic performance (Table 5) and exposure to hazardous conditions (Tables 6 and 7), the results underscore that child labor's impact on education is multidimensional. Though many child laborers maintain satisfactory grades, the quality of their learning, engagement, and well-being may be compromised. This calls for holistic, trauma-informed interventions that include psychosocial support, health services, and flexible schooling tailored to their unique needs (UNICEF & ILO, 2021; Sandoval et al., 2022). In conclusion, while the links between well-being and academic performance are modest, they are meaningful and point to the need for integrated strategies that prioritize both educational achievement and the overall development of child laborers. Longitudinal studies are recommended to explore causality and further refine policy responses.

4.0 Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive examination of the well-being and academic performance of child laborers, revealing nuanced insights into their psychological, physical, and educational conditions. The findings indicate that despite the inherent challenges of child labor, many respondents demonstrate relatively high levels of well-being, particularly in dimensions of Positive Emotion, Meaning, and Mindset, and maintain satisfactory academic performance. Significant associations between specific well-being facets, such as Engagement, Meaning, and Physical Health, and academic outcomes highlight the complex interplay between children's work experiences and their educational attainment. These results underscore the resilience and agency of child laborers while also drawing attention to the persistent risks and demands that may undermine their development. Consequently, targeted interventions addressing not only physical safety, but also psychosocial support and flexible educational opportunities are essential. This holistic approach is critical to safeguarding children's rights and promoting sustainable pathways for their growth and learning. Future research should continue to explore these interdependencies across diverse contexts to inform effective policies that balance protection, empowerment, and education for working children.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

This work was conducted by a single author, with no contributing co-authors. The sole author takes full responsibility for the entire study. He is accountable for the completion and integrity of this paper.

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

The author declares that no conflicts of interest existed upon completing this paper. There were no parties with conflicting interests involved.

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